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“Being Church”: Agency and Authenticity in a Protestant Revival Movement in Scotland

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PhD Social Anthropology
University of Edinburgh
2021
Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that no part of it has been submitted in any previous application for a degree. Except where I state otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented here is entirely my own.

Signature:

Emma Teale

May 2021

Edinburgh, UK
Abstract
This thesis explores Protestant mission, discipleship, and church reform in urban Scotland. It builds upon fourteen months of ethnographic research on Cairn: a Christian movement launched in Edinburgh in 2015/16 which aspires to “radical and tangible” revival and “transformation of every sphere of culture”. In this thesis I argue that Cairn’s revival effort hinges on “intentionality”: an emic construction of agency that represents not only the capacity but also the imperative to act in building God’s Kingdom. Cairn’s intentionality is complicated by the movement’s ethic of authenticity which calls followers to submit their agency to God.

Through its training programs, Cairn seeks to form subjects who are responsibilised individuals, undertaking methodical practices of self-reformation which will scale-up to reform the nation. Cairn’s training environments are suffused with strategy and organisation. However, this intentional, agentive approach sits in tension with Cairn’s aspiration for transformation which is organic and unmanufactured. While Cairn’s followers are to take responsibility and act intentionally toward a goal, they also desire change which is authentic: ultimately God-authored and beyond their direct control. Essential to Cairn’s model of authenticity is the individual’s direct, prophetic relationship with God through which they learn their role in His plan for revival and work to ensure His will is undistorted by human agency.

Cairn holds Scotland’s established church responsible for its own steep decline over the last sixty years, largely due to its mishandling of agency. The church institution is accused of holding too firmly to traditions which elaborate upon God’s intentions and breed stagnancy. The Cairn movement’s high valuation of the divinely gifted disciple sits in stark opposition to traditional configurations of agency which prioritise exterior authorship and fixity as authoritative. Examining a case of Cairn’s church reform efforts, I demonstrate that this core disagreement maps opposing ideals of church, affecting everything from leadership structures to dress codes. Emphasis on the disciple over the church institution shapes Cairn’s approach to evangelism and mission too. With personalisation and relationship prized as authentic and therefore effectively evangelical, disciples are charged with “being church” for the post-Christian Scottish public through forming spiritually transformational relationships. This
logic of personalization extends to an understanding of the local as authentic such that effective mission requires adaptation to the cultural particularities of each neighbourhood. I show how Cairn localises its revival efforts through auditing processes which serve to spatially map God’s Kingdom.

Cairn’s bid for transformation which is organised and organic, raises the question: is it paradoxical to strategize for a spiritual revival? Through exploring this, I demonstrate the need to approach agency as culturally constructed. I argue that Cairn’s seeming paradox of agency and authenticity, which both embraces and eschews the power of the individual, serves to propel the movement. This thesis therefore complicates discussions of religious agency which oppose intention and submission by showing how they can work together in productive tension.
Lay Summary

This thesis is based on fourteen months of research about “Cairn”: a church movement launched in Edinburgh in 2015/16 which aspires to bring “radical and tangible” Christian revival to Scotland. Cairn holds Scotland’s established church responsible for its own steep decline over the last sixty years. The movement seeks to reform the “traditional” model of church which they deem no longer fit for purpose. I argue that Cairn’s approach to revival hinges on their construction of “agency”. “Agency” is a term with a long history in Social Anthropology, broadly understood to mean “the capacity to act” and often studied as the opposite to resistance. This thesis contends that we need to study agency as culturally constructed, varying across contexts. I show that Cairn’s model of agency is about who can and should act to make Christian revival happen and that this includes particular ideas about what constitutes “good” transformative action.

Cairn’s members are to take responsibility and act intentionally in pursuing their goal of reform and revival. Believing that Christians ought to be active in actualising God’s plan for Scotland, Cairn also takes an organised approach. Their church training sessions are full of goal-setting and strategic models. However, there appears to be a paradox because just as Cairn’s members are to work towards transformation in active, strategic ways, the kind of transformation they hope to achieve is organic and unmanufactured. The movement values change which seems to result from God’s action above human control. So, Cairn’s ideal transformation ought to happen both because of and in spite of human action.

I suggest that we cannot understand Cairn’s model of agency – the imperative to act – without also understanding their model of authenticity, i.e., what constitutes “good” action. Part of Cairn’s ethic of authenticity regards ensuring that God’s will and communications are not distorted by humans. But this does not mean that authenticity is synonymous with the absence of human effort. Another part of Cairn’s authenticity is precisely about valuing the uniquely gifted individual. For the Cairn movement, authenticity is located not in the church institution but in the individual “disciple” and their personal relationship with God. The movement holds that God relates directly and intimately to each disciple and that each person should embrace their God-given identity and
This value of personalisation shapes Cairn’s revival efforts in several ways. For instance, the movement advocates a structure of church in which everyone is considered a leader, and it aims to evangelise via personal relationships rather than church events. Cairn’s value of personalisation extends to that of localisation: missionaries see it as vital to adapt their revival-making efforts to the unique qualities of each neighbourhood.

Cairn’s models of agency and authenticity seem to assume that human action is vital and at the same time problematic. The movement’s followers must be active and intentional but also submit to God’s will, being careful not to distort it with their own. I argue that Cairn’s seeming paradox of agency and authenticity, which both embraces and eschews the power of the individual, serves to propel the movement. This thesis complicates established scholarly discussions of religious agency which oppose intention and submission by showing how they can work together in productive tension.
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Rich is always disarming. Enthusiastic yet even-keeled, he has a talent for putting people at ease and is a skilled public speaker and trainer. Rich and his family moved to Edinburgh in 2016, around the same time that the Cairn Movement was launched in the city. “You said you felt led to Edinburgh. Can you say a bit about what it feels like to be ‘called’ or ‘led’?” I asked. Rich answered that there were two facets to consider: the “apostolic” and the “prophetic”. The apostle, he explained, “sees new frontiers”, seeks new opportunities, is propelled by a forward momentum and adapts to challenges as they go along. This is Rich’s “natural tendency”, whereas his wife is more prophetic. The prophetic approach is about listening to what God is saying, seeking clarity before making a move. When Rich and his wife began to feel “ready for a new adventure as a family” their decision-making process was both apostolic and prophetic. On one hand, they assessed where they have “existing relationships” and influence”, discussing the locations in which they already have established projects and connections. Some options were initially eliminated on the basis of impracticality and language barriers. Rich tells me that the apostolic assessment seeks “good return on investment”; it considers the potential for “influence”, “impact”, “opportunity”. That initial, apostolic process narrowed the many, international choices to a shortlist. On the other hand, the prophetic side of decision-making centres asking God. At first, Rich and his wife told no one else about their thoughts to control for unwanted human influence. Rich knew that his friends and contacts might have a vested interest and start making job offers or asking him to stay in his current post. He emphasised that precisely because he could engineer a new role for himself in various locations around the world, it was all the more important to preclude that approach: he wanted to know that when his family did make a move, he “could look you in the eye and say, ‘this is God’s initiative, not mine.’” God reinforced this point to Rich in prayer through the image of a dog on a lead and a physical sensation of being pulled back; “like in Tom and Jerry where the dog’s chasing the cat but it’s on a metal chain and it hits the end and yanks it back.” This was God saying, “don’t run ahead of the process”. Rich sought mentors - friends who had “no agenda” which could warp God’s calling – and asked them
to intercede, sharing what God had to say about the move. To further protect
the integrity of the prophetic process, the mentors were not told about the
shortlisted locations, nor that Rich and his wife were “leaning towards
Edinburgh.” One of the friends Rich went to for prophetic counsel texted him,
“As I was praying for you, I had a picture [a prophetic vision] of the Emerald City
from the Wizard of Oz. Not sure what it is [about] but there you go.” Rich
thanked him and went on with his day but half an hour later received a follow-
up message: “I typed Emerald City in to Google and it turns out the Emerald City
is an artist’s impression of Edinburgh Castle.” This indication to Edinburgh was
matched through three or four other prophetic communications, Rich said.
“And, you know, you could go, ‘there was four or five coincidences’...who
knows?!”, he grinned. But he and his family understood them to be divine
confirmations of their conviction to move to Edinburgh. “So,” Rich summarised,
“there was this prophetic, Holy Spirit, God ordained side; and this very strategic
– and again, God-ordained, but in a different way – process.”

In this account, it was God’s intention that Rich and his family move to
Edinburgh, and they came to understand and pursue this through apostolic and
prophetic decision making. In listening to God for His guidance, careful
measures were put in place to control for the unwanted influences of human
agency from friends’ conflicts of interest, or Rich swaying them to his
preferences. It was important to Rich that this was “God’s initiative” and not
engineered by means of Rich’s professional network. Yet, whilst seeking to
separate divine agency from human agency, the other part of this God-ordained
process entailed Rich strategically assessing the best “return on investment” to
be gained from moving. Shortlisting locations based on airport connections and
the potential for professional networks was as much a part of divine calling as
miraculous visions of the Emerald City. It was a productive combination of spirit
and strategy.
Introduction

*Perhaps we could see the transformation of the Celtic Lands; the transformation of every sphere of culture. [...] What if the kingdom of God were to come in such radical and tangible ways that really changed these nations? And what if that could happen in my lifetime and yours? Cairn* is seeking to be a covenant community and a Kingdom movement, making disciples who make disciples, who lead communities that change communities. (An excerpt of Karl’s voiceover in the Cairn Vision Video, 2016)*

Karl “tried really hard not to” move to Scotland. So, he was sure it was God’s doing. Despite being, in his own words, “rude” in the interview with his audacious plans for reform, Morningside Baptist Church took him on as their new leader in 2005. The following years saw “Morningside Baptist” become “Central Church” in a process one congregant described as “planting a totally new church inside an old one”. Karl’s vision was for “empowering more leaders”, taking a more outward “missional focus”, and doing away with stagnant traditions. The congregation outgrew its original venue (a building dating back to the 1870s which went on to become a Pizza Express restaurant) in one of Edinburgh’s most affluent neighbourhoods. They purchased a vast, former Methodist hall in the city centre and became “Central Church” - a modern, city centre church comprising several “missional communities” dedicated to bringing Christian influence to a variety of locations and social causes across Edinburgh.

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1 With the permission of the movement’s executives, I have used Cairn’s real name. I also use real names for several interlocutors where explicit permission was given for me to do so. All other interlocutors pseudonymised. And, where requested by interlocutors, some locations have also been anonymised. It is noteworthy that Cairn presented as being open to my researching the early years of the movement’s establishment. Cairn’s architects expressed a desire to be “transparent” about the movement’s unfolding in ways which align with the broader rhetoric of authenticity explored in this thesis.

2 Initially, the name was “Central: Jesus at the heart” but the tagline was abandoned – I was told by some congregants – because it was cumbersome, wordy.
Catch him in the middle of a Sunday service and you’ll find Karl animatedly pacing in front of his congregation. He is in his late forties, tall, with trendy, smart-casual dress sense and a self-confessed obsession with shoe shopping. A captivating public speaker, he sweeps up his listeners in his frenzied passion, before arresting them with the sudden drop to an imploring whisper, creating short, awesome silences as he arrives at the sermon’s lesson. Karl has obvious stage presence and charisma, and a mastery of pace and tone. By his own admission, he loves to use catchy phrases and punchy alliterative key points to structure his sermons (and occasionally engineers an opportunity for him to sing a few lines). His sermons usually focus on how to navigate living as a Christian amidst the non-Christian, “mainstream culture”. They emphasise the distinction between “religion” as a set of rules and expectations versus “all in” commitment to Jesus: a close friend and teacher whose direct guidance should be sought out even in the minutiae of our lives.

I was sitting closer to the stage than usual when Karl first introduced the Cairn Movement during a Sunday evening service. I watched him striding across the stage excitedly, gesticulating as he spoke of “radical revival” and “transformation of every sphere of culture”, “in our lifetime”. The Cairn Movement, formally launched during late 2015 and early 2016, states an aspiration to revitalise and reform Christianity “across the Celtic Lands”. In approaching this ambitious project, the movement was organised in three branches: Innovate (church planting), Renovate (reform established churches), Cultivate (leadership training). All three branches involved a schedule of training events, and curricula with associated vocabulary and diagrams, as well as reading lists.

In these training environments, Cairn’s organised, strategic approach emerges. Aspirations for revival are documented and broken down into achievable next steps. But at the same time, these rooms – strewn with Post-it notes and Sharpies – are understood to be suffused with God’s presence. God is to be directly consulted as the ultimate author of Cairn’s transformational project; it is His plan for revival which the movement seeks to actualise. What is more, the utopian Kingdom for which Cairn strives, consists of fulfilled people who know their worth; healthy, loving relationships; deep connections with God – things
which seem tricky to map, measure, or plan. This apparent tension – strategically striving for a spirit-led revival - is at the core of my thesis.

Context

Protestantism in Scotland

Scotland’s religious background sets a compelling scene for the emergence of a Christian revivalist movement. The beginning of my fieldwork coincided with the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther sparking the Protestant Reformation across Europe. John Knox, after encountering John Calvin in Geneva, returned to Edinburgh³, and began preaching fervently against the Catholic church. His criticisms of the Pope’s authority, the “idolatry” of Mass, and the practice of indulgences spread among the Scottish population, facilitated by the recent invention of the printing press. This led to the Scottish Parliament adopting Protestantism as the state religion in 1560, birthing the Church of Scotland (CoS) which decided upon a Presbyterian model of government (causing a faction to leave and form the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1582). Scottish historian, Sir Tom Devine (2009), has suggested that the Protestant Reformation was a positive factor in inspiring the Scottish Enlightenment. This is in part due to the reformers’ commitment to developing literacy across the population. Their mandate of establishing a school in every parish is said to have profoundly influenced the intellectual landscape of the nation. The 1700s saw the Scottish Enlightenment and an era of new Biblical criticism which led to a “liberalization of Scottish religious life” (Webster 2013: 32). Come 1843, we see another significant split in the Kirk: the “Disruption” which resulted in the creation of the Free Church of Scotland and is said to have “hastened the separation of church and state” because at this point, the Kirk’s majority had diminished (Bruce 2014:196). The trend of schism and amalgamation persisted for the proceeding 150 years and more.

When we reach the 1900s, the story of the Church in Scotland is one of decline, picking up pace in the latter half of the century. On the surface, the Church of Scotland appeared to be in good shape at the end of the second world war.

³ Knox was born in nearby Haddington.
Having reunited with some seceded factions it could now proudly claim that two thirds of all Scots were Church of Scotland members. But Bruce (2016) points out that this reunion was made possible because the former issues of contention were now obsolete: “there was little point in arguing about the precise status of the state church when religion was patently now voluntary,” (102). The 1940s and 1950s saw the rise of Radio missions and the Tell Scotland movement which – in contradiction to its initial aim of avoiding mass evangelism – involved rallies by American Evangelist, Billy Graham (Bardgett 2008). Despite unprecedented ecumenical efforts at evangelising, and millions hearing Graham’s preaching, a very small number converted and the movement was largely deemed unsuccessful. The “swinging sixties” brought a counterculture which embraced self-expression and sexual liberation and the rejection of authority and the confinements of the status quo. These cultural threats to the established church - plus a shift in demographics as women pursued careers and delayed marriage - are said to have contributed to an abrupt halt in generational transmission of Christianity by the 1970s (Bruce 2016: 107-9).

Church adherence statistics have continued to plummet since. The Scottish Sabbath of the 1950s reflected the nation’s religious character, marked by shut pubs and unplugged televisions. But by the 1970s shop owners had begun opening on Sundays and come 1990, pubs were open until three o’clock in the morning, seven days a week (Brown 1997:1-2). The waning religiosity of the nation can be read in the church’s decreasing role in life cycle rituals: In the late 1940s, 84% of Scots were married in religious ceremonies. This decreases to 74% in the 1960s, and by 2010 it was less than 40% (Bruce 2016: 5). Baptism and funeral statistics follow a similar trend.

We can see this history depicted not just in statistics but in Edinburgh’s architecture. St Giles cathedral, in which Knox once preached, now portrays him in its stained-glass windows. This picturesque building is a stone’s throw from Greyfriar’s Kirk; locus of landmark events in Protestant reform⁴ and now regularly swarmed by tourists. St Giles’ is also a four-minute walk from the Mound where we find the General Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland,

⁴ Including the Presbyterians’ signing of the National Covenant against royal impositions on the Kirk (see https://greyfriarskirk.com/history/the-national-covenant/)
built in the wake of the Disruption for the new Free Church. Edinburgh appears to have a church on every corner, each telling of another wave of church growth and schism. Now, many of these steepled buildings have been repurposed. They are pizza restaurants, pubs, interior design shops. Those church buildings which still boast congregations often have double-barrelled church names; usually an indication that dwindling numbers led to the amalgamation of two (or more) church communities.

Cairn is not the only organisation to have identified crisis in the Church in Scotland. Across several Protestant denominations, I found a sense of urgency. In 2018’s General Assembly, the Church of Scotland reviewed the “strategic plan” for the church – proposed by a committee which had worked on the document for two years - and found it wanting. It was supposed to answer, “the most pressing challenges facing the church,” including, “reduced numbers in church congregations, missing generations of churchgoers, a dramatic fall in income, and the need to let go of surplus buildings,” by setting out an approach for the coming decade which would rescue the church’s future. One minister rejected the report as being “thin on substance” and implored, “what we need is urgent, radical action”⁵. The Church of Scotland’s “Path of Renewal” initiative - founded around the same time as Cairn⁶ - has been one of the denomination’s key efforts at reform. Strikingly, it echoes many aspects of Cairn’s mandate: seeking to “transition” to a more “missional approach to church”; a “movement not a programme”; “developing new leadership” (Church of Scotland 2018). I found similar vocabulary used to express approaches to reform across other denominations: “pioneering”, “equipping and enabling”, “investing in people]” (e.g. see BUS report on “Investing in Godly Leaders” 2018). It seems the sense of crisis and the desire for (organised) change was keenly felt by the vast majority in Scotland’s church leadership. Analysis by the faith-focused research firm, Barna Group, in “Transforming Scotland: The state of Christianity, faith and the Church in Scotland” published in late 2015 seemed to provide plenty of confirmatory evidence.

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⁶ The initiative’s funding was secured in 2014 and congregations selected in 2015.
The Barna Group UK report found that 51% of Scots identified themselves as Christian but that 69% of those are classed as “legacy Christians” who “do not believe basic elements of Christian doctrine or express a personal faith in Jesus,” (Barna Group UK 2015: 16). As such, most pastors describe Scotland as “post-Christian” (ibid: 32). The recommendations – “key catalysts for change” – produced by the Transforming Scotland research reflect the mandates I saw from Cairn and various denominations, including focuses on multiplying leaders in “every sphere of culture” and embracing “entrepreneurialism” (ibid:76). “Meaningful and authentic relationships” also features as particularly important to millennials, along with the application of faith principles and teaching to everyday life (ibid: 67) – factors which are also explicitly woven into Cairn’s approach, and those of other contemporary reform initiatives.

The call for change is widely shared in Scotland and Cairn’s architects claim that the movement is openly interdenominational. The only stated criteria for churches to join are that they support women in church leadership and engage with the Holy Spirit as immediate and active. In practice, most Cairn churches I encountered were Church of Scotland, Baptist Union of Scotland, and independent/non-denominational. Cairn is critical of “denominationalism”. I heard frustrations brew among the movement’s architects when denominations would decline partnering with Cairn’s training in favour of running their own, denomination-specific programs. In my thesis title, I use the term “protestant” to broadly delineate the form of Christianity I studied but this was not a term my interlocutors used. They simply spoke of their peer group as “Christian” however, I found Protestantism was implied in this labelling. Catholicism (to which around 16% of Scots claim affiliation (2011 census)) was almost entirely absent from my fieldwork interactions.

The calls for urgent church reform extend beyond Scottish Protestant denominations as Christianity across Britain finds itself in decline. Christianity remains the official religion of the UK and, according to the 2011 national census, still holds a 59.5% majority. In 2015, the Prime Minister’s (David Cameron) Christmas message termed Britain a “Christian country” but this

7 Two of the largest denominations in Scotland.
garnered criticism from secularist organisations (Calhoun 2016). Some forms of Christianity – namely, the Church of England with its royal associations - continue to play a ceremonial role with public prominence. But “like other liberal democracies committed to pluralism”, there is a widespread desire to maintain separation of church and state (Engelke 2013). Both the Scottish and UK governments state a dedication to religious freedom and publicly support interfaith initiatives. In the same year as David Cameron’s message about Christian Britain, the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life controversially reported that Britain needs to acknowledge that is no longer a Christian nation, as affiliation with non-Christian religions and no religion are on the rise whilst church figures decline (Calhoun 2016). Anthropologists of British Christianity have studied various Christian attempts to engage this (arguably) secular public sphere. In Swindon, Engelke (2013) found Bible Society Christians opting for ambient spiritual and thought-provoking billboards. Strhan’s (2015) evangelical Londoners struggle with feelings of fragmentation as “aliens and strangers” in a lost city. Moreover, McIvor (2020) highlights the exclusion of more conservative forms of Christianity (specifically “ex-gay” rhetoric) from the public sphere, judged by politicians to threaten London’s tolerant climate. It seems these studied groups would be inclined to agree with the Commission’s report that urban Britain is – as my interlocutors would put it – “post-Christendom”.

Wider Christian Context
Despite the precipitous, overall decline in mainstream Christianity, the charismatic movement grew in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s, numbering around 400,000 people by the end of the twentieth century. Part of this movement featured creation of new congregations and growing popularity of “house churches”. But the less visible element of the movement which we see continuing in some Cairn churches, was the congregations of mainstream churches (including Baptists) opting to revitalise their own churches (Bruce 2016:139). The charismatic movement can be distinguished by a series of characteristics including efforts to be “culturally relevant”, “informal and demotic”, “unchurchy” (including unidentifiable church names a.k.a. “stealth naming”), and “socially involved” (ibid:143-150). It is suggested that the
widespread influence of the charismatic movement can be seen in the general lessening of formality in Scottish church life across denominations (ibid: 152). Certainly, Cairn’s ideals for church match the aforementioned charismatic characteristics.

We can also see in Cairn the influence of North American Christian trends and movements, for instance, the church growth movement (see McGavran 1980). In the 1960s, Donald McGavran pioneered the Church Growth Movement which drew upon social science to make evangelism efforts more effective. Crucially, this effectiveness was to be “quantitatively verifiable”, documented through a variety of charts and figures to determine how well the Great Commission\(^8\) was being achieved in a given location. Whilst Cairn departs somewhat from the quantifiability of McGavran’s teaching and claims to seek church “health” over “growth, we can see echoes of the Church Growth Movement in their use of organisational tools and interest in social scientific principles.

By the late twentieth century, the U.S.A. was experiencing what Peter Wagner (a theoretician of the Church Growth Movement) called the “Third Wave” (third after Pentecostalism, and the charismatic movements). The third wave pertained to a form of “Pentecostal-infused evangelical Christianity, which consists of post-denominational charismatically affiliated churches” (Bialecki 2015). This wave sees an emphasis on the miraculous which challenges the sureness of McGavran’s approach, reduces human agency in favour of the Holy Spirit’s, and prioritises more affective measurements of growth which resist quantification. This is very relevant to Cairn’s concern for authenticity and spirit-led goals which I explicate in this thesis. Around fifteen years after coining the “Third Wave”, Wagner identified a “New Apostolic Revival” within it. This too bears similarity to Cairn in terms of its interest in the five offices in Ephesians\(^9\) and its focus on cultural change through Christian influence (Haynes, forthcoming). However, as with the previous movements and waves discussed here, Cairn is not simply a product of this influence and – as we will see –

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\(^8\) The great commission is Jesus’ instruction to the disciples to spread the gospel: “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19 NIV).

\(^9\) The Biblical book of Ephesians is interpreted as naming five “offices” or roles in the Christian church: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11 ESV)
approaches the “fivefold ministries” in a different way. In fact, Cairn’s theology of the Ephesian offices is led by an Australian church leader, Alan Hirsch. The Cairn movement’s international connections spread further than the U.S.A, facilitated not only through literature but personal connections between church leaders. With this international connectedness in mind, let us zoom in on the movement’s primary locus.

Urban Scotland
Edinburgh is the site of Cairn’s foundation and flagship church and was my primary fieldsite. Whilst this thesis speaks to themes applicable to much of the Church in Scotland, I should make clear that Edinburgh has its own particularities and, like any capital city, is not necessarily representative of the nation as a whole. Edinburgh has a population of around 525,000\textsuperscript{10} and ranks as the fourth largest financial centre in Europe\textsuperscript{11}. The capital has achieved international renown for its tourism, cultural and government activities (Bailey et al 2001). Whilst Edinburgh’s economy grew steadily in the latter decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and in to the 2000s, Glasgow’s experience was markedly different. Glasgow was an occasional fieldsite in my research and there is a notorious, largely friendly, rivalry between the two cities which are located just forty miles apart. Following the “long boom”, the early 1970s saw Scotland’s economy shift from industry to one “driven by foreign capital and global markets” (McCrone 2017:43). Glasgow’s economy suffered but the city has gone on to remake itself as a post-industrial success story. Glasgow and Edinburgh are known to contrast not only economically but in appearance, accent, weather, etc. However, I would argue that the differences (particularly in social class) between the neighbourhoods within Glasgow or Edinburgh are as great as any contrast drawn between the two cities. Whilst sociologists have productively researched Scotland, particularly in terms of nationalism, anthropological attention to Scotland is almost entirely absent. Notable exceptions to this are Webster (2013) and Course (2019) who explore the

\textsuperscript{10} For reference, the population of Scotland is reported by National Records Scotland to be 5,463,300.
country’s fascinating rural villages and island populations. However, an Anthropology of urban Scotland is yet to be established. This absence seems unusual given that Scotland has been described as “a country of ‘city-states’ with distinctive identities and cultures” with the main centres; Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow wielding significant economic and cultural pull as well as being magnets for population (McCrone 2017:42). This thesis speaks to that gap in the literature.

As alluded to above, Scotland has been described as a “class society” and class disparities in urban Scotland are evident (ibid: 221). Social class is difficult to define but I argue that, whilst class is related to economic structure, it is not reducible to matters of wealth and occupation (see McCrone 2017: 223). As a category of relationship and identity, social class is about an awareness of

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12 Available at [https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/marker/#zoom=7&lat=57.3875&lon=-2.7243&f=0&z=1&marker=58.3441,3.0322&from=1550&to=1970](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/marker/#zoom=7&lat=57.3875&lon=-2.7243&f=0&z=1&marker=58.3441,3.0322&from=1550&to=1970) (Last accessed May 2021)
commonality and difference. Furthermore, the experience of class is culturally constructed: “Whether or not people use class categories and what they mean when they do so depends on an array of social and cultural forces impacting upon how they see and make sense of the world around them,” (ibid: 228). This cultural variability is evident when we compare Scotland and England which, despite very similar class “structures”, are notably different in their approach and experience of social class. Social attitudes surveys show that Scots are far less likely to describe themselves as middle class (ibid: 237). This seems to speak to the social democratic, “egalitarian myth13” – “a stubborn belief that Scotland is a more egalitarian country than England, where people relate to each other in terms of merit and not status” (ibid: 221). This also speaks to something my interlocutors call “tall poppy syndrome”: disapproval of being seen to “get above one’s station”. This emerged as relevant to the Cairn movement’s understanding of its Scottish audience. Stereotypes of Scottish wariness, stubbornness, and self-deprecation were occasionally invoked to explain the difficulties Cairn faced in getting churches to commit to the movement, or challenges in connecting with residents of a local neighbourhood. Some of my interlocutors who had moved to Scotland from England told me that mission in England is easier; that England is “ahead” in terms of missional church. In part, this was attributed to earlier adoption of missional thinking and initiatives, but it was also said that Scottish audiences can be harder to reach and more reluctant to change. Of Scottish churches, I heard it said that they typically prefer to “wait and see” if an initiative like Cairn will work before “buying in”, rather than boldly volunteering for the vanguard. Individuals within the church who were inclined to be “entrepreneurial” and “innovative” were reported to face resistance from peers: “sheep bites” reminding them not to get above their station and disrupt the status quo. This “tall poppy” attitude would align with the Scottish tendency toward self-describing as working class. However, in contrast to the social attitudes survey, many of my informants considered themselves to be middle class. The reason for this may, in part, be that many of these informants identify as English. But I suggest that the more significant factor is the class disparity common to missional outreach. A significant

13 “Myth” here in the anthropological sense of a mobilising social narrative, not to connote falsehood.
proportion of Cairn’s missional initiatives involved middle class church leaders seeking to reach more working-class communities. One interlocutor explained to me that it would be a disservice to those living in impoverished areas for middle-class missionaries to deny or downplay their socio-economic privilege.

Whilst Cairn’s affiliated churches are almost exclusively sub/urban, their website’s “vision” video is set against a backdrop of rolling hills. The movement’s focus on Scotland (and Ireland, which I address momentarily) is framed as a movement for “the Celtic Lands”. Through various artistic camera angles, the video sees Karl carry a rock to the top of a hill (where he adds it to a cairn\textsuperscript{14}) whilst his voiceover speaks of a rich Celtic heritage tied to the landscape: “These are the lands of Patrick and Columba and Aidan.” Celticism has been found to represent a “tamely ethno-cultural” form of identity; one which has been easily taken up by a variety of groups (Pittock 1999). However, whilst I often heard the “Celtic missionaries” admired as exemplars for mission, I did not encounter a distinct sense of Celtic identification among the movement’s followers. I was told by some interlocutors that use of the term was mostly about “branding”, invoking a pleasing and inspiring historical reference rather than a category of belonging.

If not Celtic, to what extent could one call Cairn a “Scottish” movement? Scottish national identity has been a topic of great social scientific interest in recent decades (e.g. Stewart et al, 2011; Soule et al, 2012; Pattie & Johnston, 2017; Zwet, 2015, Ichijo, 2012; Bond, 2014). Residence, birth and ancestry have been studied as prominent markers of Scottish national identity (Bond 2006). But McCrone (2001a, 2001b) emphasises that Scottish national identity, woven through politics and culture, is indeed more civic then ethnic. He stresses that subjective markers of nationalism are constructed and mobilised according to the political conditions of the time. This civic as opposed to ethnic dynamic allows for an elective element to national belonging which speaks to the seemingly absorptive “Celticism” of Cairn (Bond, 2006). Scottish national identity has also been described as “banal”. As Scottish novelist McIlvanney wrote in the Glasgow Herald (6th March 1999, cited in McCrone 2017),

\textsuperscript{14} Cairns are piles of rocks used to point the way on a trail and commonly found at the top of hills and mountains. Hillwalkers add their own rock to the pile.
Having a national identity is like having an old insurance policy. You know you've got one somewhere but often you are not entirely sure where it is. And, if you're honest, you would have to admit you're pretty vague about what the small print means.

Two of Cairn's most prominent architects – Karl and Rich - are from England and have moved to Edinburgh relatively recently. Many, if not most, of my interlocutors had discernibly English accents. I heard it joked that when Karl says “Cairn” it sounds like the Scots word *ken* (meaning “know”). And when people with a “strong” (in the joke, usually Glaswegian) Scottish accent say “Karl” it sounds like “Carol”. These comments were light-hearted rather than critical but they served to underscore that whilst Cairn was “a movement for Scotland”, it was – at least by ethnic standards – not very “Scottish”. There was a noticeable difference between Cairn Lothian\(^{15}\) and Cairn Glasgow events in terms of the language I heard. Only at Glasgow events would I expect to be invited into a group conversation with the lovely Scots expression, *coorie in* (huddle in). When a leader of Cairn Glasgow was in Edinburgh and tried to give a sermon based around the phrase *haund uhrs* (give us a hand), the speaker asked “Scottish people” in the room to translate for the non-Scot majority. That not everyone understood this vocabulary was a source of light amusement and certainly did not bring into contention the attendees’ claim to be part of this “Celtic” movement. Whilst Karl and Rich made clear their long-term commitment to mission in Scotland, neither of them made a case for their own Scottishness. I once asked Karl if Cairn was in some way nationalist. Baffled, he replied,

> I’d never considered that that’s even a possibility. “Is it nationalist”? No. Our vision would definitely be a European vision. It just recognises that there’s nothing wrong with wanting to bless the environment that you live in. And I’m certainly not “a nationalist” as an Englishman living in Scotland. We [the Cairn movement] get involved with people all over Europe right now. Most of our funding comes from America. […] In fact, the Celtic

\(^{15}\) The Lothian region includes Edinburgh City, West Lothian, Mid Lothian and East Lothian.
Any claim Cairn made to Scottishness was not ethnic. The appeal to “Scotland” (or, more often, “the city” or a “neighbourhood”) as the site of the movement was meant in geographical terms. As I will later demonstrate, the framing of Scotland was more spiritually strategic than nationally symbolic. (Note that when Cairn established itself as a movement for “the Celtic Lands”, there already existed a counterpart for “England and Wales”.) I found that for most of my interlocutors, “Scottish” revival was important because they found themselves located in Scotland. The drive for revival was not exclusive to this nation: as Karl put it, revival in the Celtic Lands is a starter for re-evangelising Europe.

Cairn’s lack of appeal to nationalist sentiment is especially salient given the recent, international upsurge in nationalism (Bieber 2018) and the contemporary political climate in Scotland. The movement was established in the wake of some hugely influential, national political events. Firstly, the movement emerged in the aftermath of the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum. I was around Central church during this highly contentious vote in which the church leaders encouraged congregants to participate in the democratic process but were careful not to indicate support for either side. The “No” vote won by a margin of 10% and Scotland remained part of the UK. The 2016 Brexit vote to leave the European Union was also in very recent memory for my Cairn interlocutors. This referendum saw Scotland vote overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the EU, and following the “leave” result, discussions around Scottish independence were renewed. However, I never heard these events discussed by my interlocutors as matters of Scottish nationalism and in general, explicit discussion of party politics was avoided16 (in line with the British taboo around discussing politics). Instead, political conversations tended to make general, quite liberal, statements about tackling inequalities. Notably, 2016 also saw Donald Trump’s election as President of the United States. This added to an overall sense of political unsettledness, anxiety, and confusion

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16 The exception to this polite neutrality was discussion of Brexit, where people seemed to think it safe to assume that everyone present voted “remain”.

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which characterised my fieldsite. I often heard Cairn’s architects and members alike cite this time of “shaking” in global politics as opportune circumstances for the church to be a source of stability and hope. This political unrest was often framed in terms of a “leadership crisis” - the remediation of which is one of Cairn’s primary motivations.

Methodology

Fieldsites
The research for this thesis comprised fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork from October 2017 to December 2018. Throughout my fieldwork, I lived in an Edinburgh city centre flat. This situated me a short walk from Central church and close to bus and train links for my visits to other churches and events. Trying to locate a disparate movement with around eighty affiliated churches necessitated multi-sited research. Training events were key locations for my fieldwork, as these were where Cairn’s architects taught the principles of the movement and members interacted, generating a sense of commonality. For many of my interlocutors, when they talked about “doing Cairn” or “being involved in Cairn” they were referring to participation in the movement’s training. “Learning Community” training events were typically two-day long intensive exercises held Friday to Saturday, allowing “leaders” - ministers, pastors, elders etc. - to return for Sunday duties at their home churches. I attended fourteen learning communities plus various similar events over the course of my research. Another training environment key to my fieldwork was Training Hub, Cairn’s leadership training program. This involved five weekend events: two in Edinburgh, two in Glasgow, and one in St Andrews. Additionally, I conducted participant observation at a Prophecy Course and training for church planters. The many events brought with them an array of name badges, folders, printed schedules, and leaflets which I scrapbooked in tandem with my fieldnotes. Participant observation in these training environments included attending pre-event organisers’ meetings; listening and note-taking during seminars; joining church teams’ working groups as they completed exercises; fetching coffee for them during particularly long planning sessions; being the

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17 This feeling of distrust in power and authority was bolstered by other current events including the #MeToo movement and its exposure of abusive, male public figures.
timer for prayer segments during “report outs”; chatting with participants over lunch breaks; and helping to clear up Post-its and flipcharts at the end.

During my research, none of Cairn’s executives worked full-time for the movement. Each board member and employee would work perhaps two days a week for Cairn alongside their main role in their church, denomination or business. For “followers” of the movement, Cairn was explicitly engaged through these intensive weekends every six months, alongside monthly prayer lunches, and/or fortnightly mentoring sessions. The demographic of my interlocutors was almost exclusively busy professionals, often working nine-to-five jobs and fitting in church commitments during evenings and weekends. When not at scheduled events, I was often meeting interlocutors for coffee and conducting semi-structured interviews. These coffee conversations had to be arranged about a fortnight in advance, with a one or two-hour window found in busy Google calendars between other personal and professional commitments. For the first several months of my research, I worried that I was not doing the “proper”, 24/7, Malinowskian fieldwork I had been trained to pursue. But I came to realise that the temporality of my fieldwork was offering insight to the temporalities of the Cairn movement as experienced by my interlocutors. During a busy period (Cairn’s events and training schedule peaked in March/April and September/October), I was able to sympathise with trainers who had spent the last four consecutive weekends wearing name badges, shuttling between Glasgow and Edinburgh churches to deliver their teachings from a whiteboard, serving themselves coffee from cannisters and lunch from buffet tables. They too did a lot of socialising and networking in scheduled, two-hour catch-ups over flat whites. I came to see this “anthropology by appointment” as aptly reflective of my informants’ busy, urban lives. The coffee breaks which punctuate training, and the sharing of tea and home baking immediately following church services also allowed me to have casual conversations, and for my interlocutors and I to get to know one another. Additionally, I “hung out”, shared meals and went to the pub with interlocutors from various churches and groups. By engaging Cairn’s busy events schedule, experiencing the intense bursts of training weekends, and carefully folding in

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18 “Report outs” are structured feedback sessions for each church group to share what has been discussed or planned during group activity time.
opportunities to socialise, my fieldwork structure allowed me to inhabit Cairn in a way which resembled my interlocutors’ experience of the movement.

From the outset, I intended to study Cairn at an organisational level, in leaders’ meetings, events and training. But I also wanted to study what was happening in church life; the more mundane, everyday goings-on of revival and reform. One occupational hazard of studying Christian groups is that Sundays are key, despite Cairn’s ethos that church does not just occur on that day. At the time of my research, I heard it said that around eighty churches had some affiliation with the movement. But rather than attending a new church every Sunday, documenting the distribution of the movement, I opted for weekly (Sunday morning service and Thursday evening Bible study) attendance at Castlebank Baptist Church. Through recommendations from friends whilst planning my fieldwork, I quickly identified this church as both a welcoming place and a revealing location for studying church reform. From April 2018, I also began regularly attending the Tollcross Community Pastors’ sessions held every second Monday. Consistent interactions allowed me to build rapport in these groups and access the more mundane details of church life.

Addressing the spread of the Cairn movement, I visited various affiliated churches in Edinburgh as well as Glasgow, East Kilbride, Dunbar, Aberdeen and Belfast. I was even able to trace some of the movement’s connections with the U.S.A. through a week’s visit to a church in Kansas City. Cairn receives significant financial support from American churches and hosts their leadership teams for a week’s training every year. Some of Cairn’s architects occasionally travel to the states to preach and provide mentorship. My time in Kansas City showed how Cairn’s training vocabulary and principles travel internationally. I also travelled to Belfast as Cairn is officially proclaimed as a movement “for Scotland and Ireland”, “for the Celtic Lands”. Having met a key leader of “Cairn Belfast” at training events, I was invited to attend a Learning Community there and to visit some of the churches involved. Whilst this was revealing of some interesting consistencies and differences across the border, I decided that

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19 East Kilbride is a large town, seven miles south of Glasgow. Dunbar is a town in East Lothian, thirty miles east of Edinburgh.
20 Another facet of this connection was predicated on the idea that the U.S. will follow the U.K.’s footsteps in becoming more secular, so should heed the teachings of from a nation which is living out America’s future.
including Northern Ireland would go beyond the scope of my doctoral project. Not only would it have been logistically challenging given the already multi-sited nature of my research, but it would also have brought with it a complex history and culture of Christianity distinct from that in Scotland. To avoid overstretching my focus, I opted to exclusively study Cairn in Scotland.

Addressing its own multi-sitedness, Cairn self-defines as a “movement” and takes care to distinguish itself from “denominations”, “networks”, or “programs”. Key to this distinction is minimal control from “the centre”. As Karl put it to a gathering of church leaders, “We’re not inviting you into something. We’re inviting you to lead it. We want energy on the edges. The role of the centre, if there is one, is to create environments where this stuff is equipped.” The movement speaks of its training in terms of offering “tools” and “equipping” rather than conforming its followers to a particular doctrine. Cairn affiliated churches are not homogenous, and their experience of the movement varies. When I speak of “Cairn” in this thesis I am referring to a set of teachings and teachers; to a collection of ideas, values, principles, aspirations; a common vocabulary; and a network of personal connections.

Participants
As previously established, a majority of my interlocutors were working professionals who could also broadly be described as middle class. The church leaders I met in training environments were almost always university educated and many held post-graduate qualifications. In the words of Ortner (2010) and others, I was in the position of “studying sideways” (ibid:222). Many interlocutors had personal knowledge of what it meant to conduct research and complete a university qualification and shared my interest in Social Science. In one particularly extreme case, I began to explain Social Anthropology to a Cairn minister who responded, “I actually have a PhD in Social Anthropology from Edinburgh University. So does my wife. And so does my daughter.” Unlike many anthropologists who “study up” (Nader 1969) with corporations and “elites”, my participants were very willing to engage in my research and welcomed an academic perspective on the early development of this movement.

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21 Several used this term to describe themselves and/or the areas where they lived.
Discussing my ongoing research with interlocutors enhanced my data collection. I found that many Cairn followers were to some extent, familiar with and interested in social sciences. Indeed, several of the principles taught during Learning Communities and other mission training are predicated on social scientific theory. They are themselves “analysts and theorists of culture” (Islam 2015). As I will explore later in this thesis, the majority of my interlocutors were persistently reflexive people and often seemed to think and speak ethnographically about themselves and their missional approaches. As Marcus and Holmes put it, “for expert communities, the ethnographic is already a familiar way of knowing,” (in Gilbert 2015). Talking about my observations often elicited from my interlocutors a social critique of their own institutions and practices. These “paraethnographic” (Rudnyckyj 2010, Islam 2015. See also West 2007) conversations were in themselves a revealing characteristic of the group I studied, as well as valuable sources of data for building my understanding.

The age demographic of my participants might be considered in two approximate groups. Many ministers and church leaders were in their forties and fifties and had been in church work for several years. They saw themselves as the vanguard trying to change the system from the inside and constantly challenging their peers who were upholding the “traditional” system. The other predominant age group (to which I belong) was in their mid-twenties and early thirties. This group was motivated by a sense of frustrated disillusionment. Many spoke of rejecting their early church experiences, rebelling against principles and styles of Christianity in which they were raised, or had embraced as students. Often, people in this group had been through a “season” of leaving – or at least, coming close to leaving – church, and were attracted to reformist congregations. The demographic of the Church in Scotland is rapidly aging, so a spotlight is on the younger generations. The Church’s demographic is also skewed in terms of gender.

22 Whilst I align with the proponents of paraethnography in their recognition of informants’ own ethnographic consciousness, I do not claim to have produced “collaborative” research in the ways that many of said scholars would advocate. (See Holmes & Marcus 2008)

23 My interlocutors were almost exclusively white which is fairly representative of racial demographic of these denominations in Scotland. The 2011 census shows that
The 2015 Barna Group report found that 87% of Scotland’s ministers and lead pastors are male. Most of the ones I met at Learning Communities (LC) were male but it was rare to encounter a leadership group with no female representation. The gender disparity in church leadership was explicitly critiqued among Cairn members who expressed a general desire for gender equality in all denominations. One of the few named “criteria” for membership in Cairn was “support of women in leadership”. Whilst Learning Community training environments tended to include more men than women, the Training Hub program and Castlebank Baptist church were female dominated, so too were the prophecy events I attended. And TCP, one of my key informant groups, is exclusively female. So, outwith the senior leadership tier, the gender balance shifted. Looking at my participant sample as a whole, it contains fairly equal numbers of men and women.

Positionality
I scrawled my first chaotic mind-map about church and mission in Scotland on my living room wall. That year (2015/16), I was living in a house belonging to a small, Christian community, located in one of Edinburgh’s most deprived housing estates. The living room’s blackboard wall was ordinarily used to teach bible studies among the community of around fifteen students and graduates. I went on to type my research proposal and PhD applications at the dining room table, sitting opposite my friends whilst they planned how to “build God’s Kingdom” in this impoverished neighbourhood. I had become close friends with the community around three years previously and had done ethnographic research about their efforts at collective, Christian living for my undergraduate dissertation in Social Anthropology. The group moved to the housing estate as a “church plant” – a missional off-shoot – from Central Church. Cairn was formed while I was living among the church plant.

84% of Scotland’s population is white. And that white British are more likely to be Christian than other ethnic groups.

Prophecy has been identified (Eriksen 2012) as women dominated, whilst preaching is commonly the purview of men. In Cairn, it was not uncommon to find men identifying as “prophetic” but those who saw “prophet” as their primary role and gifting tended to be women.

To my knowledge, all participants of this study presented as cisgender. The interchangeable use of “female” and “woman” here reflects emic use of the terms.
When composing the proposal for this PhD, I met with one of Cairn’s executives to discuss my research ambitions and to ask permission to take the movement as my subject. She made my case at a Cairn board meeting and my request was consequently approved and granted institutional consent. I was put in contact with the movement’s Operations Manager who would oversee my research. We met periodically and I would share my research activities. At training events, the lead trainer would introduce me and my project, and I would wave and identify myself as the researcher. In subsequent interactions with attendees, I was regularly asked about my research, making it easy to reiterate my position as an ethnographer and establish participant consent. Similarly, ministers and missional community leaders acted as initial gatekeepers for their respective groups, and I would regularly discuss my research in small group/individual conversations. My incessant note-taking also served as an important reminder of my role, which kept my research overt.

As highlighted above, my involvement with Central church and its personnel – some of whom became part of Cairn’s leadership – predates this doctoral research. So, when I first approached Cairn’s executive board, I was known to some of its members. I made my undergraduate dissertation (2014) about one of the church’s missional groups, available to Central’s leaders. I was also part of said missional group and a fairly regular attendee at Central’s evening services. I am quite sure this familiarity facilitated my access to study the movement. My position as a non-Christian with experience and cultural literacy in these church circles positioned me as a hybrid insider/outsider which often caused some confusion and amusement among my interlocutors. That a non-Christian would demonstrate such persistent interest in the faith, and “talk the talk” seemed uncanny to some. I had developed the vocabulary and understanding to participate in insider conversations. Perhaps unsurprisingly, my position as a non-Christian meant I was sometimes subject to evangelistic efforts. Indeed, some suspected my research might lead to (or be an indication of) my religion conversion. I find evangelistic conversations to be ethnographically insightful as they sketch out ideas of Christian identity and soteriology. As well as experiencing evangelism, my position in the non-Christian audience which the movement sought to reach, more often resulted in my being asked for insights and honest opinion about how the church is
perceived by outsiders. Again, these conversations contributed to my understanding of Cairn’s missiology.

When I was part of a missional community/church plant group prior to this research, I participated in a range of Christian activities. I have facilitated discussions on Alpha courses; I have handed out bottled water alongside church members ministering to nightclubbers; I have “laid on hands” and prayed for people; I have played “prophecy games”; I have closed my eyes while singing worship songs to which I know the lyrics and harmonies. However, I am keenly aware of “signalling”. These activities are generally interpreted by onlookers as indications of faith. In my initial, close group of Christian friends, I was able to make it known that my participation in such practices was not tantamount to religious conversion. But in my doctoral research environments I was careful not to falsely signal to others that I might have become Christian.

This was especially important to me around people who have a vested evangelistic interest in my conversion. I would participate in less conspicuous ways, by singing along in group worship and being quiet for moments of prayer. However, I was selective about the contexts in which I would contribute to praying aloud or raising a hand in worship. In conducting this research, I am able to draw upon my accumulated participatory experiences over the years but during fieldwork, I was careful to manage others’ perceptions of my faith-status because of the interesting conversations which come from being an insider/outsider and because of my ethical concerns about misleading those who earnestly pray for me to make a faith commitment.

Cairn’s church environments were familiar to me when I began research and so too were its geographical locations. Having been born in Scotland and been a resident of Edinburgh since 2011, my research arguably falls in the bracket of “anthropology at home”. Whilst Edinburgh is not where I grew up, nor where my parents live, the homeliness of this fieldsite was furthered by my established social life there, and more so by my existing familiarity with the church circles I studied. On “arrival” in the field, few of my interlocutors were close friends but most were acquaintances or friends of friends. As well as being familiar with

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26 An eleven-week course which introduces the fundamentals of Christianity, usually to non-Christians, through small group discussions.
some of the social network, my position as an Edinburgh resident lent me some marks of being “local”. I understood the stereotypes about different areas of the city. I knew the bus routes, the popular bars and cafes and the local news stories. As other “anthropologists at home” have highlighted, this approach can mean a blurring of boundaries, making ambiguous what and where is the field (e.g. Madden 1999, Caronia 2017). My personal and professional life now shared a city as I continued to see my partner and friends there while I conducted fieldwork and in addition, many of these existing friendships were with Christians from Central church and former informants from my undergraduate research. I sympathise with home ethnographers who experienced the blurriness of boundaries. However, for me this was quite a familiar feeling. As a non-Christian closely involved in church life for several years, I have been a curious and critical presence even when not working on academic research. From the outset, anthropology was linked by friends and acquaintances at Central to my personality, not just my profession. Meeting my Christian friends closely coincided with my undergraduate research about them so, together we had learned to negotiate that dynamic of friendship and ethnography. In my experience, the boundaries involved in entering the field were far easier to navigate than those I met on leaving. Whilst for many of my participants, explaining that I was “going back to uni to write up” made sense as a reason for my impending absence from church, for a few, the fact that the university was only a short walk away made this an odd and slightly pathetic excuse.

**Analytical Framework**

“We have manoeuvred ourselves into irrelevance,” I heard one minister say of the Church in Scotland. Cairn holds the established church partly responsible for this precipitous decline. The movement critiques “traditional” church for its aversion to change; for holding too firmly to the maintenance of its traditions and becoming increasingly disconnected from surrounding non-Christian communities. Proclaiming that “what we’ve been doing isn’t working”, Cairn aspires to radical reform and revival which reaches outside the church walls to the “transformation of every sphere of culture”. The movement is suffused with aspirational forward momentum to bring “transformation” and “build the
Kingdom”. In this “pitched forward” (Robbins 2013: 459) posture, each individual is challenged to “take personal responsibility for their faith”, to identify their calling, and play an active role in God’s revival project. Members must self-consciously commit themselves to the revival effort and be “intentional” about developing good habits, cultivating (potentially evangelical) relationships, and making choices which reflect Kingdom values. This thesis explores how the Cairn movement seeks to bring a national Christian revival through programs of leadership training, models of church reform, and missionizing the public. I argue that the movement hinges on Cairn’s unique cultural construction of “intentional” agency and, connectedly, a relocation of authority and authenticity from the church institution to the individual believer.

This thesis takes up themes which are perhaps infamously well-rehearsed in Anthropology: agency, neoliberalism, the modern/Western/Christian individual subject. These themes have been core to the Anthropology of Christianity and to Social Anthropology more broadly. “Agency” has a significant history in our field and features among our discipline’s catalogue of post-structural critiques (Schachar & Hustinx 2019, High 2010). Through the mid-2000s, several scholars called for social science to go beyond the prevailing binary of agency (essentially taken to mean “the capacity to act”) as resisting structure, and towards agency as variously made and expressed through practice (Maxwell & Aggleton 2004, McNay 2003). The dominant conceptualization of agency was found to be fraught with problems, carrying western, Christian-influenced ethnocentrism about the individual subject (Comaroff & Comaroff in Ortner 2006).

The notion of the Christian individual has been well documented by anthropologists. Louis Dumont argued that the early Christian individual was “outworldly”: disembedded from connection with inworldly members of society. This shifted, with Lutheran and Calvinist theologies, (in coordination with enlightenment philosophies) to an “inworldly” individual (Dumont 1985, Mosko 2015). The “inworldly” individual was focused on the Christian’s inner, eternal soul. Raymond Williams (2011 [1961]) traced the history of ideas about the soul, particularly through the Reformation, and shows how the figure of the individual became more personalised and seen as having a direct relationship with God. For Dumont, the Calvinist took on a duty of continual self-fashioning (Cannell 2006) and “owe[d] their salvation to no one but themselves and God”
(Bialecki, Haynes & Robbins 2008). With the advent of capitalism, this individual was also understood as “a source of economic activity” and “by his free enterprise” (Bialecki & Daswani 2015:275.) Michel Foucault also places Christianity as fundamental to the emergence of the modern self. The interiority of the confessing Christian, Foucault found, enabled the psychoanalytic regimes of modern, western subjectivization. In this vein, Webb Keane (2002) writes that, “Protestantism and modernity (and, one might add, capitalism) alike, even conjointly, seek to abstract the subject from its material and social entanglements in the name of freedom and authenticity.” (83). He explains that the Protestant subject is necessarily autonomous so as to allow transcendence of this world. The source of authority is not physical but internal to the subject and so sincerity – transparently portraying this without fleshly distortion – is imperative. Notably, this same transparency was prized by 17thC Protestants and by contemporary scientists in the interests of objectivity. Keane traces the Protestant roots of the subject as autonomous with an interior essence that is separable from, and authoritatively superior to, external, physical and social influences. Recent conversations about the nature of Christian personhood have presented a prolific line of inquiry for the Anthropology of Christianity, productively problematising its inherent individualism (e.g. Mosko 2010, Daswani 2011, Bialecki 2015). I speak to this debate in exploring Cairn’s construction of “disciples”.

The European, Christian, “modern” concept of the autonomous individual has been found to bias understandings of agency. Seminal to critiques of the dominant conception of agency was Saba Mahmood’s (2005) work which spoke against feminist and subaltern studies’ (e.g Scott 1985) use of agency as necessarily entailing a desire for autonomous freedom. In reconceptualizing agency, anthropologists began to recognize it as not only universal but also culturally defined (Fausto & Heckenburger 2008, Ortner 2006). In recent years, we have seen researchers build upon this idea, approaching the study of agency as “a subject of articulation and mobilization, rather than a mere exhibited attitude,” (Schachar and Hustinx 2019:210). The form of agency I am introducing here bears a striking resemblance to the problematic, European-biased understanding of agency which our discipline has worked hard to critique and complicate. Cairn – as a Scottish, Protestant movement in a
“modern” city – resonates with the autonomous subject (and attendant implications for freedom and action) as described by Keane. But I am not advocating for anthropology to regress and embrace previous, individualist definitions of agency. Rather, I take up recent encouragements to study agency as it is culturally constructed. Agency – often expressed by interlocutors in terms of “intentionality” - is of great emic significance in the Cairn movement. Managing human and divine agency embroils Cairn’s followers in some complex tensions which, I will argue, are fundamental to their revival-making project.

I take Sherry Ortner’s (2006) work to be especially helpful in re-considering “agency”. She identifies three elements to take into account in (re)defining agency. One, mentioned previously, recognises that agency is culturally and historically constructed. Another is agency’s inextricability from power and inequality: agents cannot act outwith “the multiplicity of power relations in which they are enmeshed” (130). The final component of Ortner’s definition concerns intention: “‘Intentionality’ here is meant to include a wide range of states, both cognitive and emotional, and at various levels of consciousness, that are directed forward toward some end.” (134). Ortner suggests that theorists’ approaches to agency fall along a continuum with regards to this element of the definition. “Soft” definitions of agency do not feature an emphasis on intention, tending to point to issues of unconscious action and unintended consequences of action. Some thinkers, including Ortner, contend that too “soft” a definition loses the distinction between routine practice and agency. “Hard” definitions take intention as central. Sewell (1992:20) for instance speaks of agency as “strivings and motivated transactions” and “a capacity for desiring, for forming intentions and for acting creatively.” Overall, Ortner argues that agency is about “the pursuit of culturally defined projects” (139). These projects are disrupted or enabled by the network of power relations in which they occur and are defined by “local logics of the good” (145).

The role of the cultural analyst of agency, Ortner states, is to study the workings and ideological underpinnings of said “cultural games”.

This thesis takes up Ortner’s invitation and analyses Cairn’s emic construction of agency which I contend is central to the movement’s revival efforts. Cairn valorises action which is “intentional”, consciously undertaken in pursuit of an aspiration. “Intentional” was one of the most ubiquitous terms of my fieldwork.
My interlocutors spoke of being “intentional” about effort, time, relationships; all in all, one ought to “live intentionally”. Karl described God himself as essentially “intentional”. When I asked what “intentionality” meant, the explanations were about being “conscious”, “proactive”, and “deliberate” in one’s actions and seeing these actions as part of furthering God’s broader plans. Cairn takes a “pitched forward” (Robbins 2013) posture; intent on progress as opposed to the “passive”, “maintenance” position attributed to the traditional church. Action in this movement is considered and goal-orientated. These goals and the capacity to work towards them are predicated on God having called upon believers, tasking them with roles to play and authorizing them to act in accordance with His plan. This divine calling on disciples’ lives means that Cairn’s model of agency is not only about a capacity to act, but also an imperative, a personal responsibility. In studying Cairn’s “pitched forward” posture and aspirational efforts, I am also taking up Joel Robbins’ invitation to an Anthropology of the Good, exploring “the different ways people organize their personal and collective lives in order to foster what they think of as good,” (Robbins 2013:457).

Cairn’s approach to organising their revival efforts, and to creating revival-making individuals often follows a strategic, economic logic and endows the individual with a high degree of personal responsibility. Such rationalization and responsibilisation are commonly identified as characteristics of neoliberalism. This thesis addresses the “elective affinity” between Cairn’s Christianity and the political-economic system which pervades its urban Scottish context (Weber [1905] 2002). However, “neoliberalism” has been critiqued as an overused term in recent anthropological work with claims that it is “so baggy and unclear that it means almost nothing” (Eriksen et al, 2015: 914). It has been approached as a vague, global evil and seems to comprise a vast constellation of potential characteristics. So, I do not wish to apply this term wholesale. There are elements of the term “neoliberal” which would be ill-fitting descriptors for the Cairn movement, including the fundamental role of competition and the explicit goal of financial gain. The altered relationship between state and market associated with neoliberalism (Rose 1999, Foucault 2008) not only has political-economic effects but also transforms relationships and persons (Haynes 2017:3). Bloom (2017), Muehlebach (2012) among others have highlighted that
neoliberalism produces significant ethical effects. It is to neoliberalism’s ethical, subjective, social effects – particularly in relation to Cairn’s “intentionality” – that I wish to draw attention. Gershon (2011) writes that “neoliberal agency” sees individuals reflexively managing themselves as though they were a business; “a collection of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed and developed” (Martin 2000:582). I will demonstrate that Cairn’s practices of subjectivization echo this responsibility for self-curation. Cairn’s focus on cultivating every individual as a leader who will reform their surroundings constitutes a form of governmentality which replaces so-called “legalist” conformity to rules with a reflexive, self-regulation between the believer and God that my informants argue characterizes traditional churches. I consider how this mirrors Schachar and Hustinx (2019) who speak of agency as “a resource” which has proven particularly useful in “the augmentation of neoliberal governmentality” (211). However, I also analyze the limits of this affinity. Cairn is not working to further a neoliberal economy in Scotland, nor are neoliberal principles folded unproblematically into their revival project. As well as showing how some characteristics of neoliberalism are effectively incorporated and leveraged by Cairn, I highlight ways in which the movement and its emic mode of agency resist neoliberal logic.

There is an apparent paradox inherent to Cairn’s model of Christian agency. Cairn prides itself on being “intentional”: going after revival, working on self-improvement, actively seeking God. The movement’s actors are to make deliberate effort toward goals. This is a heavily agentive position in line with Ortner’s description of “hard” agency. But at the same time, Cairn’s goals include communities and relationships which feel unmanufactured and “organic”. Cairn’s followers delight in God’s actions which are (sometimes) unpredictable and fundamentally beyond their control, beyond their agentive capacity. They are motivated by a sense of calling and responsibility to act, but at the same time “disciples” submit to God’s authority which ultimately determines whether their “intentional” actions will achieve their intended consequences. How does Cairn manage this apparent tension? How do they reconcile the strategic planning of their training weekends with the desire to see divinely-authored transformation? Is it paradoxical to strategize for a spiritual revival? In this thesis, I will analyze the productive tension, core to the
Cairn movement, of embracing “intentionality” and at the same time limiting human agency through submission to God.

Cairn’s desire for the unmanufactured and “organic” implies a concern that their human agency might fabricate something which is an unnecessary elaboration upon, or distortion of God’s perfect plan. This concern about distortion is also present in their critique of the established church and its “unhelpful” traditions and formalities. I argue that Cairn’s “logic of the good” (Ortner 2006) which underpins “intentionality” entails a multifaceted concern with authenticity. Note that the word “authentic” was used by my interlocutors occasionally (often describing relationships) but was more often implied in phrases like “true identity” and “being real”. Whilst “authenticity”, like “agency”, is not a popular emic term, I show that, in practice, it is a defining issue for Cairn.

Brüntrup et al (2020) write that “authenticity” can refer to a lost original state, harkening back to an unspoiled “golden era”. We will see this in Cairn’s desire to emulate “Celtic” missionaries who are believed to have acted in line with God’s will for church and mission. There are elements of Scotland’s Christian history which Cairn seeks to revive. But in Cairn’s case, there is also a “golden era” ahead of them. In Cairn’s social critique, the measurement of authenticity relates to the utopian ideals of the Kingdom they are building. The authentic as ideal is elucidated in discussions of “vision” – combining aspirations and expectations - which are prominent in Cairn’s training events. The authenticity of these golden eras is rooted in the idea that these are instances in which God’s intended state is actualised without distortion or elaboration by humans.

Contemporary concerns about authenticity are abundant and are not confined to Christian contexts. Social scientists have identified authenticity as a primary value of modern/western society such that it has overtaken classic virtues like politeness or fairness (Hutflotz in Brüntrup et al 2020). Trilling (1974), Giddens (1991) and Taylor (1991) among others, argue that this “culture of authenticity” (Taylor 1991: 17) is uniquely modern and preceded by “sincerity” which had a

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27 Sincerity is a well-established concept in the Anthropology of Christianity regarding Protestant language ideology (see Keane 2002, 2006) where its use differs from Trilling’s. I further discuss “sincerity”, and its connections with intention and authenticity, as it pertains to Cairn in chapter four.
greater emphasis on predictability and fitting in to society. Forces of secularisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation have been associated with loss of authenticity, provoking a crisis which people have sought to escape by looking inward for their true selves. “Authentic” often refers to “being true to oneself” or “realizing one’s true self” and therefore closely links with practices of reflexivity and self-improvement. This is a key element of Cairn’s emic concept of authenticity as we will see in their “discipleship” efforts. Cairn’s followers are deeply concerned with knowing “who God made them to be” and refining their character to fulfill their intended role in His revival plans. Their understanding of God’s plans for this world, and its utopian potential, is deeply personalised. Each believer has direct, intimate communication with God; a bespoke array of spiritual gifts and characteristics; and a specific role to play in building His Kingdom.

Cairn’s critique of traditional church sees the movement re-locate authenticity – and thereby authority to act - to the individual believer, rather than the church institution which has been deemed problematic. Given its high valuation, Umbach and Humphrey (2018) have argued that authenticity is “a political concept”, deeply implicated in authority and power relations. Authenticity has been offered as a panacea for years of corruption and misconduct scandals (in politics, business, finance) which have generated a pervasive sense of suspicion and disillusionment. A contributing factor in this is the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash which generated a cavernous wealth gap, and increased feelings of polarisation and distrust between those on either side. Consequently, “authentic leadership” is now a significant trend in business and politics, with candidates’ personal attributes held as pivotal to popularity. And we are now especially well-equipped to test the authenticity of authority figures through the possibilities of the internet (Brüntrup et al 2020, Umbach & Humphrey 2018). When I first interviewed one of Cairn’s architects, he identified this value of authenticity in leadership as a generational trend; a point supported by social scientific and business literature (Moore 2014, Pattuglia & Mingione 2017). He pointed out that “Generation Y” judge church leaders, “by where they shop, what they wear, how they live on Monday through

28 “Gen Y” is understood to include people born between 1981 and 1996. They are also referred to as “millennials”.

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Wednesday, their stance on social justice. So, their integrity in life not their oration from the pulpit [which was of greater importance to the previous generation].” This quote highlights that another facet of Cairn’s understanding of authenticity pertains to integrity: not only knowing one’s true self but expressing this consistently across contexts. This notion echoes organizational anthropologist, Peter Fleming’s (2013) observations about authenticity in “the contemporary firm”. He writes that “In the [...] [corporate] office of yesteryear, uniformity and collective adherence to the rhythm of rationality usually characterised the workplace” (ibid:58). In striving for a “strong” corporate culture, the 1980s saw discomfort around the idea of cross-contamination between work and personal/leisure spheres. But a new management ideology has taken hold which asks workers to be authentic and includes the “whole person” in the labour process. The symbolic boundary between work and non-work has become blurry and lifestyle factors are no longer “barred from the organisation in the bureaucratic tradition, but celebrated as a useful organisational resource,” (ibid:64). I will show that, in the interests of authentic consistency, a similar traversing of the boundary between church and other spheres of life (work, home, public) is built into Cairn’s reform ideal.

Contemporary concerns for authenticity are elsewhere expressed in consumer trends towards “shop local”, small artisanal business, personalised media and advertising, bespoke and handmade products (Rosenbaum et al 2021, Varlander 2007). I suggest Cairn’s concern with authenticity highlights a parallel shift in church trends where some Christians are pushing against the high quality, high tech, polished church style which often attracts believers to places like Central (also, e.g. Hillsong)30. While this style initially tackled the stereotype of churches as dusty, uncomfortable, formal places and made it more attractive, this is now reading as contrived to some of its members and former members, particularly those of the “millennial” generation. In Edinburgh, I have seen a growing preference for small, closer-knit, local expressions of church as more “real” and less institutional. The “local” emerges as a significant mark of authenticity for Cairn as an extension of their logic of personalisation which

29 See also “Small Business Saturday” created in critique of Black Friday and Cyber Monday dominated by larger companies. https://smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com/
30 See Cristina Rocha’s (2019) work on how this style of church catered to middle class sensibilities.
values individuals’ unique gifts and experiences. Echoing the ethos of the Emerging Church movement (Bielo 2011), Cairn speaks of a desire to do things “relationally”, centring the personal connection in contrast to the perceived “one size fits all” approach of “traditional” church institutions.

Cairn’s intentional agency does not simply represent an imperative to act but speaks to a particular kind of action according to the movement’s “logic of the good” which I describe in terms of “authenticity”. Cairn’s disciples pursue a revival model characterised by a multi-faceted authenticity. In large part, this authenticity is rooted in the individual and individual differences: discovering one’s true self, expressing this consistently (integrity), and valuing uniqueness in people (personalization) and places (localisation). But at the same time, Cairn sees authenticity in that which is untainted by the individual: in “organic” occurrences, in submitting to God’s agency and actualising the Kingdom according to His undistorted will. Cairn’s configuration of agency, whilst impelling the disciple to embrace the role of active revival-makers simultaneously problematises human agency, requiring them to submit their will to His. In Cairn, the capacity and imperative to act (agency), and the logic defining good action (authenticity), contain an inherent tension of embracing and eschewing the power of the individual.

In this thesis, I argue that the Cairn movement’s approach to revival hinges on an emic construction of agency which implicates a deep, complex concern with authenticity, and a concomitant relocation of authority from church institutions to the individual’s relationship with God. I examine these emic concepts as they emerge ethnographically in Cairn’s efforts to cultivate ideal subjects and social forms, and to build a socio-spiritual utopia: the Kingdom.
Chapter Summaries

Chapter one introduces Cairn’s training environments and shows that the movement’s approach to creating revival is replete with organisation and strategy. Through diagrams and planning exercises, the movement unites and mobilises its followers toward an aspiration for transformation. Yet, this intentionality seems to sit in tension with a deep desire to see change which is “organic” and beyond their control.

Chapter two focuses on “prophecy”: the ways in which Cairn experiences and manages direct communication from God. The theme of embracing and eschewing individual agency is crystallised in the gift/skill nature of prophecy. Hearing from God is a skill to be actively honed, and at the same time revelation is surprising and God-authored.

Chapter three addresses Cairn’s creation of particular subjects - “disciples” – who are held personally responsible for reforming themselves. Their practices of self-cultivation demonstrate how Cairn locates agency in the (in)dividual and authority in the disciple’s relationship with God. The disciple emerges as the unit of revival as Karl proclaims to each of them, “You’re the project.”

Chapter four looks at the movement’s project of church reform. Using well-established theory on Christian language ideology, I unpack the disjuncture between Cairn’s model of church and the “traditional” church” which it critiques. Cairn’s intentional, individualized form of agency extends to a valorisation of personalisation and dynamism which jars against “traditional” notions of authority as external and fixed.

Chapter five turns to Cairn’s engagement with, what it perceives as, a “post-Christian” Scottish public. With the traditional institution deemed unfit as a vehicle for evangelism in “post-Christendom”, disciples are charged with “being church” as their personal relationships become sites of transformational potential. This relational approach raises a challenge of authenticity for disciples who must be closely engaged and relatable to non-Christians, without losing their Christian distinctiveness.

Chapter six examines the socio-spiritual utopia Cairn seeks to build through its mission work: the Kingdom. We see an extension of the value of personalization as the movement spatially demarcates mission into “local communities”, each
with their own personality and “culture”. In Cairn’s insistence on the importance of “contextualising” the gospel, it fuses sociological data gathering with prophetic guidance from God, spiritually mapping the Kingdom.
Chapter 1. Strategizing for Revival

Three green men stand between me and Central Church. The six-storey church building sits at a busy road junction in Edinburgh’s city centre. So, I wait, damp and impatient from the rain, for the pedestrian crossings to beep and halt the rows of cars which stretch out in all directions. Sitting on the corner of a commercial block aside supermarkets and pharmacies, Central Hall boasts a large shop window, always artfully decorated by the church’s “Creative Team” to capture public attention. Whilst the window has prized public presence, the stone arch and steps to the main entrance are on a small side street, opposite a nightclub. Glad to escape the drizzle, I climb the steps to find the glass-paned doors are locked. The building manager sees me from his desk and buzzes me in: “D’you not have the code for the door yet?”. He quietly tells me the security code as he waves me upstairs to the foyer. I heave open the white, sound-proof doors leading to the rear of the main auditorium. Jane, manageress of logistics for these events, greets me with a cheery “Hi Emma” and a plastic folder with my name badge inside. The large, circular, leaders’ table is tucked in a corner next to the sound desk. Its black tablecloth is strewn with folders, laptops and boxes of Tic-Tacs. A printed floor plan of the room is Blu-Tacked to the adjacent wall indicating the designated “social spaces” and workstations for today’s church teams. I take my seat to more, polite “hellos” from the event organisers who look up from their laptops and briefly interrupt their friendly conversations about the school run and the working week. Karl sweeps into the room with a cardboard carrier of Costa Coffee cups, and begins distributing the orders: “Flat white?” “Me!” Americano?” “That’s mine, thanks.”. Karl grins and shakes his head at the carrier as he sits down and shrugs off his coat, “I got too many extra! Emma, would you like a latte?”

Rich is in charge of today’s Learning Community. He finishes a phonecall, consults with Jane – also his personal assistant - and calls for the team’s attention to the thirty-minute briefing which precedes the participants arrival

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31 Cairn employs an executive team of around eight people, all part-time alongside working for their own churches. Facilitator teams for Learning Communities tend to include two or three of these execs, ideally to be replaced by church leaders who have completed their own LC cycle and are encouraged to become organisers for the next cohort.
at 9am. The weekend’s running order is planned to the minute on a colour-coded spreadsheet which we find in our plastic folders alongside Cairn branded note paper and a leaflet for this year’s “Training Hub” leadership course. Everyone around the table follows along and nods as Rich talks through the spreadsheet, clarifying arrangements and reaffirming the principles of today’s training. As he speaks, I realise my comprehension of these meetings has vastly improved since the first Learning Community I attended. Rich sits forward with his elbows resting on the table:

*We’ll begin with welcome, worship, the Word; to posture ourselves to God. We’ll follow that with an introduction on the ‘Community of Practice’ process. The section on the ‘Leadership Engine’ will focus on culture and we’ll use the circle, triangle and square there. As we walk around the teams, make sure we’re setting a culture of short dialogue. And be reminding and encouraging them that leadership is to be lived out and modelled. We want this to be a community environment; a relational experience. Let’s remember we are creating disciples for a city, not building a church. We’re not giving formulas and pre-set answers but feeling God move. We’re not organisers but equippers.*

“Let’s pray,” Rich concludes. Most of the leaders close their eyes while others stare at the table or off into the distance. Almost everyone takes a turn to speak aloud their prayers: that the attending teams would not become exhausted from the intensive program; that everyone would “listen for your [God’s] voice in the planning”; thanks “for all that you [God] are already doing” in churches and their local communities. When Rich takes his turn to speak, this signals the close of prayer time. As we say “Amen”, the first of the attendees are already arriving and Cairn’s regular and beloved caterer is stood behind a table of pastries, serving tea and coffee. Wrapping my hands around the now lukewarm Costa cup, I scan the room. There are curved rows of around fifty chairs facing the stage and projector screen which displays Cairn’s branded, monochrome motif of a mountainous landscape. Around the edges of the room are more circular tables, with grey partitions separating each team’s designated station. The name of each church is stuck on a flipchart pad which sits upright in the middle of the table, surrounded by Sharpie markers, sticky dots and colourful
Post-its. Every Cairn Learning Community (LC) event, held in a handful of host churches in Scottish cities, has the same resources and an approximation of this layout. The attendees demonstrate their familiarity with the set-up, swiftly claiming their station with jackets and iPads. There are hugs, handshakes and smiles as leaders from different teams reunite following the six-month gap since their last LC gathering.

Figure 2. A Learning Community at Central Church

A great deal of imaginative work, bonding the movement’s followers and delineating the project of revival, happens in Cairn’s training environments. Chief among these is “Learning Communities” which will be my focus in this chapter. Here, I will unpack Cairn’s methods for making a revival movement. I explain the impetus behind the desire for national transformation and go on to examine the means by which Cairn’s architects hope to unite churches and believers toward common aspirations for reform. I will demonstrate how pedagogical diagrams, exclusive vocabulary and temporalities of planning are incorporated in Cairn’s strategic approach to Christian revival. I argue that this organised approach exists in productive tension with the movement’s simultaneous desire for unforced authenticity.
Organisational Background

It was a Learning Community process which first fuelled Cairn’s foundation. In the early 2000s, a pastor at St Thomas’ ecumenical church, Sheffield - Mike Breen - began to develop methods of training churches in principles of “mission” and “discipleship”. Working to distil biblical lessons on leadership and Christian living to simple, catchy models, he created Lifeshapes. These Lifeshapes formed the framework of a training program called Learning Communities. Learning Communities are “immersive” experiences in which church leadership teams (ideally comprising around five senior leaders, i.e. ministers and their elders, associate pastors etc.) are guided through considering “what is?” (the existing state of affairs), “what could be?” (aspirational vision), and “what will be?” (pragmatic planning) in their church contexts. Learning Communities meet every six months over two years, with the option to continue to a more advanced cycle as a “Community of Practice”.

It was one such Learning Community which started Central Church on the road to Cairn. During 2010/11 Central’s leadership team travelled to Sheffield for training and strategising every six months as participants in a LC. Those involved told me that the success in “transitioning” their church became evident to surrounding churches and - curious about this flourishing new model - “they came knocking”. In 2011, Central hosted their first Learning Community with participating churches coming (primarily) from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Belfast. As this progressed, lead pastor Karl and his team began to sense that this was the beginning of “something bigger than Central”: that God wanted them to support other churches on their journeys of transition and to do so as another entity, as a “movement”. Following prophetic dreams where Jesus took him on a road-trip of Europe and spoke to him about “re-evangelising Europe in the way the Celtic Saints first did”, Karl founded Cairn which was officially launched in 2015/16.

In running their first LC, Central was still under the mentorship of their Sheffield-based trainer, Rich. Rich became Christian in his early twenties at St David’s so spent his Christian adolescence surrounded by Mike Breen’s concepts of “misional church”, Lifeshapes and Learning Communities. He took co-creative roles with Breen in pioneering the training programs. From the success of his

32 Plus, teams from England and an American-Japanese missionary couple
publications, Breen founded an organisation called Three Dimensional Movements - “3DM” - which continues to “resource” church leaders with materials and training. Breen relocated and established his business in the United States and Rich was entrusted with responsibility for 3DM’s operations in Europe. Central’s LC cohort included churches from across Europe, four of which were also looking to turn their “transition” experience into a national movement. Thus, Cairn has four counterpart movements – in England/Wales, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany/Austria/Switzerland – all under the mentorship of Rich. Rich tells of how this geographically organised, “relational network” model of delivering mentorship and training is his ideal. He wanted to be a “catalyst” in “regional networks” where his influence would be enacted and “multiplied” by *local* leaders. So, Rich founded his own organisation through which he coaches church networks and movements all over the world. He is an internationally popular consultant and guest speaker, contributing at events for denominations, charities and Christian organisations. There is a nod to these institutional connections in the form of a book stall at Cairn events, including many of the titles from the LC’s recommended reading list. Perusing the table of neatly displayed books, I note they mostly include publications from Mike Breen, stamped with 3DM’s publishing mark and Rich’s name is on some of them. Flicking through “Building a Discipleship Culture, 3rd ed.” (2017) feels to me like fast-forwarding through Cairn’s training programs, and I recognise some of the material from sermons given at Central prior to Cairn’s foundation. Several of the books on offer seem to comprise a series, dated around 2012-14, placing Cairn’s foundation in the unfolding of a broader trend. The book stall signals subtly Cairn’s situation in a complex, international nexus of Christian organisations, and a wider trend of reform movements using Learning Community techniques.

**Welcome**

Costa cup in hand, I head over to three attendees hovering near their workstation. They hail from a small community church in Aberdeen which runs a café in the city centre. Hope, a short lady of Southeast Asian ethnicity (the only person of colour in the room), describes their team as “ragtag, small and feisty”. Enthusiasm pours out of her; she can barely stand still, almost bouncing
as she speaks with eyes and smile wide. Her teammate, William, is contrastingly subdued as he calmly shakes my hand. He has white-blonde hair and eyebrows, a gentle Welsh accent and the red rugby shirt to match. We bond over shared experience of post-graduate study and he asks about my research. “There’s such chaos in our culture,” he posits, arguing the need for a movement like Cairn. William speaks with high praise about the “Huddles” endorsed by Cairn: a small group mentoring system applying Lifeshapes to personal life circumstances (more on this in chapter three). “It’s great. The church has seen real growth within people, working on what’s inside them; even people who have been Christian for years.” William shares a Huddle with Pete – also a professional in his thirties - who stands beside him, nodding in agreement. Pete speaks excitedly about a networking group for local businesspeople and a board games group which he runs at the café. He hopes to introduce Lifeshapes to these communities through evening classes – a format which he acknowledges is already popular in their affluent area. My conversation with Pete is halted as Rich appears in front of the stage, beckoning us to sit in the rows of chairs.

Rich wanders nonchalantly, smiling and sharing familiar hellos as the rows fill. He is the tallest man in the room, wears slim-fit jeans and a navy shirt, and makes occasional jokes about his baldness. His relaxed demeanour and slightly cheeky smile are disarming, and it seems he is as well-liked as he is well-known. Welcoming everyone to the event, Rich announces that – as with all Cairn events – we will begin with worship, “posturing ourselves toward God”, “choosing to listen before we speak”. He explains, “I want to model small group worship”. While these events usually begin with sung worship from lyrics on PowerPoint projection, led by a small ensemble of skilled musicians, Rich acknowledges that not all church group gatherings have those resources at hand. He wants to demonstrate “how worship might look for a Missional Community33 in someone’s living room”. On the screen, there appears a music video from YouTube. “As we listen to this – and the lyrics will come up for you to follow – I want you to ask God, ‘What is your word in this for me?’” The song plays - an American, country-pop number accompanied by photographs of

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33 Missional Communities (MC) are groups of up to fifteen people oriented around a specific geographic location, network (e.g. surfers) or cause (e.g. ministering to sex workers). MCs meet regularly to socialise and worship as well as actively pursuing their “missional” goal. MCs feature in 3DM’s literature as a recommended social form.
sunsets and waterfalls - and Rich stands to the side of the rows, arms folded, eyes tightly closed, swaying a little. The artist sings, “Farther along we’ll know all about it. Farther along we’ll understand why.” Most attendees watch the lyrics; some close their eyes and tip their heads back. The end of the song leaves silence. Slowly striding back to the front, Rich speaks softly: “We want to be really mindful of our rhythm. We can get so busy and find ourselves breathing out all the time. Now, breathe in. Allow God to remind you of His pace. Let’s pray.” Rich speaks a short prayer, reiterating the importance of God’s participation in the weekend’s training. He then swaps places with an Edinburgh minister who speaks on today’s verses of scripture as dictated by the “Rooted” bible app. Followers of Cairn are encouraged to use the app daily, synchronising their Bible studies with fellow believers in the movement. Just as Rich connects the gathered attendees with a collective breath, the app suggests an ongoing sense of solidarity, coordinated in its practices.

Devotional complete, Rich rolls the whiteboard toward centre stage and begins to recap the structure of the LC process. Learning Communities can resemble an academic conference or corporate training. The vast majority of attendees find this format comfortable and familiar. The events’ demographic is largely higher educated, professional, middle class, aged between mid-thirties and late-fifties. Just as for Rudnyckyj’s scientist and engineer interlocutors, Cairn’s business owners, school head teachers, and civil servants are no strangers to the logic of applying of knowledge and rational intervention in solving worldly challenges (Rudnyckyj 2010).
Cairn’s Learning Community attendees listen intently to seminar-style teaching, often diligently taking notes. Rich draws a four-block pyramid (seen at the top of figure 2.), familiar to previous attendees who nod along, whilst others copy it into their notebooks. The blocks represent the themes of the four gatherings which comprise a two-year LC program. The base – gathering number one - is “Building a Discipleship Culture”, followed by “Multiplying Missional Leaders”, “Leading Missional Communities”, and finally topped with, “Leading Kingdom Movements”. Rich adds a dotted line, commenting that the first two sections manifest “under the surface”, relating to a church’s “culture” which ought to be strengthened as the foundation in order for the functions (the top of the pyramid) to be healthy and sustainable. “Most of our churches actually look like this,” Rich continues, drawing a second pyramid upside down, explaining churches’ tendencies to pursue lots of activities, sustained...
precariously by a few, overworked staff and volunteers. The gathered attendees share a groan of agreement and knowing glances. I turn now to explain the common feeling behind this reaction as Cairn members share the view that reform in Scotland’s churches is sorely needed but challenging to mobilise.

**The Need for Change**

Learning Communities draw together leaders from churches of various sizes, across several geographical locations and denominations. Notably, they often speak of “the Church” in Scotland as a united entity in a theological sense (the Body of Christ), despite its schismatic nature. In LCs, it seems the urgent desire for change takes precedence over denominational politics. As Elaine, a Cairn trainee turned facilitator, puts it:

*One of the beauties of Cairn for me is that it knocks down any barriers. Central’s Baptist, we’re Church of Scotland, so-and-so is something else... it knocks down those barriers. And that’s what we need because we’re all striving for the same Kingdom.*

What is it that draws these people to LCs and bonds them together? Amidst this diversity; fatigue and frustration are ubiquitous. Leaders continually told me of frustrations with their own churches as well as the institution as a whole. Following training one Saturday, I strolled with organisers and attendees to a nearby pub. Lounging together on the worn leather sofas, cold beers in hand, one minister asked me about my faith. Having confessed I was not Christian, my interest in churches immediately became a source of confusion. When I spoke positively about my experiences of research in Christian environments, the minister shook her head and shared grins of disbelief with her peers. She looked at me with weary eyes: “It’s God who keeps me in church a lot of the time...Sometimes it’s a struggle to see where the church is beautiful.” Almost every interlocutor I encountered during fieldwork shared this sentiment and it forged solidarity between them. Learning Community attendees repeatedly

34 Cairn purports to be open to almost all churches so long as they support women in church leadership and believe in the Holy Spirit as active and communicative. In practice, Cairn’s participating churches include mostly Church of Scotland and Baptist, alongside Independent, Apostolic, and Nazarene.
emphasised to me that the greatest benefit of the process was the supportive cohort(s) it created. Ministers would appear visibly relieved at reuniting with fellow leaders, who are equally worn out and desperate for transformation in their church communities. They delighted in being “on the same page” in their critiques and aspirations. There emerged a well-known pattern for church leaders attending LCs: arriving worn out; leaving the weekend challenged, inspired and expectant; but returning to churches which felt fraught with stagnancy and resistance to change.

Cairn addresses this resistance in its training using a model which I later identified as the “Diffusion of Innovation” theory by sociologist Everett Rogers (2003 [1962]). Originally, the model pertained to the uptake of innovations in business/technology and teaches that, in any social group, some will be more readily amenable to change whilst others will resist.

![Figure 4. The “Diffusion of Innovations” curve](image)

Reported incidences of “resistance to change” in churches are myriad and ranged from arguments about the responsibilities of ministers to thorny disputes over furniture arrangements. As Rich released the rows of attendees to their workstations, I tossed my coffee cup in the recycling bin and joined one of the team tables with Matheus (minister) and Craig (elder). Matheus, born in Brazil, had previously worked with Cairn’s church-planting partner organisation.

(“Forge”) on alternative and pioneering models of church and he promotes a creative and charismatic approach. He admits he was shocked to be accepted as the new minister by a relatively conservative congregation of a small, village church. Craig, a local farmer and active leader in his church for fifteen years, grinned at the minister: “He’s a breath of fresh air! We needed that.” Rich reads aloud a Powerpoint slide which details the first team task: to assess your church’s “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats” drawn on a matrix. (The “SWOT analysis” is a popular tool of assessment in the business world.) As they reflect on this, Matheus and Craig find themselves in various negotiations over which church traditions and customs are problematic and in need of reform. Conversation turns to the apparently controversial matter of the church choir. Matheus insists the choir needs to move out of the fixed choir pews beside the pulpit because the congregation cannot see them clearly. Craig seems instantly on edge, shifting in his chair. “Well...well, they could still sit in their pews... and then come to the front to sing!” he nods as he offers his cheerful solution. Matheus remains stony-faced and shakes his head. “There are a limited number of seats there, so it limits their potential for growth. Think about it: if the choir can sit anywhere then you could have a choir of hundreds!” Craig chuckles nervously and adjusts his frameless glasses. A mischievous grin emerges on Matheus’s face: “Of course...We could just get rid of all the pews completely...”. Immediately, Craig reels back in his seat. His eyes widen as he clears his throat, “W...Well, I...” he shakes his head.

Notably, this was neither the first, nor the last church I encountered in which choirs and pews presented divisive issues, symptomatic of deeper schism (see chapter four). In Cairn’s adoption of this bell curve, Matheus represents an “innovator”; modelling Cairn’s value of “entrepreneurship”, motivated to challenge tradition in pursuit of creative reform. Whereas Craig resembles an “early adopter”. His participation in Cairn’s revival training and his support of Matheus as a “breath of fresh air” would be seen as openness to change, yet he still holds to some traditions which Cairn would deem stagnant and hindering progress.

Cairn’s supporters are motivated to build a revival movement by their belief that the Church as it is, “is no longer fit for purpose.” It is understood that wide reaching change is needed to avoid the steep trajectory towards irrelevance.
and atrophy. The decline in church attendance is well known: LC conversations are peppered with references to “...the 98% of people in Scotland who don’t know Jesus,” and warnings that “The Church of Scotland is haemorrhaging people: figures are something like, by 2032, the Church of Scotland will not exist!” However, decline in attendance numbers is framed as a secondary issue and a consequence of the need for reform. In fact, Cairn openly disavows the “traditional” metrics termed “the ABCs”: Attendance, Buildings, Cash. The movement’s followers were united in their belief that the real threat to Scotland’s churches was dysfunctional stagnancy, preventing the church from functioning and flourishing as God intends. In Karl’s words,

[Cairn wants] to encourage churches to turn around and be everything they could be, rather than just maintenance ships for people who wanna hide from the world. [...] We wanna plant fresh expressions of church and find new ways of creating different vehicles for ancient values.

There’s something about the need for us to reimagine the Kingdom of God. I sense the Lord calling us back to reimagination. [Reading about the early church in Acts 1 through 2] I see a movement of Holy Spirit imagination. Their background was institutional, religious thinking – layers of it over generations had suffocated God...Does that sound familiar for us!? We need freed up from thinking the answer lies in repurposing the church as it is. The hope lies in reimagining the Kingdom as it is and what it could be. God is for a movement.

The perceived dysfunction of Scotland’s Church is often framed as a triad of problems: tradition, religion, institution.

Cairn’s imagined timeline idealises the “early church”, as seen in the Book of Acts. They view “the Celtic church” as having successfully emulated that ideal model. Whilst many followers consider the mystical invocations of Celticism in Cairn’s promotional video to be, essentially, “branding”, they do argue that the community structure and adventurous mission of the Celtic church is a heritage to be reclaimed. Coleman (2011) explores how relating to one’s history can shape movement toward the future. He shows how the Word of Life charismatic
ministry in Sweden “invokes” history and “makes” history. This two-sided process of “mimetic relation” to past events, alongside producing new action which moves ahead towards salvation, is given the term “historiopraxy”. In a similar vein, Tomlinson (2014) draws on the work of Kierkegaard in presenting the term “recollecting forward”. This aptly applies to Cairn’s re-invoking of the past in new contexts, giving that “repetition” a forward momentum: “an ongoing act of transformative reengagement” (166). Karl’s prophetic dream about the Cairn movement’s inception, involved God intending to re-enact the evangelising of Europe via the Celtic Lands. Cairn identifies particular traits and practices in Celtic Christianity as desirable. A favourite tale was that of the “coracle” (another candidate for the movement’s name, I was told). The story goes that Celtic Christians, trusting God and ardently pursuing evangelism, would get in small circular boats named coracles, without a paddle – choosing to submit their agency to God’s will. Wherever they washed up, they would engage with the existing culture and establish a Christian community. It is this curated Biblical and Celtic history which the movement seeks to fold in to their present. What Cairn purports to “revive” are these ancient models, whereas the recent past is cast as problematic.

“Traditional” is the term regularly attributed to the mainstream UK church of the last sixty years or so. Cairn’s use of “traditional” connects with a dislike of “institutional” thinking and connotes a conservative approach which seeks to rigidly maintain practices as they are: Craig’s panic about the pews would constitute a characteristically “traditional” or “religious” response. One critic described the rigidity of “traditional church” for me, complaining that signing up for the tea rota is a life sentence and only those on the rota may set foot in the kitchen; and no one may eat at the church picnic until the minister says grace. “Traditional church” implies a hierarchical system wherein the minister is both sole leader and servant to the congregation which consumes Sunday services passively. Traditionalism, with its focus on maintaining the church institution’s customs, is considered a suffocating force by Cairn’s followers. “Religious” functions as a negative description, connoting undue focus on rituals and rules over dynamic, personal faith.

In many ways, Cairn’s critiques of church mirror those of the Emerging Church movement which arose in late twentieth century America. In a context of
widespread suspicion of institutions, Packard cites “a growing distaste for traditional religious authority and the institutional, corporate form [of church]” which gave rise to this movement (Packard, 2011:9). The Emerging Church is described as “fundamentally a movement of resistance” against institutionalisation which threatens their goal of an “authentic expression of faith in their local contexts” (Packard, 2013:441; Packard, 2011:16). Emerging Church congregations are characterised as appealing to ancient traditions and reacting negatively “against the historically, more recent tradition of protestant fundamentalism” (Packard, 2013:441). The Emerging Churches’ resistant stance takes the form of continuous reformulation; a “messiness” which is unpredictable, unique, and contingent (ibid, see also Strhan 2019). Cairn shares many aspects of the Emerging Church’s anti-institutional, pro-authentic values, and yet, as I will go on to demonstrate, their strategic approach to movement-making makes a stark departure from the Emerging Church’s total rejection of structure and organisation.

United, in part, by their critique of tradition and desire for change, church leaders attend Learning Communities for guidance on how to make change happen. In the following section, I interrogate Cairn’s tools for making a revival movement, examining Learning Communities’ use of pedagogical diagrams, exclusive language, and planning exercises.

The Leadership Square
Attendees return from their morning coffee break on the sofas of the designated “social space”. They sidle into the rows of chairs, balancing compostable cups of tea and squares of courgette cake on black napkins. Tablets and notepads are placed on their laps and they look up to Rich, whiteboard marker in hand. The Learning Square\(^{36}\) is taught on the second LC weekend and regularly invoked thereafter.

\textit{Jesus was the best leader the world has ever seen. He was also the best leadership trainer or discipler. If we follow his example}

\(^{36}\) It was brought to my attention by Cairn members and Cairn critics with backgrounds in business that some Lifeshapes, including the square, closely resembled business tools of the 1980s.
and his teachings, we can be the leaders God intends us to be.

Jesus’ leadership is seen in four stages or phases, thus I use a Square to help easily recall the following principles. (Breen, 2016:141)

This introduction to the Learning Square, taken from a core LC text, highlights the way Lifeshapes are designed to connect Biblical scripture seamlessly with simple models about Christian life, the function of leadership and other elements of organisational management. For instance, Rich describes scripture from the book of Nehemiah\(^{37}\) as documenting Nehemiah’s transition “from cup bearer to project manager”. When Breen characterises Jesus as a “leader”, he means not only as a spiritual figure to be admired but also the ideal model of a coach or manager. We see a similar framing in Rudnyckyj’s case in which Indonesian business workers were taught that Muhammed is the ultimate example for the modern CEO (Rudnyckyj, 2010). Cairn’s take on Jesus’ leadership practice as a blueprint for contemporary disciples also echoes Haynes’s (2020) Zambian interlocutors’ “typological reading of [scripture],” and Pentecostal “this is that!” hermeneutic,” (Yong 2010:89 in Haynes 2020:58-59) whereby they recognize their own stories in scripture. The Leadership Square lesson draws on passages of scripture about Jesus’ ministry (in chronological progression), identifying four stages of His mentorship process: “Jesus as catalyst, Jesus as coach, Jesus as challenger, Jesus as champion,” Rich summarises. Lifeshapes intend to extrapolate simple models from the teachings of the New Testament to be directly applied to a range of “discipling” circumstances. “Disciple” is a complex word in Cairn and I explore its meanings further in chapter two. But in the case of the square, “disciple” is synonymous with “learner”.

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\(^{37}\) Scripture tells that Nehemiah supervised the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the mid-5th century BC after his release from captivity by the Persian King to whom he was cup bearer.
Rich draws a square in black marker pen, pausing at each side to label the stage it represents. Leadership stage one ("L1", or "D1" if viewing the square from the disciple’s perspective) pertains to Jesus “inviting the disciples to follow Him” (Mark 1:15-20). Rich presents this as the first stage in teaching a disciple, characterised by the leader being “directive”. The second stage sees the disciple become aware of their incompetence and have a crisis of confidence. This requires the leader to show encouragement and “coaching”, as Jesus did, Rich suggests, in Luke 12:32-34: “Do not be afraid, little flock…”. In L3, a leader ought to place themselves in the role of helper, as the disciple begins to grow in assuredness: “I no longer call you servants,” (John 15:12-17). Finally, L4 is the culmination of this progression from “I do, you watch” to “You (disciple) do, I (leader) watch”. This is said to be exemplified by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) where Jesus charges his disciples to go and make disciples.

These Lifeshapes diagrams, “hold the promise of transforming abstract ideas into graspable images and translating the unseen into intelligible and actionable form” (Englemann et al 2019). They prompt attendees to imagine the various ways in which the discipling process might manifest in their lives (Humphrey, 2019). As Pete from Aberdeen put it to me, “We need models because, [without them] how would you replicate actions?” At a Learning Community, attendees are taught broadly to apply this square model, extending its rationalising logic into church, domestic, and personal spheres (Foucault 2008:242). Rich offered an example of the square in action when learning to bake with his daughter. Having downloaded a recipe from the internet, their culinary attempts had failed for lack of an instructor, or leader. But when his daughter came home
from school having been taught how to make the cakes and practised in home economics class, she was able to bake them successfully and, crucially, demonstrate this for her Dad who can now make them without her supervision. The square had first operated with the teacher instructing Rich’s daughter, and then a second time with Rich in the role of disciple and his daughter as leader. (The baking example was also used to demonstrate Cairn’s value of “multiplication” to which I will return momentarily.) The square is also invoked in the realm of church management. For instance, in training a new volunteer to operate the PowerPoint projector during Sunday services: The church volunteer is taken under the wing of an experienced staff member who leads them through this four-stage mentorship (sometimes with explicit reference to the model but more often, implicitly) until they are able and willing to take up the role independently. The same model is applied to leadership development on a larger scale, such as shaping successors for Karl or Rich through apprenticeships. Here, the process of obtaining a practical skill (like operating audio-visual equipment) is treated as analogous to aspects of spiritual and professional development. In Cairn’s framework, “leadership” is a scalable skill. The square connects closely to the movement’s priority of “multiplication of leaders” – every leader ought to be replaceable and part of one’s responsibility as a leader is train your successor. The newly trained PowerPoint volunteer should expect to mentor the next one. In this, Cairn directly opposes the Emerging Church’s approach to church reform. For the Emerging Church, escaping the trappings of institutionalism means, for example, having a worship leader whose style is completely unique and spontaneous (Packard 2011). However, whilst Cairn shares many of the Emerging Church’s critiques, the movement prioritises “sustainability” of its reform efforts. Cairn asks its followers to do something which for the Emerging Church epitomises institutionalisation: to render themselves multipliable. Diagrams like Lifeshapes presuppose this principle of replicability, treating seemingly very different contexts – Jesus’ mission and Rich’s home baking – as analogous, with the essence of leadership consistent throughout. Leadership is therefore rendered replicable and scalable such that it can be widely distributed across the movement.
Rich finishes drawing the square and his annotations on the board, then closes his eyes to say grace for lunch. Moving notebooks and flipcharts to one side, I join another church team as they set down plates of sandwiches and salad from the buffet. Conversation turns to home life. Meg tells her teammates how her husband (with whom she co-owns a business) has been landed with all the domestic labour and childcare this weekend; ordinarily her domain. She raises her eyebrows and shakes her head, commenting that homework, housework, and ferrying the kids to extra-curricular activities might not be done to her usual standards. A teammate sitting opposite jokingly wags a finger at her: “Now, are you taking him round the leadership square properly!? You’re jumping from D1 to D4 there!” They all laugh.

The square, and other Lifeshapes were regularly invoked with sincerity in conversations and praised as helpful communicative tools. But the shapes were also the subject of jokes. Organisational anthropologist Krause-Jensen (2013) found a similar “let’s-not-take-this-too-seriously” tone among high-placed employees when discussing their company’s newly declared “values” which it was their job to communicate. This humour, Krause-Jensen says, “pointed to a reflexive or analytical distance” which created a sense of rapport (ibid:47). At the Learning Community, I took this humour to be about signalling shared knowledge. By being in on the joke, one demonstrated fluency in the movement’s concepts, and I will say more about this linguistic dynamic of group belonging in the next section. However, this interaction also sees the LC attendees distancing themselves from the neat economic logic of Cairn’s models. The team’s laughter is suggesting that to apply such a methodical approach explicitly and neatly to one’s everyday domestic relationships would be inappropriate, ridiculous even. While accepting the utility of the square, they establish the limits of its applicability. At the end of the chapter, I will return to this argument that embracing the fallibility of Cairn’s models is in fact crucial to protecting one of the movement’s key values: authenticity. First, let us continue with the Learning Community training process.
Two Year Vision, Six Month Plan

The Learning Community oscillates between lecture-style sessions and follow-up group tasks, consolidated with “Report Outs” as teams feed back to the whole cohort and receive prayer. Given the tight schedule, report outs and prayer were often time limited. I was sometimes charged with the role of timer, setting the alarm on my phone for a three-minute countdown to halt people’s calmly spoken prayers with intrusive beeping. Report-outs allow teams to piece together a picture of what is happening, or hoped for, across the movement.

Elaine commented,

*I love these times where we go round, you spend a lot of time...particularly when you do the three-day Learning Community, you spend a lot of time in your team but then you spent a lot of time listening to everyone else’s ideas going round the boards. And I think that’s useful. Apart from being able to pray and encourage the other teams, it’s seeing what they’re doing, where their struggles are. And actually, helps put into context what your struggles are... or maybe not, actually [identify where] we’re quite lucky.*

The days are punctuated with coffee and lunch breaks where the teams take the opportunity to meet other churches, compare notes, and offer encouragement.
The weekend culminates with teams completing their “2-year vision” and “6-month plan” worksheets. I help Fi to distribute the printed A3 templates across the workstations. Lasting around two hours, the exercise is saturated with reproductions of the terminology and models taught over the weekend. This can pose challenges in groups where some members are attending Learning Community for the first time, whilst others are familiar with the course and connected literature. When I first met the café church team from Aberdeen, it was clear they were well-versed and enthusiastic supporters of Cairn’s teaching structures. At the following LC, six months later, only one of the original group returned: the minister, Damien. Some of the members I’d met had since left the church and others were unable to get away from work or family commitments, leaving Damien with a team of three LC first-timers. He welcomed me to their table as he struggled to lead the planning exercise. Morag and Michael frowned at Damien’s vocabulary as he suggested what ought to be written on their worksheet. They use “church service” and “worshipping community” where Damien corrects them with Cairn’s language of “gathering” and “missional community”. Cairn’s preferred language is part of a conscious critique,
suggested that the vocabulary of traditional church carries connotations of its failings; “service” implying formality and passive receiving, where “gathering” is supposedly more dynamic and familial. Morag screwed up her eyes in confusion, “So…wait…the Sunday gathering is a…“missional community”?!” Damien tried to explain with Post-its and sketched maps of existing and aspirational church locations. But Morag shook her head, frustrated, “We’re just…speaking in different languages!” to which Damien replied patiently, “It’s ok. That’s a problem we can deal with.”

It occurred to me how Morag’s experience was contrasting my own. I attended thirteen Learning Communities and various other Cairn training events during fieldwork. These environments, complete with their particular vocabulary and concepts, became very familiar and comfortable. I was in on the jokes about disciples “having the D2s” (i.e. the trepidation of learning a new skill as represented by stage two of the learning square). I could nod along confidently as ministers told me about issues with their “leadership pipeline” or “late adopters”. So, when it came to planning for Damien’s church, I could ask the “right” questions and demonstrate a cultural fluency appropriate to the task. I felt I was inside the circle of shared knowledge and language. Whereas Morag – and the other first-timers who joined an LC cycle part way through - seemed unsettled by suddenly finding herself surrounded by a language she did not speak. Cairn’s vocabulary permeated this session, confusing those for whom it was unfamiliar, and bonding those with fluency by allowing them to name common aspirations.

The two-year vision task asks for three bullet points summarising the current state of one’s church, linked by a large arrow to three points of aspiration. Teams huddle around the A3 worksheet and recall points from the previous “What is?” and “What could be?” sessions. The “What could be?” session preceding this exercise is also called “dreaming”. Attendees are asked to suspend their scepticisms, concerns, and thoughts of feasibility or timeframes, and to imagine their greatest hopes for the church. This final “What will be?” planning session reframes these goals in more practical terms, breaking down the steps to achieving the aspirations. Aspirations commonly centre around effective leadership with sustainable succession plans; establishing missional communities which engage local non-Christians; cultivating a church “culture”
of discipleship and prophecy; envisioning the church as a family. These ambitions recur across the teams and are expressed with a particular lexicon, such as “setting a culture of…”, creating “rhythms” and seeing “flourishing”. Here, Cairn’s vocabulary creates alignment in the aspirational imaginations of churches across the movement. With the two-year vision written out and pinned up in clear view on the grey partitions, the teams move on to a detailed grid, strategizing the “next steps” for the coming six months, ordering a world outside this novel meeting space (Brown et al, 2017). The structure of this grid guides teams’ work through each key aspiration in strategic increments from the current situation, to identifying actions required for change, and choosing a means of measuring successful goal attainment, and “accountability questions” which the Cairn leadership should ask at the next gathering to evaluate progress. These metrics are occasionally numerical such as “establish two new huddles” or clear outcomes such as “hold an internal learning community\(^{38}\) in our church”, or “maintain a rhythm of meeting regularly”. However, the teams often found the nature of their goals defied rational measurement, instead they wrote about cultivating “a culture of” prophecy, discipleship, leadership etc. Metrics are key to a strategic approach but, as with the jokes about the learning square, we see here another point of tension between the organised methodology and the socio-spiritual project of revival.

The design of the Learning Community process structures attendees’ imaginations in six-month periods. Returning for more evaluation, imagination and planning work on a six-monthly basis is sometimes described in 3DM’s terms as “orbiting”. Ethnographers of meetings (Brown et al, 2017) have drawn attention to the important temporal work meetings invoke. Abram’s (2014) research on municipal planning meetings is particularly insightful in this respect, highlighting “that governing the future is an ambition that recruits many and multi-layered temporalities.” (144) Abram described the various temporal frames of municipal planning as “nested and scaled” - ranging from thirty-year development goals, to concrete policies focussed on a decade, and the much shorter cycles of council elections which reshape the various timelines. Throughout planning, she explains, the “challenge is to relate different

\(^{38}\) Some churches took to imitating the Learning Community process in events held for the various ministries/teams within the church to re-evaluate their progress and goals.
temporal scales: how does one relate the horizon of a plan with the lived horizon of a citizen?” (This closely relates to Laura Bear’s (2014) work on the heterochrony of modern, capitalist time.) In Cairn, we can see how the nested scales of the ultimate instantiation of the Kingdom, the national revival of Scotland, the churches’ two-year visions and the six-month plans are interconnected through the Learning Community exercises. As Abram puts it, strategic planning serves to “furnish immediate decisions and the near future with coherence by linking them with broader temporal horizons.” (136) In particular, Cairn’s planning exercises adopt “backcasting”, which is popular among British planning councils:

> Whereas forecasting takes current trends, extrapolates them to a distant future, and invents policies to adapt to that future, backcasting starts with a desired future and invents policies to achieve it. The difference may sound subtle, but the concept of time is altered. Whereas forecasting sees the future as the inevitable outcome of the present, backcasting casts the future as a malleable result of present and future decisions. Backcasting thus gathers potential and agency into the near future, such that desired outcomes might be achieved by releasing the near future from merely extending trends set in the past. (ibid:143)

Cairn’s training structure invites imaginative, aspirational thinking, followed by a two-year plan, from which the immediate strategy is extrapolated. In contrast to Guyer’s (2007) findings on macroeconomic and evangelical time as emptying the near future, Cairn’s near future is laden with agency, responsibility and potential. By revisiting this planning exercise every six months, the collective imagination of Cairn is “pitched forward” and, ideally, afforded a sense of momentum (Robbins, 2013).

**Spirit and Strategy**

The six-month grid, learning square and other Learning Community tools serve to rationalize revival-making. Spiritual, interpersonal, and organisational goals are named, categorised and made legible and measurable. In this way, Cairn
engages a type of rationality which is characteristic of neoliberalism. As Foucault words it, neoliberalism entails,

...extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family.

(Foucault, 2008:242).

Within the vast constellation of elements encompassed by “neoliberalism”, several do not apply to Cairn. However, what I highlight here is that Cairn draws on a logic which is recognisably a part of the pervasive neoliberalism of its urban Scottish context. It is the specific type of social rationality – “a practical method for organizing human contact” – with which I am concerned in this chapter as, for Cairn, it aids in rendering an ambitious national revival as both imaginable and actionable (Rudnyckyj, 2010:20). Cairn draws this logic into a kind of spiritual economy in which strategy and rationalization are intertwined with prophetic spirituality.

The content of six-month plans is varied; intertwining prophetic\(^{39}\) prayer, practicalities of church meetings, website maintenance, sermon ideas, and introducing new concepts and language to the congregation. This is typical of Learning Communities where distinction between the spiritual and strategic, the Durkheimian sacred/profane divide, is traversed productively. Kirsch’s (2011) work on Pentecostalism in Zambia effectively challenges the “prevailing scholarly notions of the relationship between ‘charisma’ and ‘institution’” as polarised, with the former inevitably giving way to the latter” (3). Reworking Weber’s ideal types of charisma and bureaucracy, Kirsch demonstrates how these elements, in fact, “coalesce” in his Christian context. Kirsch demonstrates the lack of personal division between spiritual healing on one hand and bureaucratic admin on the other, closing his introduction’s ethnographic vignette with, “Having cast out the demons, the General Secretary now resumed his bureaucratic paperwork.” (ibid:1). Cairn’s combination of

\(^{39}\) Generally, “the prophetic” in this context refers to any communication from God. It is believed that anyone can hear from God and that He is always “speaking”. He is said to communicate in a range of ways: audible voice, visions, sensations, thoughts, dreams, serendipitous events etc. This is the focus of chapter two.
spirituality and strategy sits in the “conceptual space between ideal types” among the unattended “composites, mixtures and hybrids that Max Weber was so aware of.” (ibid:6). Desires to make staff meetings more efficient, and to radically transform the community by introducing them to Jesus, are spoken in the same breath, seen as connected parts of a broader goal. The prophetic undergirds the whole Learning Community process with attendees repeatedly encouraged to include God in their team exercises. The social functioning and political effects of prophecy will be explored in chapter two. But here, it is important to note that prophetic spirituality is closely intertwined with the strategic planning of Cairn’s revival-making work. While they combined readily when completing the planning grids, this spiritual/strategic dynamic can also present as a paradox of agency. To conclude this chapter, I consider the productive tension between intentional planning and “authenticity”.

**Organic and Organised**
This chapter has looked closely at Learning Communities as a key location for Cairn’s movement-making work and unpacked their strategic approach to revival. Cairn uses diagrams and grids which extend economic logic to the project of Christian revival. Through “vision” exercises and story sharing, Learning Communities perform imaginative work, uniting the movement to shared aspirations which are rendered feasible through diagrams, strategic language and temporal work. Language plays a key role in the training, putting names and logical procedures to otherwise complex processes. The multi-layered temporalities of planning break down utopian dreams of the Kingdom to actionable next steps, and the cyclical rhythm of LCs, ideally, generates a sense of progress toward that goal. However, there is an important slippage in Cairn’s application of organisation and strategy. Sometimes the models don’t quite fit; they seem to fail. Cairn’s architects and followers know this. So, whilst Cairn’s teachings offer tools, models and metrics there is a strong desire for authenticity which suffuses the movement. Personal “relationship” and the active involvement of the Holy Spirit are two of Cairn’s most highly prized values. Being “relational” is seen as authentic and the antithesis of “religion” or “institution” which are rigid and impersonal. This desire for authenticity sometimes means pushing back against rationalization of personal and spiritual
spheres. This pushback is not tantamount to total rejection of the strategic approach; prophecy and planning generally co-exist quite harmoniously in this context. Rather, there is a productive negotiation between them.

Achieving the balance of what some leaders termed “organic versus organised” was a consistent concern among Cairn’s followers. This not only arose regarding too strictly applying models to the domestic sphere but also in terms of Cairn’s evangelism. Returning to sit with the church team which joked about their member’s failure to lead her husband through the Learning Square, I listened to another member speak about his disapproval of many churches’ approach to evangelising:

*I hate the false, forced way people invite non-Christians to come along then sort of spring a Bible study on them that they didn’t sign up for. Like, I don’t like the weird set up of tricking non-Christians: asking them to dinner then bringing out the biblical exegesis!*

Another attendee echoed his concerns, expressing how she felt uneasy with the potentially instrumental undertone to mission. “I’m just really uncomfortable with the idea of making people into projects. I don’t just invest in relationships with my friends for an end goal of evangelism!”

Approaches to mission/evangelism will be the subject of chapter five, but these examples serve to demonstrate that the disciples learning Lifeshapes and completing six-month planning grids are also deeply concerned that their work toward revival does not simply become a project in organising. Rather, they hope for connections which are meaningful and genuine. Rich himself makes these points in his quote at the opening of this chapter and of the Learning Community event: “We want this to be a community environment...”, “We’re not giving pre-set answers...”. Even shortly after teaching Lifeshapes, I heard him tell attendees, “unless there is that real relationship, using the structures, the skeletons, of Huddle or the squares...there’s a limit,”. While the models and structures help to unite aspirations and make them actionable, to apply them too zealously would in fact jeopardise the movement’s goal of authenticity. At a Cairn “Best Practice Day”, the movement’s veteran LC groups – having now graduated to become “Communities of Practice” – met to share their experiences and reflect on the process of change so far. Alan, a leader in Cairn’s
executive team and head of the movement’s church planting partner organisation, took to the front to share his church’s learning points:

“Stuff we learned here about discipleship culture doesn’t work...” I stop typing my notes and look up. There are smirks and chuckles from the gathered church leaders: some with nervous laughter at this controversial statement, others with an affectionate recognition of Alan’s straight-talking. He continues, “Well, it kinda works. We’ve seen ninety-two first time conversions, mostly adults from the [addiction] recovery community. Virtually none has stuck. We don’t know how to disciple these guys. So, we had to look again at our discipleship program. If the map and the terrain disagree, believe the terrain. We came away from Learning Communities with fantastic plans. But... you have a bash, and go “oh crap, that’s not gonna work”. The situation was different to what we perceived. Don’t worry about the plan; keep asking questions about the context.”

There are ways in which Cairn’s models fail in unwanted ways: they receive ridicule for their rigidity; some (from both inside and outside the movement) critique the approach for being too business-like; it is said their method can fall on deaf ears when the alien language and intellectualisation carry no currency (notably, working class contexts). However, there are ways in which the models are expected to fall short and should be “held lightly”. For instance, when plans are superseded by prophetic surprise, interpreted as God’s participation; or when a model is abandoned or made redundant due to an “organically” emerging relationship. Such forms of change are desired by Cairn precisely because they go beyond the bounds of human effort. These limits of the strategic models – explicitly highlighted by Alan - are in fact key to success in the eyes of the movement, making room for authenticity. In this thesis I argue that the Cairn movement hinges on a paradox of agency, a desire to be intentional whilst submitting to divine agency and embracing the “organic”. In other words, a productive combination of spirit and strategy. Having considered the movement’s organisation of human agency through training events, in the following chapter, I turn to the management of divine agency.
Chapter 2. Prophecy

Liberton Kirk sits in a desirable suburb in south Edinburgh. I stop for a moment to admire the huge, grey stone building, partially hugged in a blanket of ivy. I turn my eye from the bright red arched doors, to the building opposite. Directly across the road are the church halls, including a café, with a sort of community centre-cum-retirement home feel to it. Stepping inside, I look through the glass door to the café where three generations of a family are eating soup together; the grandfather proudly balancing a chuckling toddler on his knee. I consult the whiteboard which sits at the foot of some stairs. In red marker, I spot “Cairn Lothians Prayer Lunch” assigned to “the upper room”.

Arriving at the top of the stairs, I find various conversations are bubbling between casually dressed ministers. Liberton Kirk’s minister is taking the cling film off a platter of sandwiches and setting teacups next to canisters of hot water and coffee. I take a seat at one of the tables, arranged in a large square which takes up most of the room. Elaine and Scott both squeeze my shoulder, saying hello as they walk past me to their seats. These lunches are held every six weeks for leaders of churches involved in the “Cairn Lothian” Learning Community training. As we each visit the little buffet table and return to our seats with lunch, a heated discussion begins between some of the church leaders: Are “Jaffa Cakes” biscuits or cakes? One young youth pastor adds in his broad Edinburgh accent, “They’re in a ma Granny’s biscuit tin so that is all that needs to be say-d!” Whilst others continue to stoke the argument, Scott makes a sarcastic comment about me capturing these important church debates in my research. The minister from Barclay Viewforth Church of Scotland, wryly comments that it’s a “very Presbyterian” approach to say that those who wish to call it a biscuit may call it a biscuit, while those who wish to call it a cake should also be free to do so.

Scott is minister at “Lighthouse Central”. The suffix was added when they twinned with Central church a few years ago. Known as an expert evangelist, Scott is also employed by Central, Cairn, and “Forge” (a church planting organisation). He remains seated as he starts off today’s prayer lunch with a “faith affirming story” about visitors to his church’s café. Whilst talking to a
young woman and her aunt (described as “very religious” which, as discussed in chapter one, is not a compliment), Scott felt moved by God. He explained that his arms “tingle with power” when he is “supposed to pray for someone”. So, he asked if he could pray for the young woman and she agreed. He reached out his hand and said, “I believe God wants to give you something.” At this point in the story, Scott emphasises that this is all taking place in a very casual café environment. The woman felt overwhelmed and cried and, though she didn’t “come to faith”, Scott believes this was an “encounter” for her. Off the back of this story, Scott reiterates that God always wants to speak with us and so asks that we get into small groups to listen to Him and pray for one another.

My group includes Scott, Elaine (from Barclay Viewforth) and another leader from Scott’s church (whom I hadn’t met before). We’ve only just huddled our chairs together in the corner of the room when conversation quickly turns to my lack of Christian faith. “I got the feeling when I met you that you might be fearful of going deeper,” Elaine suggests to me. She speaks of the disciple Peter asking, “Is that you Lord?” Elaine - asking my consent before placing a hand on my shoulder - proceeds to pray aloud. She speaks clearly, “Heavenly father, thank you for Emma,” and goes on to pray that I “wouldn’t get bogged down in research” but that I’d see God in it. She prays for a few minutes and after saying “amen,” Elaine tells me that she has thought those things about me ever since we met, yet she didn’t really know what she was going to say in prayer until she said it. She expressed surprise at the words she’d spoken, alluding they were not entirely of her volition. Scott suggests that I have “a prophetic gift” (an assertion which often came up in our conversations) and he asks if I’ve experienced anything spiritually which would put me off going deeper in exploring faith. He explains how his sons have had a prophetic gift since they were children but, through prophetic visions, saw things which scared them and for a while it deterred them from embracing their gift.

When we move to focusing on Scott, his prayer request is about a decision he needs to make. He has begun applying for a Masters degree in Transformational Leadership (a qualification in which several Cairn leaders had expressed

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40 Scott didn’t say precisely what it was God wanted to give but seemed to imply one of the many blessings said to be associated with knowing God - new life, hope, peace.
interest). However, he is also working on writing a book and feels sure that the book is “for now”, so worries that pursuing the Masters simultaneously might be problematic. The degree would boost his teaching credentials which Scott “expects” he will use in America in future decades. This notion of working in the US is explicitly framed as “expectation”; not a plan of his own making but something Scott has foreseen as part of God’s plans for him. Elaine prays aloud, asking for clarity from God during Scott’s decision-making. Afterwards, Scott tells us he saw a vision as Elaine spoke her prayer but was not sure what it meant. He saw a silver platter with silver goblets on it. Turning directly to me, he asks, “Emma, what would your interpretation be?” Having had a few years’ experience of prophetically-inclined groups at Central, this was not the first time I’d been invited to interpret visions. I suggest the image could represent being offered many good options – none of which are wrong – but he can only drink from one cup at a time. I offer an equivalent visual analogy about a child with a toy chest: some toys are in the chest for later, some are in sight and tempting, but he should play with one at a time. (In hindsight, most children I’ve met defy that logic.) There is a short pause. “Wow,” Scott responds, sharing amazed grins and knowing glances with Elaine and the other leader. Their eyes widen as they nod, chuckle and affirm that I am “definitely prophetic”.

Ten days later, I found myself back in the very same corner of “the upper room”, learning “techniques” and “codes of conduct” on Cairn Lothians’ Prophecy Course. As the trainer spoke, I scribbled her words in my notes: “We don’t have prophecy by accident, we need to be intentional about this gift.” I wondered, how does Cairn reconcile this emphasis on intentional agency with my experience as an inadvertently prophetic non-Christian?

This chapter focuses on “the prophetic”. In my research context, “prophecy” is used as an umbrella term for “live and direct” (Engelke 2007) communication from God. As the opening vignette demonstrates, God communicates through visions and bodily sensations. He is also known to “speak” through thoughts, sounds, or images which appear in the mind and which the person feels they did not generate (recall Elaine’s surprise at her own prayer). More rarely, some will hear an audible voice which seems to come from their external
surroundings, like someone next to them whispering in their ear. God also choreographs serendipitous events which disciples interpret for signs and meanings. More broadly, the prophetic encompasses dreams and prophetic arts (artwork, dance, music), as well as spiritual gifts such as empathy and discernment which afford supernatural insight. Central church–Cairn’s flagship – is charismatic in nature and, for several years, has been “cultivating a prophetic culture”: holding events with explicit focus on prophecy, offering prophetic training, and encouraging congregants to tell stories of hearing from God during Sunday gatherings. (I first noticed this emphasis around 2013.) So, perhaps unsurprisingly the prophetic is explicitly incorporated in the Cairn movement. In making plans for transformation as we saw in chapter one, or “discerning who God made you to be” (chapter three), disciples are encouraged to listen to God. He is considered to be actively involved in these processes and should be directly consulted for His thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Cairn contends that prophecy is available to anybody; anyone can hear God’s voice. However, some people are more proficient than others. Moreover, whilst everyone can be prophetic, not everyone is “a prophet”. Certain people are called to “the office” of prophet⁴¹; that is the capacity in which God intends for them to serve the church. So, though the ability to “hear” is available to all, it is not equally distributed. Still, Cairn stands in contrast to many Pentecostal church contexts in which a select few, exceptionally gifted and verified individuals have access to the prophetic (e.g. Jules-Rossette 1988). The relative accessibility of the prophetic gift in Cairn’s case presents a unique need to manage God’s participation mediated by numerous believers.

In this chapter I consider how God’s involvement is manifested in the Cairn movement. I will examine prophecy as skill and gift and the complex dynamics of agency involved in this duality. I consider how the prophetic lends authority to people, ideas, and plans. Taking “the Prophecy Course” as my initial focus, I explore the rhetorics of gift and skill and show how attribution of agency is complicated by a, seemingly oxymoronic, expectation of surprise. Moving on from this pedagogical setting, I consider how God’s revelations are collaboratively produced but also hierarchically managed by church leaders.

⁴¹ Referring to Ephesians 4:11 – “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.
Finally, I will look at the role prophecy plays in planning revival strategically. Firstly though, it is important to note the controversy surrounding the prophetic which Cairn’s architects seek to overcome.

At a Learning Community in Belfast, two of the trainers held a lunchtime “taster session” to gauge interest in running The Prophecy Course in the city. They explained to the curious attendees,

> [At Learning Communities] There’s the undergirding assumption that people know how to hear God’s voice and to recognise those Kairos moments. We want to equip you to hear God to guide how we choose those leaders, make those decisions. It also comes into the Huddles we’ve been teaching about – we lead Huddles not as experts but having learned to hear God.

The organisers of this LC had agreed that the prophecy taster session should be held informally, in the same large hall where everyone would be eating lunch.

“It should be somewhere really accessible and visible so people can see we’re not doing something weird,” an organiser stated during the preparatory meeting that morning. Whilst Central explicitly encouraged spiritual gifts like prophecy, the prophetic is controversial in some less charismatic church circles, not least the Church of Scotland.

Elaine, the woman who prayed for me in the “upper room”, is a graduate of Training Hub (Cairn’s leadership training program). During her term of Training Hub, the program had “streams” allowing attendees to specialise in an area of spiritual/skills development e.g. leading worship. Elaine had applied to the “Life Care” stream which involved honing pastoral counselling skills, but it transpired that this option was cancelled, and she had instead been assigned to the “Prayer and Prophecy” stream. Elaine was daunted by this and describes retrospectively how she had been avoiding the prophetic for years. Due to her Church of

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42 Kairos moments refer to instances of God’s “inbreaking”, where He is drawing the believer’s attention, teaching them something. More on this in the following chapter.
43 The Presbyterianism which characterises Cairn’s church audience in Northern Ireland was seen as very similar to CoS, not least in terms of its trepidation around charisma.
Scotland background, Elaine said, she had received almost no teaching on prophecy and was cynical and fearful about the idea of modern-day prophets. She explained that for believers in CoS, the suggestion that they could prophesy was met with a meek and sceptical, “who, me!?” Through the process of a Huddle with prophecy expert Deborah, Elaine has embraced the prophetic and is now praised by Cairn members for attempting to introduce it to her Church of Scotland congregation. I joined Elaine at a Cairn “best practice” event where she and two ladies from BV were creating the church’s six-month goals. Elaine announced enthusiastically, “Prophetic culture” and began to write it on the goals grid. Her fellow congregant’s face contorted. “Prophecy’ has connotations... It’s scary. Can’t we just say. ‘praying and listening to God’ instead?” Elaine smiles and speaks encouragingly: “Any hearing from God is prophecy. It’s not as scary as you think. I bet if you pray and close your eyes, He’d give you a vision or a word. Some people do hear aurally, but He speaks to me in pictures. Ask, ‘what do you want to say to me God?’ The other woman continues to look horrified. Elaine turns to me and chuckles, “She’s needing persuading.” “More like twisting my arm,” the woman replies, curtly.

Clearly, Elaine made some progress with the arm twisting/persuading. As I took my seat in Liberton Kirk’s upper room for the Prophecy Course session, the formerly horrified woman sat down next to me, opening the course manual and a notebook, looking a little nervous. Deborah is in her mid-twenties, from Northern Ireland, and is known as an expert in the prophetic. Having apprenticed at Central, she now runs various prophetic huddles and delivers the eight-session Prophecy Course which was designed by English author Cath Livesey who comes from the same Sheffield church as Rich Robinson and 3DM’s Mike Breen. Livesey’s organisation “Accessible Prophecy” is officially affiliated with Rich and Mike’s organisations and has the tagline “growing prophetic culture in the local church”. Today, we cover the material from sessions five and six in the booklet which will be led by Deborah, Elaine and another known (male) prophet from Central. Like most prophetic groups and events I encountered, the attendees are almost all female and middle aged. There are fewer than twenty of us assembled in two rows, for the five-hour training and we sit facing our instructors with notepads at the ready.
Prophecy as Skill and Gift

“We can all learn to hear God’s voice,” Elaine tells us, as she recaps from the previous session and summarises today’s agenda. She shares with us how it was that, someone with a Church of Scotland background with its attendant preconceptions, was initially reluctant to embrace the prophetic: “I didn’t know enough to let Him in.” Today’s theme was to be about “growing, becoming more prophetic.” And we were reminded of a popular phrase which accompanies explanations of prophecy: “The prophetic is like a muscle; it needs exercising to get stronger.” Cairn propagates a rhetoric around prophecy which casts it as a skill. I jotted quotes in my notebook as the leaders told us that prophecy is “not passive”, we don’t have it “by accident”. “Intentionality” is crucial. Elaine invokes the Parable of the Talents⁴⁴ to emphasise that, “we mustn’t bury the gifts God has given to us. We must faithfully use it. God wants us to grow in the prophetic.”

Some of the initial Prophecy Course material focuses on the cultivation of the prophetic imagination during prayer; learning to “listen” and identify which thoughts are authored by God. Livesey - creator of The Prophecy Course (2016) - advocates journaling and lots of practice in order to recognise the unique quality of God-given words and pictures. She recommends an imaginative technique for practicing: picture Jesus in front of you, or the person for whom you are praying, and see what He says or does. Another beginner’s exercise I encountered was asking God “which fruit” represents the person for whom you are praying and why. Luhrmann (2012b) has written extensively on this practice of cultivating prayer experiences in which God is present vividly in the imagination. Like Cairn’s disciples, her Vineyard interlocutors work to develop “radical receptivity” to ideas, feelings and events in their lives, as potential sources of communication from God (see also Albrecht et al, 2014:241).

Luhrmann (2012a, 2012b) writes that the prophetic requires re-learning “theory of mind”, a psychological phenomenon developed in childhood where we come to understand that the contents of our minds are private and distinct from others (Luhrmann, 2012b:xxii). Prophetic minds, by contrast, are not bounded

⁴⁴ The Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 tells of a master who trusted his property, in unequal shares, to three servants. When the master returned after a long absence, the servant who had buried the talent - rather than using it and increasing its value – was punished.
by psychic privacy because God participates in thoughts and alters feelings. Those seeking to “know his voice” learn to attend carefully to their mind and senses, to identify the Holy Spirit’s presence.

For today’s lesson, Elaine walks us through ten points on cultivating a “lifestyle” which prepares the believer to grow in their prophetic ability, not only in moments of concerted prayer. These points include spiritual disciplines, reading the bible, nurturing a relationship with the Holy Spirit, and worshipping continuously. Key to this ideal lifestyle is engaging the prophetic across all areas of life and adopting an attitude of expectation.

*Use prophecy in all areas of life: going to the supermarket, in the school playground, in the office. Give words of encouragement to those around you. Sometimes we feel comfortable in particular settings, [such as] practicing prophecy in church, then we lose that expectation elsewhere.*

The emphasis on using prophecy in all spaces and circumstances reinforces Cairn’s broader contention that contacting God is a capacity which resides in the individual. It is not dependent on proximity to a particular place, object, person or ambience. Recall, for example, Scott’s story from the opening vignette and his emphasis on the ordinariness of the café setting. Connected with this unbounded domain of prophecy, is a continual expectation that God may speak – or rather, is always speaking – anywhere and anytime. So, believers need to be ready to “tune in” (Bialecki 2017, Luhrmann 2012b) to his voice and neither allow it to be drowned out by their busy everyday tasks, nor doubt God’s desire to be involved in the minutiae of the mundane. In small break-out discussion groups, Deborah reassured us that many find it easier to hear God when they demarcate moments of dedicated stillness to pray and listen. But with practice, this was said to cultivate an “inner stillness” which would eventually allow believers to hear God even in the bustle of their day to day lives. As Bialecki (2017) notes, demarcated times for focusing on prophecy purposefully encourage a watchfulness wherein aspects of sensorium that would ordinarily go un-noticed, are drawn to one’s attention. He adds, “this recalibration of the senses can become habitual in the same way eyes learn to
focus and scan in particular patterns in written text,” (ibid: 120). This habitual scanning for God’s voice is the goal of a prophetic lifestyle.

One of the stories held up as an ideal of prophetic practice was taken from the life of Louise. She is leader of prayer and prophecy at Central and mentored Deborah in this role. She is regarded as a very prophetic individual, often called upon to sit on the panel for “prophetic appointments” (depicted later in this chapter) and lead prophecy events. I first heard the story from Louise herself when she was a guest speaker at Castlebank Baptist – a suburban Edinburgh church - and went on to hear it retold by others in various church settings. Her story begins on a hectic morning in her household. Her husband is at work and her young children are in high spirits. It’s chaotic. Amidst this, Louise has the dreadful realisation that they have no milk in the house for breakfast. So, she corrals the kids into a buggy and heads out the door, towards the supermarket. It’s raining, and she’s grumpy, tired, and overwhelmed. As she stomps along the street, lively children in tow, she hears God tell her to go and buy flowers for the lady who lives in the house she just passed. Louise describes how she argued with God all the way to the supermarket: “No! I’m only going to buy milk. And frankly, I’m having a rubbish day – who’s buying me flowers?!” But by the time she left the supermarket she had reluctantly decided to obey. On the way home, she knocked on the woman’s door and said, “I live just round the corner and I wanted you to have these.” The old woman looked at her joyfully and blown away. It transpired that it was the woman’s birthday, and Louise was the first person she had spoken to that day.

This story – always met with smiles - is intended to illustrate Louise as an exemplar of leading a prophetic lifestyle. Others are invited to aspire to such experiences. The narrative is predicated on conversation with God as an everyday expectation in Louise’s life. She is unsurprised to find herself chatting to God on the way to the supermarket and their interaction is easy and intimate enough that there is even a back and forth with her “arguing”. But there is an element of surprise here in as much as Louise was not sitting in church with a Bible in front of her, no worship music playing, and she was not actively trying to pray. God instigated the conversation as she went about her day. Of course, Louise’s deferral to God’s authority and her willingness to “step out” and “be bold” in approaching a stranger on His instruction, is ultimately praised as a
faithful act. The re-telling of this story is significant. The smiles it generates are not only due to warm feeling. Stories of prophetic situations like this one are testament to God’s involvement in the world and to the possibility for His believers to hear from and collaborate with Him. As Bialecki (2017:134) points out, accounts of the miraculous can function as miracles in themselves through the effects on those who hear them. They are signs of the divine which produce expectation of more.

While Cairn’s disciples are encouraged to actively cultivate a lifestyle of practicing prophecy, Louise’s story illustrates that God is understood as the author of received revelations: it was He who initiated and arranged the encounter. This is crucial to the authority of prophetic utterances. Whilst believers have a responsibility to seek, learn and practice the prophetic; the Prophecy Course training is very careful to emphasise that they have no control over when, how, or what He speaks. Sometimes Jesus shows up in unexpected ways.

At one of Castlebank Baptist church’s Bible study and prayer evenings, it was Emily’s turn to lead. Emily, a theology graduate in her mid-twenties, is charismatic in her faith and speaks often of “having fun with Jesus” and chatting with Him about what is on her mind. She stands ready to address the gathering. “I had a plan [for this evening’s gathering],” she tells us, standing with her weight on one hip and with hands gesticulating, “but then Jesus spoke. So, now I’m winging it!” Her cheerful nonchalance fades and suddenly tears well up in Emily’s eyes, her cheeks flushing slightly: “Oh my word, I didn’t expect this.” She tucks blonde waves behind her ears and reaches to her pocket for a tissue. The group looks kindly towards her, politely chuckling and nodding encouragement. “You can tell I’m a crier when Jesus turns up! …We’re going to acknowledge how God sees us and speak about who He’s made us to be and the good we see in ourselves and others…” She fans her face as her voice breaks and the tears well again, “Ooft! …Now He’s speaking about you guys.” She laughs at herself, turns her face from us and inhales deeply to gain her composure, then asks that

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45 In this context, “God”, “Jesus” and the “Holy Spirit” were cited interchangeably as the author of prophetic revelations.
we turn to the person next to us and speak about what gifts God has given us. Emily made it through the rest of the evening with her composure intact, guiding paired and group conversations on gratitude for the gifts of God.

As we stack chairs at the end of the night, she reflects with me on Jesus’ unexpected interruption. “He just times his words to me so on purpose. Like, when I’m totally exposed, and I think I’ve got a plan... BAM! He’ll whisper something so close to me and just bring me to my knees.” She goes on to chuckle about how Jesus can get quite “sassy” with her, and a little sarcastic, especially when she thinks she is in control of a situation as opposed to Him. This sort of surprise where God leverages Emily’s own thoughts and emotions, is challenging to the “modern” notion of the person as autonomous subject (Bialecki 2017: 125). Emily experiences an intimate relationship with Jesus wherein conversation is commonplace. Whilst Emily will sometimes instigate these conversations, this is not always the case as the moments when she was emotionally overwhelmed demonstrate. Jesus interrupts: He speaks unprompted and with words that are both unexpected and deeply significant. I recall Emily telling me about how Jesus was speaking particularly clearly when she was recently out walking. “Can you hold that thought ‘til I get home and can write it down?” she replied jokingly. Emily reflects on how these interruptions are reminders that she is not in control of her interior and exterior worlds.

Core to the prophetic is a dynamic of surprise and expectation which hinges on locating agency. This is explored fruitfully by Bialecki (2017) and Mittermaier (2011). Bialecki, in a church context not dissimilar to my own fieldsite, writes that “one can choose to listen to God [...] but one cannot decide to hear God; it is by definition something that happens to a passive recipient.” (97). Intentionally practicing prophecy – as encouraged by Cairn’s Prophecy Course – works to “summon up” surprise, constituting “a willed passiveness” (ibid:119). Cairn asks its followers to cultivate a “lifestyle” which makes room for surprise. Mittermaier (2011) studying Muslim dream-vision interpretation in Egypt depicts a similar tension of agency. Challenging rhetorics of self-cultivation and the autonomous subject, Mittermaier invites us to consider “preparedness” and that “it is not mutually exclusive to seek spiritual experiences and to be overcome by them, nonetheless” (103). Even when Cairn’s disciples diligently practice or set time aside to hear God, the presence and nature of any
encounter will only occur on His terms. Whilst dream interpreters encourage their clients to take up various spiritual disciplines to facilitate prophetic dreaming, ultimately “it is the dream’s agency that matters, more so than the dreamer’s” (S). Yet, Mittermaier (2012) also writes that even though the dream-vision content is gifted to the dreamer, it does not excuse their agency but rather invokes responsibility for them to act upon it. This imperative to act resulting from an externally-authored revelation is also identified by the creator of The Prophecy Course: “There is a profound intentionality to God’s spoken words to us. [...] We need to be active responders rather than passive receivers.” (Livesey 2015: 141). So, disciples are to seek the unexpected and be ready to respond, actively and intentionally, to the resulting surprise.

Whilst intentionality is encouraged in pursuing prophecy, it is also potentially problematic. Alongside emphases on intention and “eagerly desiring” prophecy, the course teachers told us that prophesying, “should come from a place of rest rather than striving. [...] Striving can muddy the channels and taint the prophecy.” The tainting factor to which the trainer, Deborah, refers here represents the potential for the believer to distort God’s words or manufacture parts of the revelation. In other words, striving risks too much human agency and wrongful authorship by the disciple rather than God. This was the greatest point of trepidation discussed in the course’s break-out groups. More than the worry of not hearing anything from God, the course attendees worried that they would think they had heard Him, but “get it wrong”. Specifically, they asked Deborah, “how do I know it’s not just my imagination?” A popular response to this concern was to reassure the learner that “God gave you your imagination.” A believer’s imagination is not entirely self-authored, rather God will use it for spiritual communication. Accuracy did not seem to be the primary concern of prophetic trainers indeed, learners were reminded consistently that most prophecy they hear or deliver will not be 100% accurate but rather a mixture of human words with God’s. The greater focus was placed on continuously building relationship with God through trying to talk with Him. Moreover, the Prophecy Course’s teaching on how to share revelation, manages the potential dangers of human error in three ways: setting the expectations of fallibility and partiality, separating revelation from interpretation, and interpreting collaboratively with other believers.
The expectation that prophecies are partial and collaboratively made alleviates the pressures of total accuracy from individual prophesiers. Moreover, the belief that God is always speaking and that all can hear means that potential revelations are plentiful, further assuaging anxieties about ensuring each one is successful. I recall one occasion where Scott – known to be prophetically gifted – was leading a small group discussion at a training weekend and invited those present to contribute revelations they had received in prayer. On Scott’s encouragement, one man offered gingerly a vision for which he confessed he had no interpretation. The vision was of an iconic scene from the movie “Jaws” in which a gas cannister explosion finally defeats the terrorising shark. Scott admitted he didn’t know “what that was about,” and opened it to the group. A few members tried to highlight possible symbolism – the shark as fear in the church, the canister as the small solution taking on the big beast. But the conversation lacked the sense of resonance which tends to mark a seemingly successful prophetic moment. Yet, this didn’t seem to concern anyone. In the face of a prophetic word that was not met with resonance or applicability, I saw Cairn’s followers puzzle for a moment over potential meanings, then simply move on accepting that it may well have a meaning that is not instantly understandable to those present but might reveal itself later on. Or, that it was simply a “miss” (to borrow Bialecki’s (2017) interlocutors’ term). That the believer was trying to speak with God, and open to participating in the collaborative work of hearing Him was more highly valued in this scenario than discerning an accurate revelation. Through techniques which assume fallibility, separate revelation from interpretation and promote collaboration, Cairn allows for “failed” prophecies to be simply let go without calling into question a believer’s capacity to prophesy, or more fundamentally, the possibility of hearing God. I further explore these elements of delivering prophetic words in the following sections.

The Prophecy Course teaches the paramount importance of “delivery” in sharing a prophetic revelation. When receiving communication from God which is to be shared with others, disciples are told to be very careful about their language and attitude: They should approach with humility and caution, even when they feel they have heard clearly from God. For instance, Deborah told a story of a well-known prophet who although he writes books on the subject will
still preface sharing a revelation with phrases like, “I’m learning to hear from God...” , “I think God might be saying...” The content of some revelations is thought to be especially sensitive and calls for cautious handling. “Directional words”, which seem to call a person to take particular action require a prophesier to take precautions before sharing it with the intended recipient, including consulting someone in church leadership for their discernment. Prophecy about “matches, hatches, and dispatches” – i.e. romantic relationships, pregnancies, and deaths – were to be avoided as far as possible and handled with utmost caution due to the potentially emotional ramifications for recipients. In general, Deborah remarked that, “prophecy should be lightly given, lightly received.” So, not only should those prophesying make clear their fallibility but they should also make room for the receiver (and other believers present) to either disagree or collaborate in interpreting the revelation. When prophesying for someone, one should always make clear that words are “weighed and tested” through prayer, reference to scripture, and verification from other prophets. Deborah taught us:

Avoid “thus sayeth the Lord,” partly because God’s capable of contemporary English! *laughs* We’re new testament prophets which means we get to prophesy in community. We all get to weigh His words because we have the Holy Spirit. So, it’s not “This is it, no argument.”

Some of the most established anthropological work on the prophetic focuses on the role of language. Csordas classifies prophecy as the most overtly sacred genre of charismatic ritual language as it is “a means of access to the mind of God” (Csordas, 1997:322). Scholars of this field have attended to the ways in which rhetorical strategies allow groups to “attribute spiritual authority to their utterances and participate in the communal creation of a spiritual message,” (Szuchewycz, 1994:390). Style and vocabulary, including pronoun use are effective tools in variously positioning speaker, author, and listener, creating a “we” of the church community, attending an orator whose words are not their own (Csordas, 1997; Jules-Rossette, 1988). Csordas’ informants will most often indicate the prophetic nature of their speech by speaking in the first person in which “I” is God; the speaker presents themselves as the animator of speech but not the author (Goffman 1981). This style, in which the prophesier is
“ventriloquized by God” tends to be accompanied by grand vocabulary, like “thus sayeth the Lord”, akin to the King James Version of the Bible (Bialecki 2017:126). Such direct speech is often incorporated in more autocratic prophetic styles wherein the prophet’s gift and the truth of their revelations are considered infallible (ibid: 130-133). Cairn is very careful to distance itself from this “overweening” (ibid:131) style of prophecy. (Though, notably, the movement is partnered with the Glasgow Prophetic Centre where we find lauded prophets, prophesying in first person.) Cairn prefers two other forms of prophetic language which Bialecki describes in his study of the Vineyard in California. The first, reported speech, sees the prophesier relay what God has said to them, i.e “God is saying that...”. The roles of animator and speaker are clearly separate and thus “issues of human agency and responsibility are far less pointed” (ibid: 132). The other form used by Cairn is prophetic visions where the visual revelation is depicted but also requires translation to ascertain its meaning. Here, human responsibility and involvement is greater. In the following example from the Prophecy Course, I elucidate how Cairn’s prophesiers work to clearly indicate God as author.

The final portion of the morning’s training was entitled “activations”. “We do these activations of the gift of prophecy because there needs to be some practical output from this gift,” Deborah announces. “We’re going to do some blindfold prophecy, and I’m gonna need two volunteers.” The room is instantly tense. After an uncomfortable silence, two women move tentatively to the front. Deborah asks for a few people to lend their scarves and the two women stand with them tied around their eyes. She asks for two more volunteers. With a continued air of reluctance, two more ladies slowly prise themselves from their chairs and nervously eek forward to stand in front of their blindfolded counterparts. All four clasp their hands in front of them. Deborah explains that the blindfolded women are going to listen to God for what He has to say about the anonymous person now stood in front of them. The blindfolds remove the possibility that the prophesiers could be swayed by visual cues or any prior knowledge of the person in front of them, thus suggesting that any revelations are from an exterior source. Deborah gently prays a simple prayer - “come Holy Spirit” - and leaves silence during which all the volunteers and onlookers are still. After a minute or so, Deborah says “Just when you’re ready, you can tell us
what you heard, saw.” Still blindfolded, one woman says, “I saw a running stream,” she lifts her hand to illustrate, “It was a trickle and then it misses out the middle and there’s a rushing wave. I also think I got a Bible verse – Proverbs 18:4 - but I’m not sure what it says. Maybe something about wisdom?” Deborah takes a Bible from the table next to her and scans to the verse. She reads it aloud: “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.” Smiles of excitement spread on the faces of the onlookers. Deborah asks the woman being prophesised over, “And, how does that land with you?” “Yes, wisdom is something I’ve had a lifelong search for,” she nods and grins in confirmation. The other blindfolded volunteer sees a circle and speaks about wholeness with a grounded centre. This time, when Deborah asks, “And how does that land with you?”, the woman receiving the prophecy explains, “That’s not how I feel right now. In fact, I really feel the opposite. That’s what I long to feel like.” “I think that’s what he wants for you,” the blindfolded prophesier says. “Isn’t it amazing that that’s how God sees you and that he wants you to know that?” Deborah reflects. She thanks the volunteers and invites them to take a seat. The exercise is repeated with new volunteers, and Deborah’s mediation, inviting those receiving prophecy to share what they think about the revelation given to them. She praises the blindfolded volunteers for “not dressing it up when you just got one word or a partial picture.” They had resisted the temptation to add to the revelation by their own authorship, endeavouring to stick purely to what they heard/saw from God. One of the intended outcomes of the morning’s session was to highlight the need for believers to “actively set aside their own agendas” when prophesying, and to beware of spiritual pride getting in the way of simply passing on God’s message. The agency of the believer was cast as potentially damaging to the practice and requiring careful monitoring, both by themselves, and through the accountability of third parties: like Deborah.

Cairn’s choice of language and approach to conveying prophetic revelation seeks to clearly index God as the author. The blindfold serves as a visible, tangible sign of the desire to eschew prophesiers’ agency in favour of channelling God’s message. Without the need for discussion, the Bible verse “received” by one of the prophesiers was taken to be a veracious revelation as the scripture was consonant with the rest of the prophetic word. This
“intertextual linking” helped to authenticate the prophecy (Szuchewycz 1994). However, in the case of prophetic words and especially visions, the authentication process pivoted on the response of the recipient: Deborah asked, “how does that land with you?” In the first instance, the recipient offered simple verification: the word about wisdom resonated with her, so was deemed accurate. The vision of the circle required the participation of Deborah, prophesier, and recipient to ascertain a relevant application. This separation of revelation and interpretation carefully manages the incorporation of human and divine agency. Deborah praises the women for not embellishing the revelation but welcomed her collaboration in the interpretation stage. This chapter so far has discussed the complex dynamic of agency involved in prophecy as both expected and surprising. In the following section, I continue with the theme of collaboration. While we might be quick to interpret embodied spiritual experiences – such as physical sensations, dreams, visions – as individual phenomena, the ethnography explored in this chapter invites us to consider the forms of relationships and negotiation they implicate. I explore the integration of God’s revelations as an inherently social process; prophecy as “co-acted” (Opas 2016).

The Social Life of Prophecy
On another Thursday evening at Castlebank Baptist Church (CBC), I joined a small group on a prayer walk through the neighbourhood. The usual Bible study and meal had been cancelled last minute due to problems with the church building. As the others headed home via the chip shop, five of us wandered the boundary of Castlebank in the relentless drizzle, pausing to pray aloud in locations deemed significant, including the tram tracks which connect this suburb to the city centre, and the boundary between Castlebank and its neighbouring areas. We continue for around twenty minutes, praying for God’s redemptive plans for this area. Sodden, we toddle back to the car, parked outside the church, and reflect on what sparked the decision to prayer walk this evening. As well as reacting to the cancellation of tonight’s gathering, they had been responding to a prophetic word Rose (a CBC member) received. Before we left the church, Rose had been telling me about her trip to last week’s “24/7 Prayer International” conference. One of the attendees at the event had given
her a prophetic word about prayer walks and when Rose reported back to lead pastor, David, he confirmed that this was not the first time such a word had been given to CBC. “So, we’d better do it!” Rose concluded. Another attendee at the prayer conference had prophesied a vision for Rose’s church: the church members walking the streets of the area with spades and pitchforks. Rose interpreted this as being about planting new things through prayer walking. But as I walked through the rain with prayer-walker, Melanie, she spoke about her thoughts on this image. A few months ago, Melanie had brought a prophetic word to David about “resilience”:

If you think about the use of a garden fork, it’s toiling, it’s persistent and hard work and ongoing. And you can toil the same piece of ground for a long time. Plus, it’s a repeated use of the body. The parts you’re using to toil over and over will become sore. So, it’s like we can expect that the same parts of us that we use are going to get hurt repeatedly and we’ll need to build resilience. We can expect calluses on our hands, blisters on our feet, and a sore back.

Melanie’s suggestion of an alternate interpretation did not bring into question the veracity of the vision itself, nor Rose’s ability to interpret prophetic visions. Prophetic visions lend themselves to multiple interpretations more readily than prophetic words or scripture. The separation of revelation from interpretation allows the meaning of the divine communication to be collaboratively determined without bringing into question the abilities or accuracy of the prophesier (Bialecki 2017: 54). Notably, Melanie interprets this vision in the light of previous prophetic insight: the word she received about “resilience”. So too did Rose who found confirmation for her interpretation, when David said that other prophetic words had highlighted prayer walking. The lead pastor of Castlebank Baptist church was a key figure in the prophetic process. I have never heard David identify prophecy as his primary gift, whereas others in his congregation are known to be particularly prophetic. But his role as the church’s leader positions him as manager of the revelations received. Rose and Melanie habitually reported revelations to David, and it is he who would decide whether and how the church should act on prophetic communications. His agency takes precedence. Prophecy is thus filtered through the church’s hierarchical division of labour. Haynes (2015) writes that in her Zambian Pentecostal context,
egalitarian access to spiritual gifts like prophecy can serve to challenge established authority, sometimes resulting in schism. Contrastingly – and perhaps, for this very reason - the Prophecy Course training taught prophesiers to defer to the church leader, even if s/he chooses not to act upon a revelation about which the prophet is adamant. Livesey stresses the importance of everyone in the Body of Christ knowing their role and working closely together. So, while we see many ways in which prophecy is egalitarian in Cairn, it is also hierarchically managed by experts and leaders. The prophetic is available to all, the “office” of some but ultimately subject to the same leadership structure as other church business. The following section develops this theme of the social organisation related to prophecy, looking to the ways in which it is incorporated in Cairn’s strategic revival-making.

The prophetic process undergirds Cairn’s Learning Community (and other training) cycles, with attendees consistently asked to listen to what God is saying about His plans for their church and local area. Where possible, some Learning Communities include prophetic appointments. During the training weekend, each church is assigned a timeslot when they leave their station’s Post-it notes and planning grids and are invited to a separate room. Whilst I was sitting on the sofa, taking a moment to jot down fieldnotes, one of the church leaders gently placed a hand on my shoulder and invited me to join their prophetic appointment. I looked to see the other members of his team strolling out of the auditorium. We climb the stone staircase to Central Halls’ “Islay” room where I had helped to arrange a circle of chairs earlier. The church group take one side of the circle, opposite the panel of prophets. I recognise their names and/or faces as renowned prophets in Cairn circles. The very presence of these “appointments”, consulting experts, reinforces that whilst all of Cairn’s followers have access to prophecy, the authority and ability to prophesy is not evenly distributed. Louise (from the story about supermarket flowers) takes the

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46 This may appear to match with the hierarchical organisation of the Ephesian offices—apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher—as argued by the New Apostolic Revival which places apostles in the position of authority (Bialecki 2016, Haynes forthcoming). However, Cairn’s approach to the five-fold ministries differs in its emphasis on harmonising/balancing the offices, as I will explore in the next chapter. Deference to the leader of the church in this case speaks to their managerial role rather than an inherent, divine authority above prophets.
lead, introducing the prophetic team and explaining the process of the appointment:

We’ll pray, invite Holy Spirit to come, and listen to God. We believe God loves to speak strengthening, encouragement and comfort. We’re comfortable with silence, so we might not say anything for a while. We’re not infallible; you need to weigh and test what we say.

Louise and Mark (the lead pastor who invited me to join) keep their eyes open. The rest close theirs, some bowing their heads. After around a minute of silence, the prophets begin.

S: I see a vision of a wave. It’s like in surfing; you need to wait and catch the wave in order to surf the furthest.

A: Yes. It’s a wave full of the glory of God, his manifest presence. Give time to his presence and miracles will overflow to the community. People will be attracted by that.

D: I really feel that God’s going to bless the connections between the church and community, vulnerable groups facing poverty – your church will be an important influence. I’m getting the word “rest”: that your church will be a place of rest for them. There’s power in you honouring those communities. Your heart matches with God’s and you’ll bring in people with the same heart.

L: I’m sensing a real celebration of the geographical area; I see like street parties, celebrating life.

A: That rejoicing starts with your leadership team; you need to reconnect with the joy of God.

L: Easter will be particularly important in that.

[...]

L: This is for Mark [the church leader]. I feel like God’s saying that you’re held in really high respect. But he wants you to know that even a teacher needs a teacher. And He’s enough. God can teach you.
D: Yes, also for Mark - I feel like God’s going to reveal new things inward and He’s calling on you to trust him in that. I’m thinking of the picture, on the wall, of the ship, in Narnia\(^{47}\). There is a season for retreat and there will be a specific time to delve in.

A: Mark, you have been given a new shepherd’s rod, it has authority, to pastor sheep. And there are miracles in that.

At this, the church leader smiles and appears a little emotional. His teammates look to him knowingly, with grins or raised eyebrows. The session continued with more prophetic words and visions about the church and individual members of the leadership team. Some were moved to tears as quietly they listened, occasionally expressing agreement and/or surprise at the prophet’s statements. There are a few features of the quoted prophecy to which I would like to draw attention. The first is that, as discussed previously, the prophets’ language is generally couched in terms of “I feel” or “I sense God is saying”. This chimes with Louise’s introductory comments where she clarified that the prophets – despite their clear position as experts – should be considered fallible. They also tend to present visions followed by interpretation, leaving space for disagreement or, in the case of the wave vision, collaboration, as a fellow prophet added to the initial message.

After this emotionally charged fifteen minutes, the team stepped out of the room with a buzz of excitement. As we walked back down the stairs, one of the team (who had been evangelising to me over pints of beer at last night’s LC social) asked me what I thought of the appointment. Grinning, he pointed out how some of the themes raised by the prophets seemed to accurately coincide with discussions had amongst the church team yesterday and this morning. He raised his eyebrows, challenging me to respond. Prophecy is considered a powerful evangelical tool. Recall Scott’s story from the introduction of this chapter about praying with a non-Christian woman who had an “encounter” with God as a result. The demonstration of signs and wonders as proof of an invitation toward God is not uncommon in charismatic circles and was certainly

\(^{47}\) In this scene in C.S. Lewis’ ‘The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader’, a painting of a ship at sea comes to life when the characters look closely at it. Water pours out, flooding the room and the characters reach the surface to find themselves in the sea by the boat, met and rescued by protagonist Prince Caspian.
a familiar experience for me. It is crucial to prophecy’s evangelical effectiveness that God’s authorship is clearly marked. Prophets must appear to possess knowledge that cannot possibly be their own, or which seems serendipitously to align with past/future events.

Returning to the auditorium, the team resumed their work on planning grids and goal setting strategies. The conversation included some references back to the prophetic appointment. Such as “Are you sure you can take that [task] on too? Remember what was said about ‘rest’.” This involvement of the prophetic was not restricted to the content of the appointment. Often the church team has received prophetic words at other events or through their own conversations with God. As potential plans and ideas are discussed, efforts are made to reconcile them with prophetic revelations the church has received. For instance, if in the past a prophet gave a seemingly authoritative vision which depicted a particular church as being “a place of rest”, or as “lots of lights being connected together”, or as a “burning centre for mission”, this image is referred to as a measure during the process of planning goals and strategies. These enduring, defining prophecies often seemed to be deemed authoritative if given by a highly regarded “prophet”, and/or if the same revelation had been offered by several prophesiers, confirming its significance. Discord with a prophetic vision presents solid ground for the dismissal of an idea, e.g., “we thought about engaging in international missions this year, but God has been clear that we are “a church for the city” so instead we’re focussing our mission work locally”.

“Cultivating a prophetic culture” was a popular goal stated on Learning Community planning grids. For Damien’s Aberdeen church (which we met in chapter one), their pursuit of a prophetic culture included committing to hold “prophecy nights”. I attended one such evening with them, in the living room of a family who hosted me for the week. Leading the session, William addressed the circle of fellow church members reminding them of the LC at which they’d agreed the importance of “…asking God to grow and prune us. Prophecy means not going on what we want. We want to discern what’s God’s and weigh what we hear.”. Another leader echoed this: “We want God ideas, not good ideas.” William explained that we would begin with some “general prayer followed by silent listening time and some discernment.” But before prayer began, he
recapped the two-year vision and six-month plan documents, and the minutes of a recent AGM, setting out the challenges and aspirations of the church. The general prayer session, where various members contributed aloud, asked that God would “show us your strategy” and prayed for courage and confidence in “our individual callings and giftings”. After “amen” prayer gave way to discussion focussed on the church’s goal to pursue family ministry. This discussion consisted of analytical thinking about how best to approach non-Christian families and opinions about family as “the lynchpin of community”. After William put an end to the conversation, the silent time of prophetic prayer saw most members close their eyes, bowing forward or relaxing their head back, faces to the ceiling. Only three (of nine) people fed back particular visions or words but notably, revelations quickly unfolded into strategic discussions.

P: I was hearing the birds in the silence. I hadn’t been aware of them until we stopped and were quiet. So, I think we need to become more aware of the families already around us.

M: I have friends at [an Edinburgh church] who did Messy church in the park because that’s where the kids already were. They used a familiar church tool and tweaked it to fit the context.

L: I think the Baptist church does Messy church.

W: Summer could really lend opportunities - a lot of the usual mums’ groups stop.

These prophecy evenings are predicated on the assumption that God has a “strategy”, a plan for this church’s work, and that through dedicated focus disciples can tune-in to his intentions. My interlocutors often spoke about “God’s plan”, citing how events of their lives could – in retrospect – be seen to align according to His divine will (See Webster 2012 on “Godincidences”). For instance, a series of events (which can seem unfortunate at the time) lead a disciple to an opportune location or community for mission. While God can be miraculous and mysterious, He was also presented to me as “a planner” whose actions make perfect sense (even if it is not immediately obvious to believers). As God is known to be a planner, revelation from Him can feasibly unfold along logical lines. As we saw in the prologue and chapter one, the prophetic and the
strategic symbiotically and productively co-exist in Cairn (Kirsch 2011). God’s word is surprising but not generally considered ineffable. His communications have reason and are meant to provoke intentional, goal-oriented action.

Conclusion
Of Christian prayer, Bandak (2017) states: “Prayers reveal different idioms of agency and passivity, of responsibility and surrender, of empowerment and domination as they are performed.” (12). Perhaps this is especially true of prophetic prayer where God’s agency is at stake. Incorporating God’s participation is fundamental to the Cairn claim of being a spirit-led movement. This chapter has focussed on the ways in which Cairn experiences and manages direct communication from God. This thesis’ core theme of intentionality and submission, embracing and eschewing individual agency, is crystallised in the gift/skill nature of prophecy. Trainees are encouraged to actively hone prophetic skill and practice hearing God in the same way they would exercise to strengthen muscles. They are to “cultivate a prophetic lifestyle” across all spheres of their lives, constantly expectant to hear God. At the same time as Cairn places responsibility on the disciple to work for this prophetic ability, the movement also casts prophecy as a “gift” from God. Here emerges the interplay of expectation and surprise; seeking and anticipating communication which is outwith your control. It is key to prophecy that God must be clearly located as the author and disciples’ agency can be problematic because striving to prophesy “muddies the waters”, polluting divine revelation with human imagination. There are three ways in which Cairn’s methods manage human agency: setting the expectations of the recipient to assume fallibility of the prophet and partiality of the message; separating revelation from interpretation to maintain the veracity of the prophecy whilst making room for more than one meaning; and collaborative interpretation with other believers which serves to limit the agency of the individual prophesier. In examining the collaborative production of prophetic encounters, I have also demonstrated how egalitarian access to God’s voice is subject to hierarchical management when it comes to the roles of “leaders” and experts”. Just as Ortner (2006) highlights, agency is always situated in a network of power relations.
Cast back to the Upper Room at Liberton Kirk. It was possible for me to be considered prophetic because Cairn’s God is one who “shows up” and can participate in my thoughts as a gift received through no effort on my part. However, if I were a disciple, this gift should provoke me to action, to hone my abilities. The process of self-work prompted by God-given gifts is the focus of the next chapter where I explore Cairn’s cultivation of revival-making subjects.
Chapter 3. “You’re the project”: Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

Catching an early train from Edinburgh Waverley, I arrive in Glasgow by 8.30am with the sun still straining to rise on a chilly November morning. I’m accustomed to the buzz of the city centre train stations but today I arrive in Dennistoun: an up-and-coming neighbourhood in the East-end with a mixture of run-down frozen food shops and trendy new coffee places lining its main street. As I climb the steps from the station, I spot two of the women involved in this year’s “Training Hub”: Cairn’s leadership development program. After a few minutes strolling together through Dennistoun, Google Maps tells me we’re close to the venue and I see an old stone building with a large steeple, peering round the next corner. But to my surprise, the little blue dot on my Maps app leads us past the steeple to a little wooden bungalow, nestled between tenement flats. The closed wooden door looks makeshift and has a house number stuck on it. I’m convinced this can’t be the place but we gingerly open the gate and edge along the path, opening the door to a hubbub of conversations and negotiations over a PowerPoint projector. I take my name badge from a table at the entrance to the modest little room, with dated, beige walls, blue patterned carpets and well-worn chairs. It’s a stark contrast to the last Training Hub session held at Central with its grand columns and pristine, black/chrome furniture. As I join the short queue for sorely needed caffeine, I’m offered a friendly welcome from today’s lead facilitator: “Emma! It’s lovely to see you. How are you doing?” Fiona has a way of making every person in the room feel as though it was their arrival in particular for which she’d been waiting. She is in her forties, a bit over 5ft tall with expressive blue eyes and a bob haircut hugging her chin. Working in creative arts, her bubbly personality and colourful accessories seem all the more effervescent in this muted venue. I first encountered Fiona several years ago when she was part of Central church. Fiona felt strongly that God was calling her (back) to Glasgow to be part of something new. She packed up her life and moved west but the hopes of establishing a new church initiative didn’t materialise. I heard her share the story a couple of times with fellow Christians as a lesson in faithfulness, perseverance and disappointment. Whilst it wasn’t
what she’d imagined, Fiona now finds herself instrumental in leading Cairn’s Glasgow branch and Training Hub, plus a thriving missional community.

During my fieldwork, Cairn’s Training Hub (TH) accepted applicants who were members of Cairn affiliated churches in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Participants are selected through written applications and interviews. If successful, they must agree to attend five training weekends, participate in accountability groups and prayer triplets, keep up with the reading list, submit written assignments and pay a £900 fee. Training Hub leaflets are often distributed at Learning Communities and advertised by the event’s host. At “The Cairn Gathering” in 2018, Cairn supporters from churches across Scotland were encouraged to enrol potential leaders from their congregations for the coming year’s Training Hub intake. Endorsement from previous TH graduates’ testimonies focussed on how the course develops identity and leadership:

Elaine: I grew in identity and confidence. [...] I’d started a new role at [my church] and needed some development. You can teach an old dog! Teaching was fantastic. I’ve wrestled with my identity through teaching, assignments and fellowship and I grew in who I am. [Previously,] I felt not to get above my station. But God called me to something greater; bigger than me.

Lee: It’s been a remarkable year, learning my character in God. We’ve been learning from amazing, knowledgeable teachers. I’ve got to know people and really built my relationship with God. We’ve been learning about discipleship, leadership – it’s really equipped me going forward and I feel ready to relay that to other people.

The 2017/18 Training Hub cohort included six university students/recent graduates in their early twenties; an eighteen-year-old Christian youth worker; two mums and a married couple expecting their third child; and five professionals with ages ranging from twenty-five to fifty. The vast majority are members of Central, plus a handful of attendees from a church in East Kilbride (a large town seven miles from Glasgow). I place my laptop and notebook at

48 Central church runs an apprenticeship program. Apprentices of the church’s various ministries/departments are required to participate in Training Hub and the fee is reduced.
one of the small, group tables, before being welcomed enthusiastically by Mia and Debbie who are from East Kilbride. They speak of Training Hub as part of the beginning of a new chapter, having recently moved their commitment from one church to another. Mia had recently moved back from Bristol, while Debbie left her previous congregation having dedicated so much time thanklessly, to the church that she became “burned out”. They are at Training Hub to contemplate their new roles in new life phases.

Karl reclines at the back of the room with his leather satchel by his feet as Fiona starts the day’s training with prayer, a recap of the previous session (held six weeks ago) and an outline of the weekend’s itinerary. When invited to begin teaching, Karl strides slowly to the front of the room and stands by a large flipchart. Characteristically, he commands the attention of the room with his mastery of public speaking, interspersing wit with compelling challenges directed at his listeners. He goes through several flipchart sheets scribbling diagrams to illustrate his points, pacing a little and sometimes resting on the table behind him. Even for those who hear him preach regularly at Central, his charisma captivates. “Jesus didn’t call us to make churches.” He pauses after this controversial phrase to let the intrigue pique in his audience before continuing, “He calls us to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples.”

Notably, my interlocutors rarely referred to themselves as “Christians”. They preferred the term “disciples”. One contributing factor was the heavy, negative connotations they felt clung to the word “Christian”: It meant unwelcome associations with certain histories (e.g. of “state religion” in the UK) or people groups (e.g. “American Evangelicals”, seemingly synonymous with Trump supporters). However, even more significant to the meaning of “disciple” was the connotation of active, “personal responsibility”. “Disciple” implied being “intentional” in following God, in cultivating the Christian self and in being “missional”. It was thought that “Christian” might index a “cultural Christian” which is a nominal term for vague belief in God and perhaps attending church at Christmas - an anathema to Cairn’s ideal. Whereas, a disciple’s whole life is said to be subsumed with active commitment to Jesus.

Karl drew a circle on the flipchart in red marker pen.
First, let’s think about how you’re going to lead you. You need to take responsibility. There was an evangelist called Gipsy Smith who was asked about the secret to revival. And he said, “get on your knees, draw a chalk circle around your body and don’t get off your knees until God restores everything in that circle”. You’re the project.

Karl’s words – “You’re the project” - and Cairn’s broader rhetoric around “discipleship”, speak to fundamental understandings of the individual which undergird Cairn’s national vision. This chapter will examine how the Cairn movement calls for a particular kind of subject formation as it casts the Christian individual – the “disciple” - as the unit of national revival.

In this chapter, I will explore Cairn’s imagined, ideal subject and the movement’s technologies for cultivating such a Christian. I also explain how these processes of subjectivization figure in the vision for national revival. In chapter one, we saw how agency and authenticity are animating concerns in the movement’s aspirations for reform. These themes persist in the current chapter which attends to Cairn’s emphasis on personal, active responsibility for forming oneself and for “discipling” others. I argue that Cairn situates authenticity and agency within the individual. Cairn’s creation of self-governing disciples is fundamental to their method for spreading the movement throughout the population. I argue that the Cairn movement seeks to enact national transformation by scaling up individual reformation, operating on the premise that revived individuals will revive the nation. Before I go on to explain the how and why of Cairn’s subject formation, I first discuss the movement’s “true self ideology” (Thin 2018).

Who God Made Me To Be
Karl continues, setting the marker pen down on the flipchart stand, allowing him to gesticulate more freely.

Inside of you is another you. It’s the “full of the Spirit” you. The “looks like Jesus” you. [...] Who did he make me and what for and how do I do that most fully? I want to be fully who I am.
“True self ideology” in various forms is a widespread phenomenon and implies the existence of an elusive aspect of character which individuals must “discover” in order to “self-actualize” (Thin 2018). Citing recent increases in online searches for terms like “true self”, “personal authenticity” etc., Thin (2018) concludes that “people in most countries today talk and worry more about their identity” than did the previous generation (ibid). However, the pursuit of self-knowledge - as inherent curiosity and ethical imperative - is certainly not new: Foucault discusses the ancients’ persistent concern with knowing the truth of oneself and the connected pursuit of ethical self-fashioning (Kelly 2013, Bialystock 2009). Karl frames self-discovery in a rhetoric of revival, of excavating something dormant, mirroring the broader, national vision of the movement. Resting on a table, addressing the captivated Training Hub cohort, Karl speaks about the importance of discovering an inner version of the self which is truer to God’s intended design. This self can be distorted, he said, by external influences like imperfect parenting or being “mislabelled by society”. It is latent and in need of discovery, clarification and actualisation. This concept of self, often glossed as “identity”, encompasses personality traits, dispositions, tendencies, proficiencies, life purposes and God-given gifts. My interlocutors consistently spoke of the desire and necessity to understand “who God made them to be” and believed that God’s design for each person is innate and bespoke.

Among Cairn’s members, personality testing is a popular way of “working out how you’re wired”. Two of the most widely used are The Enneagram and Myers Briggs. Many free versions of these tests can be found through a quick Google search and there are paid alternatives which promise more detailed profiles. Numerous relevant publications can be found in the pop-psychology or self-help sections of bookshops, genres which have grown substantially in recent decades. Also the growing market in podcasts offers a wealth of additional content, especially on the Enneagram. The tests ask participants to rate how accurately various statements apply to them, e.g. “I feel my emotions deeply”, “I think about what I should have said in a conversation long after it has taken place”. The Enneagram assigns participants to one of nine numbered personality types, whilst Myers-Briggs results take the form of four letters (e.g. INTJ), placing individuals on four spectra of personality aspects:
Introversion/Extroversion, iNtuitive/Sensing, Thinking/Feeling, Judging/Perceiving. Whether as part of a training event, a small group exercise, or having been sent the weblink by a friend, nearly all of my interlocutors had taken these tests (with many also engaging the accompanying literature) and ascertained their “type”.

Individuals’ sense of identification with their type was sometimes marked using humour. This reflects a tendency, seemingly characteristic of British humour, to express familiarity with something by mocking it. In a hipster, city centre bar with two of my agemates (Emily and Rose, a Training Hub graduate) from Castlebank Baptist Church, discussion of the Enneagram turned to light self-deprecation: “I’m a four,” Rose says, unimpressed, “which basically just means I’m an emo!” She comically thuds her gin and tonic glass on to the upcycled wooden table. “We have ‘a melancholy awareness of suffering’. But they also like pretty things and making things pretty,” she shrugs. Emily responds, “Well, I’m a nine. So, I’m basically a stoned hippy(!) We’re totally unproductive,” she says through giggles. “We just get deep in to thinking and retreat into our hidey-holes.” Rose leans forward until her lips almost touch the paper straw in her glass: “What are you, Emma?” “Not sure, actually. But a few people have suggested what I might be,” I reply. Rose and Emily look at me thoughtfully and then to each other. “You’re maybe a two?” They caution that gender stereotypes lead most women to be suspected twos – the “caring” type – so advise that I read more about it before confirming this as my profile. Enneagram numbers were regularly exchanged and discussed in Cairn’s large gathering and training environments, often with little explanation, presuming mutual understanding: “Oh, you’re such an eight!” “I bet she’s a five.” Recognising a trait in another, with a neat frame of reference for similarity and difference to oneself, bred a rapid kind of familiarity among attendees.

Many of my interlocutors included their self-identification as intro/extrovert in their earliest introductions to me. In my first encounter with Emily and her flatmate Jess, they had only just told me their names when they went on to explain how living together has occasionally been challenging because they sit at opposite ends of the intro/extrovert spectrum. Emily apologised for not staying to chat longer, excusing herself with the justification that, as an introvert, she was “peopled out” and needed time to herself. This was an alien
concept to her perpetually sociable flatmate. Introverts, I was told, need solitude to rest whilst extroverts are recharged in social situations. In the course of my fieldwork, those getting to know me regularly asked and/or offered a guess as to whether I was an introvert or extrovert. I was expected to know my answer and ideally, to make references to the classic markers: e.g. an introvert who hates icebreakers, or an extrovert who thrives at big parties. Social feedback is key to locating individuals in the various personality matrices and there is a kind of etiquette to sharing. You present your results to others, often as an explanation of your actions/reactions. For example, “I was highly prepared for a trip I took because I’m a one” - an Enneagram type associated with organisational skill and preparedness. The listener often expresses affirmation or surprise and you learn their type in return, noting similarities and contrasts. There is a social expectation that you likely know your type and can participate in this sort of exchange. Achieving self-knowledge through a method which categorizes individuals relative to one another generates mutual reinforcement of claimed identities.

When I asked my interlocutors why personality testing was important, I was told that, as well as being a helpful tool in coming to understand oneself, it could improve interpersonal communication. Using tests like the Enneagram was said to increase the effectiveness of the church organisation because leaders could use this information to tailor interactions with volunteers/staff. For instance, one minister recalled how he’d resolved some ill feeling between him and a member of the church media team. The media worker hadn’t taken kindly to the way they had been asked to complete a video project for Sunday’s service. The minister explained to me how a conversation with the volunteer had revealed some clashes in their Enneagram types (which include attitudes to authority and preferred modes of communication). By clarifying their difference using the terms of the test’s profiles, they were able to understand one another and adjust the way tasks are issued in future. In any social sphere – not only church work - interpersonal snags were thought to be alleviated by understanding a person’s reactions in light of their type’s motivations, fears, preferences etc. So, personality testing applies a rationality to personal identity which extends to interpersonal relationships. It categorises people, renders
them somewhat measurable and streamlines organisational structure and communications as a result.

Personality testing is certainly not exclusive to Christian audiences and its popularity has grown since the 1960s (Harvard Business Review 2017). It is not unusual for non-Christians of otherwise similar demographic to Cairn’s followers (middle class, resident of urban Scotland, 20-50 years old) to occasionally cite intro/extroversion in self-description. Those in the business world have almost inevitably encountered the Myers Briggs test: a corporate favourite for interviews and training days. However, I found that the frequency of references and the importance afforded to these tests was significantly greater in church circles. The belief that a divinely intended version of you lies waiting to be discovered lends arguably, a unique urgency and significance to personality testing.

Whilst the likes of Enneagram and Myers Briggs are also used in secular contexts some tests, such as “APEST” a.k.a. “Five-Fold Ministries”, are explicitly Christian. The APEST test is based on the Biblical book of Ephesians which is interpreted as naming five “offices” or roles in the Christian church:

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11 ESV)

Cairn points its followers to literature by prominent Australian pastor, Alan Hirsch (2017)⁴⁹, to learn about fivefold ministries and to take an APEST test, which asks them to rate the accuracy of various statements similar to the Meyers Briggs. The results rank the participant’s God-given “gifts” with the two strongest giftings often forming self-descriptions such as “I’m an Apostle-Teacher”. The APEST test not only tells the participant that they are divinely talented in prophecy or evangelism, rather, it said to diagnose the role – the “office” - God calls them to undertake in his Kingdom. Apostles are supposed to start new things; plant churches, create businesses and be entrepreneurial. The job of the Shepherd is pastoral; caring for the congregation, promoting inclusion. Recapturing the Ephesian offices is central to a movement called the

⁴⁹ Hirsch is founder of “SQ” an official partner to Rich Robinson’s organisation. Hirsch is internationally famous and prolific publisher; very popular in Cairn circles.
New Apostolic Revival (Bialecki 2016, Haynes forthcoming) but Cairn’s engagement – following the work of Hirsch – differs. Whilst the NAR claims a hierarchical ordering of the offices (with Apostle at the top), Cairn encourages a balanced representation of all roles across the body of the church. (Similar balance should be sought by each believer too: Being an apostle by office does not excuse you from refining your prophetic abilities or “stepping out” in evangelism.) The APEST test is not only a diagnostic tool but, in highlighting that the believer has a job to do and a role to play, it provokes followers to actively embrace their calling. It is a technology of both “authorization” and “empowerment” (Bialecki 2016:9). Speaking on APEST at Training Hub, Karl taught,

*Gifts are gifts: you get no credit for them and you can’t earn them.*

*Gifts come in the vehicle of character: that is your responsibility and you need to work at it every day.*

The divine provision of gifts by no means permits passivity on behalf of the believer. As with Mittermaier’s (2012) work on supernaturally given dreams, “Far from undermining individual responsibility, they highlight the ability – or obligation – to respond.” (261). The divine origin does not displace the agency of the gifted individual. The previous chapter looked at the dual nature of gift/skill and the complex location of agency. Similarly, in his quote, Karl is contrasting the God-ordained provision of gifts, with actively refined “character”.

“Character” is a relatively neglected category in social anthropology and Reed & Bialecki et al (2018) recently challenged ethnographers to address it as an emic concept in their research, highlighting its multiple meanings across contexts. For Keane (2016), one’s character can only be co-constituted through interactions. For Pedersen’s (2008) Danish Lutheran interlocutors, predetermined character is realised retrospectively when God “pulls” you into the future. In contrast to these instances, Karl casts “character” as the especially agentive aspect of the self; a vessel to be shaped so that the innate, true identity may be properly expressed. Without concerted, disciplined efforts to develop oneself as a “vehicle”, the gifts one holds will not be properly enacted. As one of Daswani’s (2015) Ghanaian Pentecostal interlocutors puts it, “you can speak
in tongues and be so charismatic. [But] If you do not have the character of God, you are only making noise,” (no page number). Karl frames the spirit-filled, true self with divine gifts as simply God-given, innate, essential. Whereas the quest to discover that inner self, taking up the attached responsibility for one’s role in the Kingdom and refining the “vehicle” for actualizing that self, entails an intentional project of self-cultivation (O’Neill 2009). Echoing chapter one’s organic/organised dynamic, we see here a productive tension of embracing intentional, agentive action (the responsibility to work on oneself), whilst also embracing their limits (submitting to that which is God-ordained).

Encouraging the importance of “knowing who God made you to be” and pursuing its realisation is part of Cairn’s firmly held ethos of “taking personal responsibility for your faith”. Foucault speaks of the responsibility for self-examination as characteristic of “confessional” Christianity: “Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him [...] and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community,” So, “The truth obligations of faith and the self are linked together.” (Foucault 1997:242). Foucault identifies a shift from the “care of the self” of the ancients to the Christian notion of “know yourself”. The ancients had to undergo transformations through spiritual practices in order to have access to the truth of themselves. But this gave way to a culture in which there was an unchanging truth of the soul: a knowledge we access by searching ourselves (Westerink 2019). For the modern subject, the truth is interior. As explored in the recently published Foucauldian work, “Confessions of the Flesh” (2018), Christian practices of spiritual direction in monastic life demanded regular self-examination of the soul and crucially, verbalization to superiors (Landry 2021). Truth was excised through “technes [of] admission (baptism), regulation (penance) and disciplinary surveillance (direction),” (Legg 2016: 868). Foucault highlights these practices as shaping the conception of the modern subject. He argued “that the provenance of our contemporary techniques of the self and the experience of truth they entail, must be found in the Christian ascetic of obedience and self-renunciation” (Macmillan 2011).

The notion of accessing a truth held inside oneself speaks to what Brüntrup et al (2020) have called a contemporary “cult of authenticity”. Anthony Giddens (1991) characterises “modern” societies as uniquely reflexive, requiring people
to “recover their own biography” and transparently portray it. Authenticity, he states, is a social demand of this era. Foucault (1988) also spoke of the ideal of authenticity as convincing individuals that self-improvement is key to being a good citizen. His work suggests that the cult of authenticity has roots in confessional Christianity. Notably, Cairn’s concern with the authentic self in some ways departs from Foucault’s depiction of confessional Christianity. The disciples’ discovery of their God-given identity is accompanied by an impetus to embrace their unique purpose which seems to sit in contrast to the inherent passivity (Landry 2011) and self-renunciation (Foucault 2009: 7) Foucault found in confessional Christianity.

So far, this chapter has illustrated that disciples are reassured of possessing an innate “true self” authored by God. Cairn’s followers are also charged with the responsibility to evaluate diligently that identity and actively “work on” themselves. The following section addresses that self-work, examining the technologies by which Cairn’s Christians form themselves as disciples.

Technologies of Self
There is a wealth of academic literature on self-cultivation, personhood, subjectification which explores the various ways in which persons form themselves and are socially formed (see e.g. Hirschkind 2001, Mahmood 2005). Michel Foucault’s work on subjectivization has been seminal to this field of study. Foucault writes about technologies of the self through which “the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion” (Kelly, 2013). Notably, the technologies available are not something the individual invents; processes of subjectivization are embedded in power relations (Marshall 2009, Eves 2001). Here, it is important to remember that my consideration of Cairn’s “agency” recognises its inevitable imbrication with “structure” (see Ortner 2006: 130) the tools Cairn’s disciples use to fashion themselves are designed, taught and encouraged by architects of the movement. With this organisational structure in mind, I will now consider the technologies by which Cairn’s Christians undertake the work of self-cultivation.

One tool for discipleship encouraged consistently through Cairn’s teaching is, “rhythms and patterns”. When I interviewed Rich, he explained,
[Rhythms] help us to live with integrity and purpose. We’re creatures of overswing, we are creatures of the grand gesture. So, it’s like ‘oh I’m never gonna do that again, or I’m gonna do it to the N-th degree’! And we always fail with those grand gestures. [...] And so actually think: how do we build in rhythmic patterns? In our training, [we say that] you can be proactive and intentional, about your character and about your lifestyle, through rhythms.

These “rhythms and patterns” are, as one might expect, applied to Christian disciplines such as prayer and Bible reading. For instance, Cairn encourages its followers to use their “Rooted” app which provides a structure for reflection on scripture every morning and prayer every evening. However, as Rich went on to illustrate, “patterning” is not limited to explicitly religious practices.

I do a quiet time in the morning, I do devotions with my kids, we pray as a family at 7pm, we [meet with our local church community] on a Sunday afternoon, Friday night is homemade pizza. So, there are lots of different... some of them are super spiritual, some of them are completely fun. But it’s the patterns of who are we as a family: What do we value? Who am I as a person? Reviewing my diary every month, reviewing my bills every week... Rather than go ‘Crap, I’m in my overdraft,’ actually going, ‘I’ve got a monthly budget, I review that every week and I review the spending.’ Those patterns of review and recalibrate as well as those ‘I’m going to do this proactively’.

The applications of “rhythms” are myriad and in Rich’s example, consonant with Cairn’s expansive rhetoric on rhythm/pattern, it is not so much the actions but time itself which becomes ethically charged. This reflects the kind of economic logic of time O’Neill (2009) found among Guatemalan neo-Pentecostals in which fatherhood was framed as “investing in” one’s children through quality time. As responsible investors, affection toward their children was not to be administered haphazardly but instead became ordered, calculated and managed with fathers scheduling fifteen minutes of daily bonding time with each child (O’Neill 2009:106-126). This echoes what scholars such as Lyritsas (2019) and Huang (2020) have argued about the neoliberal subject seeing themselves as an enterprise and thus being responsible for effective time
management. Cairn’s followers routinize self-cultivation. Time — in this rationalized temporality - becomes a tool for constructing the ethical Christian subject.

Karl leaves after his morning teaching, waving goodbye as the rest of us stop for a short break. Everyone takes the opportunity to move around the room, stretching their legs and chit-chatting with those they haven’t seen since last month’s gathering. There is some playful banter about the city rivalry between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Ten minutes passes quickly. With replenished cups of tea and home-baking in hand, the Training Hubbers settle again at their tables, notepads open. Fiona takes to the flipchart to deliver a session on habits which promote a disciple’s longevity through the trials of ministry⁵⁰. She draws a pendulum swinging from a horizontal line, writing “abide” and “fruit” at either end: the semi-circle Lifeshape. She reads aloud from John 15:1 about God “pruning” believers like a gardener prunes a vine. Most of the attendees look for the verse on their phone’s Bible app. Continuing with the vine parable, Fiona places the cap back on the marker pen and explains that “you can’t have fruit without abiding”. To be fruitful, the TH cohort are told, they must find a rhythm which oscillates between resting, “abiding” with God and actively working for Him, “fruiting”. Fiona suggests patterns: daily finding time to be with God through the Rooted app; adopting a weekly “sabbath” (i.e. a designated day for rest and contemplation); and monthly retreats where one leaves the city to journal with God. Fiona closes by reading one of Cairn’s most favoured Bible verses:

\[
\text{Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.} \text{ (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG,}{¹¹\text{my emphasis)}.
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⁵⁰ Note, Cairn’s use of the word “ministry” does not imply employment as a church minister. It includes bringing Christian influence to any social sphere. One’s ministry might involve representing God in the workplace, or in your parent & toddler group.

⁵¹ The Message (MSG) translation of the Bible was originated by American Presbyterian minister, Eugene Peterson and uses rhythms and idioms of contemporary English. My interlocutors explained that this version, rather than offering the most accurate word-for-word translation of the original texts, seeks to
Mastering this rhythmic temporality was taught to be both biblically mandated and a crucial skill for the successful disciple.

Anthropologists of Christianity have written extensively on time, mostly animated by a debate about continuity and rupture (Robbins 2007, Daswani, 2013; Chua, 2012; Coleman, 2011; Droogers, 2014; Keane, 2006). But I suggest Cairn’s Lifeshapes speak to a lacuna in this scholarship: Christian temporality as a tool for ethical self-making. Whilst largely absent from the Anthropology of Christianity, established in recent decades, time as a tool of discipline is notably addressed in other literatures. For instance, Foucault’s (1979) work on discipline and Engammare’s (2009 translation by Maag) historical work on Calvinist temporality which casts punctuality as piety. The following exploration of Cairn’s “Kairos circle” will provide an anthropological contribution to these conversations.

Cairn teaches that the Christian, committed to working on themselves, is persistently reflective. Also, according to the Learning Community curriculum, this reflection ought to be “personal”, pertaining to one’s character, thoughts, actions. But also “relational”, reviewing social situations; “strategic”, evaluating long and short-term goals; and “kingdom”, assessing God’s current capture the “feeling”, “meaning”, “tone” of scripture in a way that is more “relatable”. In Cairn environments, NIV was the most popular translation for preaching and Bible study but MSG was regularly employed to make emotionally impactful points.
workings in the world. Anthropology’s methodology directs a great deal of thought about reflexivity toward the researcher, perhaps overlooking the reflexive practices of our interlocutors. My interlocutors were thinking persistently about themselves ethnographically. When introducing my research to a new churchgoer I was almost always met with self-aware, reflective comments, appraising and critiquing their own thoughts and practices then providing me with “paraethnographic” data (Rudnyckyj 2010, Islam 2015, Holmes & Marcus 2011. See also West 2007). Cairn trainers advise regularly journaling one’s reflections alone and then discussing them with a mentor. This practice of reflection and evaluation is made “rational and methodical” (Salmenniemi & Vorona, 2014: 47) through the “Kairos Circle”: the first Lifeshape tool covered in Cairn’s training programs.

The circular process relies firstly on identifying a moment of “God’s in-breaking” to the Christian’s life where He’s grabbing their attention or trying to teach them something. From here, the believer ought to follow a series of steps, reflecting and crucially, taking considered action. The word “Kairos” is used to highlight the Biblical significance of temporality. Cairn’s lecture-style introduction to the circle teaches that the Bible contains two words for “time”: “chronos”, which refers to the continuous passing of time and “Kairos”, which indicates a significant moment, a God ordained time (Breen 2017:76). Cairn followers speak of “having a Kairos moment” of prophetic realisation, awareness and clarity. Learning Community attendees are told to expect these moments at all times (though heightened awareness is associated with training weekends) and to be ready to go through the circular process and enact some kind of change in mindset or action as a result. So, a disciple’s life ought to look like a coiled telephone cord, or the deepening spiral of a drill bit – one Kairos circle after another, forming a life propelled by conscious reflection and intentional action. This patterning of time represents another facet of the rationalizing logic pervading Cairn’s project of subjectification. Mastering this structured temporality, patterning one’s life, is purportedly key to being a revival-making disciple.

Cairn’s followers are encouraged to undertake this process of reflection and evaluation alongside other disciples and with the guidance of a mentor. The movement’s system for this is called “Huddle” and presents a social tool for self-
making where peers and experts shape a disciple’s reflective practice. Huddles are small groups, facilitated by one leader and drawing on a manual from 3DM\textsuperscript{52} publishing which guides members to apply discipleship teachings (including Lifeshapes) to their own lives. One experienced Huddle leader explained to me the virtues of the system: “The challenges of leadership are the same. Big churches, seemingly thriving churches, Church of Scotland and Baptist – all those churches – the leaders were going through the same challenges of identity, calling.” Rich allowed me to observe one of the many Huddles he leads over Skype. This Huddle had been running for more than two years and included ministers from churches across Scotland and Northern Ireland which had completed the Learning Communities cycle. The session was structured around listening to each participant’s reflections on recent life events which Rich requested they present in a framework of “highlights and hopes”. Well-versed in the Kairos circle, the process was implicitly woven into each person’s narrative as they identified God’s inbreaking, considered their circumstances and acted accordingly. Moreover, this senior group was being discipled by Rich in the art of discipling others. After one participant shared their highlights and hopes, Rich invited another participant to respond. The respondent emulated the role of a huddle facilitator by highlighting points for further reflection, often referring to one of Cairn’s teaching tools. Rich would have the last word, adding his own feedback on what had been said by both the person reflecting and the respondent practicing mentoring. Cairn’s mentor systems might be seen to resemble the dynamic of spiritual direction which Foucault highlights in monastic Christianity. Indeed, the movement encourages its disciples to work on themselves “in community” with others. But crucially, Cairn’s mentees are primed to become mentors themselves, disrupting the clear division of submission and hierarchy in Foucault’s monastic account. What I observed in Cairn’s Huddle was not only the use of this collective group as a technology for cultivating the actively reflective disciple, but also how Cairn mentors people to become mentors themselves. I now turn to explore Cairn’s priority of “multiplying” leaders and the transmission of ways of being from one disciple to another.

\textsuperscript{52} 3DM is the organisation belonging to Mike Breen; creator of Lifeshapes and much of the Learning Community curricula.
Leadership and Legacy

While Cairn places emphasis on cultivating the Christian individual, “individualism” is firmly stated as an anathema to the movement. Attributed to “the vestiges of liberalism” (Martin 2017:xxv), individualism is seen as a primary ill of “western” culture, connoting independence to the point of isolation and a self-centred outlook. (In)famously, Margaret Thatcher – a foundational figure of UK neoliberalism – said, “There is no such thing as society...And no government can do anything except through people and people must look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then to look after our neighbour.” (in Dean 2009:177, my emphasis). At first glance, Cairn’s concern with disciples’ own self-reformation might seem to support the neoliberal call to individual responsibility. But Karl was clear in distinguishing his “you’re the project” approach from secular individualism:

What God wants to do through you, He first has to do in you. You are the project. But you’re not the essence or the goal. [...] It’s not for you. It’s for everyone else.

Despite the focus on individuals’ identities and self-reformation, Karl argues the movement is not “individualistic” because work on the self is directed towards “the common good” (Salmenniemi & Vorona, 2014: 47), namely “building the kingdom” (see chapter six). Looking after ourselves is looking after our neighbour because, as Karl puts it, “Damaged people tend to damage people” (Martin 2017:xviii). Karl asserts that God is the author, the disciple is the vessel, the Kingdom is the purpose. Foucault’s study of the ancients echoes this notion of caring for the self as a civic activity. Interestingly, Foucault suggests this changed through “the arrival of Christianity” which recast concern for the self as concern for one’s salvation (Kelly 2013). However, in contrast to the individualisation inherent to a focus on salvation and end times (Bialecki 2015, Robbins 2004), Cairn’s Kingdom theology focuses its efforts on social reform in the present/near future rather than judgement after death. Thereby, reflecting self-work as a civic project – “It’s for everyone else.” But how do reformed individuals serve the collective goal? In essence, Karl’s answer is “leadership”.

Karl’s book, Lead, argues fervently that “the west” faces a pervasive leadership crisis. He writes emphatically that, “It is on this wonderful heavenly gift called
leadership, that everything on this earth stands or falls,” and he outlines the church’s historic failure to do it well. Cairn’s work on cultivating the individual’s gifts, callings and character is prerequisite to forming them as “leaders”. Karl’s warning goes, “If you don’t know yourself, you can never lead yourself, and you will always lead others badly,” (Martin 2017:24). Cast back to the red circle Karl drew on the flipchart, imploring the Training Hub attendees to begin by leading themselves. Cairn teaches that everyone is a leader, starting with “leading yourself” through practices of discipleship. (Non-Christians are also said to be born leaders but becoming Christian extends this responsibility as one participates in God’s divine plans and “leads from their [true] identity”). The scale of a person’s leadership varies as it is believed some are called to lead their families, others are called to lead in a church small group, or in their work office and still more are called to lead entire companies, churches, or even (inter)national movements. But regardless of the scale the essence of what it is to lead is considered consistent (recall the Learning Square from chapter one). Karl states, “You influence yourself and other people, and that’s it in its basic form: the best definition of leadership is influence.”

Cairn critiques the “traditional” view of leadership as determined by rank and role - the CEO, the minister – instead, asking all believers to consider their sphere of influence as their arena for leadership. The Training Hub cohort – whom the teachers repeatedly address as “leaders” - are often asked to be conscious of whom they encounter (through work, hobbies, neighbours, family ties etc.) and the effects they have through these relationships. Cairn’s ideal subject is not only a disciple who self-cultivates, but a leader who cultivates this subjectivity in others. Recall Karl’s statement that God calls us to be “disciples who make disciples who make disciples.” He also told the Training Hub cohort,

\[ My \textit{job is not to get people to serve my vision, it’s to create environments for us to serve the visions God’s given to our lives.} \]
\[ \textit{Become the mentor, provoker, releaser of heroes. The secret to the success of your leadership is to become Gandalf, not Aragorn.} \]

With this, Karl went on to explain that leaders ought always to think “beyond” themselves to a succession plan, a legacy. While Cairn believes in specialisms (with believers having particular callings/gifts), they add that no individual ought
to be irreplaceable in their role. To achieve the movement’s goal of creating sustainable change, each leader must mentor their successor and aspire to an ultimate goal which extends beyond their lifetime.

The term “sustainability” came to prominence in the 1990s, applied to several fields including Development. “Sustainable Development” differed from previous efforts involving simple investment of physical capital, instead demanding that each action be “sustainable and infinitely replicable” with a view to implementing programs which become “self-sufficient” (Scherz 2014: 40-41). Cairn’s approach is about intentional action which aims to produce momentum and lasting consequences which extend beyond the immediate effort. Disciples are to act in such a way as to set the ball rolling in a project which outlasts them. When training followers about rhythms and creating enduring life changes, Rich speaks about a sequence: “discipline, habit, lifestyle”. He says, “discipline is intentionally doing the right thing; habit is usually doing the right thing; and lifestyle is naturally doing the right thing.”

Note that this transition involves a decrease in intentionality. The conscious effort is concentrated at the beginning but over time, with the correct structures in place, it becomes “natural”. This is mirrored in the movement’s broader rhetoric about “sustainability”. When taking on someone to “intentionally disciple”, this is rarely a lifelong arrangement. Key to the notion of “discipleship” is that the disciple learns how to disciple others. Disciples ought to become disciplers.

Notably, the successor ought not to simply replicate their predecessor. Leaders should ensure that their successors also pursue a vision of their own, that they “innovate”. This ensures that sustainability does not mean “maintenance” of a status quo but there is a creative, forward momentum. “Innovating” in this context speaks to Cairn’s desire to move beyond “tradition”, embracing novel, creative approaches to church life, mission and discipleship. The premium placed on innovation casts the ideal disciple as an entrepreneur. In fact, Cairn’s promotional video even talks of emulating the “entrepreneurial spirit” of ancient Celtic people. Entrepreneurship is a value lauded in contemporary Scotland more broadly, attached to the logic of neoliberalism (McCafferty 2010). Bloom (2017: 2) suggests,
Entrepreneurship now trumps all other values. The epitome of leadership—whether political or economic—is that of a hard-charging, decisive and visionary corporate executive. [...] Entrepreneurship became a crucial and increasingly all-encompassing modern ethics. The business owner was lauded as the driver of innovation, the visionary who was singularly capable of radically transforming society.

The neoliberal subject has been described by numerous scholars as “a free, autonomous, individualized, self-regulating actor understood as a source of capital; as human capital” (Turken et al 2016). And Scharff (2016) adds that, “the neoliberal self is an entrepreneurial subject,” (108). Where liberal subjects own themselves as if they were property, neoliberal, entrepreneurial subjects own themselves as though they were a business (Gershon 2011, Scharff 2016). As such, they are, “a collection of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed and developed” (Martin 2000:582). Also included in entrepreneurial ethical traits is “cultivating the capacity to aspire, namely to envision a future and engage in forward planning” (Huang 2020). This speaks to the disciple’s aforementioned mastery of a rhythmic temporality which corkscrews forward by way of structured reflection and calculated action. We also saw this careful measurement and organisation of time in chapter one which showed the importance of documented planning exercises in connecting aspired futures with imminent strategic action. Cairn’s reflexive practices - organising their time, discerning consistently how to “grow” from experience, “investing” in influential relationships and planning for legacies - mirror the diligent self-management of the entrepreneur.

In training, Cairn incorporates the ideals of mentorship and innovation in a triangular teaching tool. Said to be modelled on scripture about Rabbis teaching disciples, the triangle teaches that people best learn and develop through a tripartite process consisting of “Information, Imitation, Innovation”. “Information” speaks to Cairn’s penchant for training events and literature: gaining knowledge from experts. “Innovation”, as we’ve established, is the goal of all good leaders – pushing beyond traditions, realising their own visions and “releasing” others to find theirs. In the next section, I address the remaining (by this process, the second) side of the triangle: “imitation”. This speaks to Cairn’s
desire for disciple-making to multiply and spread through Scotland’s population.

**Imitation**
For Cairn, “disciple” functions as both noun and verb. “To disciple” someone, is to lead (i.e. “influence”) them to become a better disciple. “Disciplers” are taught to be aware that they influence those “close enough to see their lives”. Not only explicit advice and teaching but also one’s entire way of living is thought to be influential. Observers might attend to and come to emulate how the discipler behaves, reacts and makes choices. The discipler/discipled dynamic is expected to function amongst fellow believers and between believers and non-Christians. Among Christians, discipling is a mutually conscious practice with mentorship actively sought and offered. It was said, “everyone looks like a sheep from the front and a shepherd from behind.” All individuals were to centrally place themselves in a hierarchy of spiritual maturity, “sitting at the feet” of a teacher and “pouring in to” a follower. The purpose here is to mentor/be mentored in cultivating the ethical disciple subject through contagious emulation. Combined with Cairn’s ethos of “multiplication” and “sustainability”, each person one disciples will ideally go on to disciple others.

When expressed between believers and non-Christians, discipleship takes on an evangelistic flavour. Training Hub teaching emphasises that “discipling begins before the person knows Jesus”. (Notably, this reflects Cairns’ soteriology which emphasises processual discovery of faith over momentary conversion.) The Training Hub cohort, like all of Cairn’s followers, are encouraged to consider how they are leading non-Christian friends toward Jesus through the way they live their lives. Here too, discipleship is supposed to happen not only in formal mentoring sessions but through “doing life together”. Cairn’s leaders spoke about discipling people by inviting them into their everyday: do the supermarket shop together, have them round to dinner at your home, let them witness how you discipline your children or handle a professional failure. When I visited a Cairn church in Aberdeen (which we met at a Learning Community in chapter one) Hope explained to me how a non-Christian friend was witnessing
and noting how Hope resolves tensions in her domestic life. Parenting and marital communication, along with most social skills, are considered by Cairn’s followers to be uniquely shaped by their faith. The result was that her friend emulated these faith-inspired approaches in her own family life and became increasingly intrigued by Hope’s faith, even asking “what would God say about” particular domestic scenarios. Another “discipler” – a female youth pastor in her twenties – put it,

If I walked a young person through my week, what lessons would they learn from my life? The good and the bad? What would they learn about what I value, what I prioritise and my relationship with God? And I’m not so sure I’d like all the answers. But actually, it starts with me being the project, more than we like to admit.

Cairn’s training places strong emphasis on leading by example. In large part, a disciple’s influence is said to occur through “imitation” (see Lempert 2014 on the importance of the metalanguage of imitation). The most prominent anthropological literature on imitation is the corpus on “mimesis”. Remarkable work has been produced on the resistant capacities of mimesis particularly in post-colonial contexts (Bhabha 1984, Taussig 1993, Ferguson 2002). In these cases of mimesis across an oppressive power divide, we find space for parody and the power to subvert. However, the imitative practice in Cairn’s context is more aptly captured by terms like “convergence” used in speech accommodation theory to describe the “process of creating interpersonal similarities” (Deumert, 2018). Cairn hopes to harness the “powerful compulsion to become similar” to transmit ways of living (Benjamin 1979:69). Therefore, a question put repeatedly to Cairn’s trainee leaders is, “Do you have a life worth imitating?” The question is intended to be deeply challenging, though trainees are reassured that this doesn’t mean living as a perfect example of Jesus; disciples can grow from seeing a mentor’s failures as well as successes (so long as they respond constructively to said failures). Even so, this challenge forces Cairn’s followers to view the nature and management of their own lives as directly impacting others. They are not only responsible to themselves and God for their own behaviour but must assume that their comportment will reverberate throughout their sphere of influence. Cairn’s goal is contagious self-
reformation. The movement expects that reformed individuals will reform churches, will reform communities, will reform nations.

Self-governance
As discussed in chapter one, Cairn situates itself as a critique of “traditional church”. Traditional church is charged with storing power among a few “leaders” who distribute catch-all dictates for passive followers who hold one another to the behavioural standard through the insidious policing of social expectation. Essentially, “religion” and “institution” are accused of mishandling agency. The epitome of this strict, “religious” approach is sometimes called “legalism”: regulation by dogma which prioritises uniform, restricted behaviour over an individual’s transformational relationship with Jesus.

In Rudnyckyj’s (2010) ethnography, his Indonesian interlocutors – who leverage Muslim spiritual development as a tool for business economic benefit - seek to replace the existing disciplinary system of their organisation with “an ethic of individual accountability to God” (135). Speaking on instilling this ethos in the company, one of the managers told Rudnyckyj, “that spiritual reform was not simply a matter of ‘more rules’,” and that rules were unnecessary if you could change a person’s heart. Rudnyckyj described the training program as,

\[
\text{intended to inculcate an ethic of individual self-policing based in Islamic practice in contrast to calls for the state to enforce Islamic law. The spiritual economy did not consist of rules and regulations but rather an ethics of self-management, which was referred to as “built-in control”. (Rudnyckyj 2010: 139)}
\]

Rudnyckyj’s findings on “built-in control” speak to Foucault’s understanding of subjectivization as a technique of government; “procedures for directing human behaviour” (Foucault 1997). Cairn’s disciples hope to govern themselves through self-cultivation, rather than submitting to prescribed, uniform rules. Through Cairn’s promotion of personal responsibility, “legalism” is replaced with an individual, prophetic dynamic where Christian living is a direct negotiation between disciple and God. However, as I was often told, discipleship is “something we do in community”. So, this self-governance is not tantamount to disciples being a law unto themselves. My interlocutors cite “accountability” to disciplers/mentors and close friends as the checks and
balances on their self-regulation. Note that it is said to be the individual’s choice - and responsibility - to invite these accountability figures as an aid in their self-transformation and to be receptive to their guidance.

Consider the inherent responsibility in being termed “a leader” in the construction of God’s ideal world; an entrepreneurial leader expected to be innovative and leave a legacy. In some ways, Cairn’s model disciple closely resembles the “responsible”, late modern subject (Dean 2009). Cairn’s “disciple” figure chimes with logic often associated with neoliberalism which casts the individual as responsible for their own wellbeing and self-regulation (Bloom 2017, Mittermaier 2012, Eves 2011). The rationalised personality testing, routinized technologies of self and emphases on replicable leaders and entrepreneurship explored in this chapter all seem to highlight an affinity between Cairn and a neoliberal ethos. However, I contend that there are limits to this affinity and that Cairn’s subjectivity cannot be cast as simply “neoliberal”.

Another part of disciples’ accountability, distinct from forms of neoliberal subjectivity and governmentality, is their relationship with God. This relationship, as we saw in the previous chapter, is intimate and immediate. In fact, disciples do not just communicate with God but seek to carry his presence, to incarnate him. This complicates the notion of autonomy which is core to neoliberal subjectivity.

Having polished off platefuls of salad and sandwiches from the buffet, Fiona announced it was the boys’ day to do the dishes. Various conversations about post-graduation employment anxieties, searches for new church venues and sustainable lifestyle blogs were brought to a close as tidying up began. The men’s laughter echoed from the kitchen as the women - comprising around two thirds of the cohort - reset the chairs, ready for the afternoon session from Cairn’s prayer specialist, Crystal. Crystal works for “24/7 Prayer International” as Scotland’s national co-ordinator and is regularly invited to contribute at Cairn training events, whether as a speaker, or to support prayer. She stands at the front of the room, barely taller than the lectern beside her and speaks in a steady tone. She occasionally fights back tears, filled with emotion as she teaches on prayer and discipleship. Crystal teaches that believers are “changed through prayer” and reminds them that any change Training Hub attendees wish to see in the world starts with them. Sporadically taking notes, everyone
in the room listens intently and nods in assent. I glance over the shoulders of two Central members in their twenties, recognising the artistic journaling style popular at their church, replete with calligraphy and artfully adorned quotes, including: “The people we hang around, we start to look, act, sound like them.” Crystal adds, “When we hang out with God we start to sound, look, act like him.” Here, she speaks not just to imitation but “incarnation”.

While imitation constitutes mirroring a demonstration, incarnation is a process of incorporating the divine. As well as emulating Jesus’ character as portrayed in the Bible and following his commands, my interlocutors spoke of “being filled with the Holy Spirit” (e.g. Meyer 2010, Luhrmann 2012b, Strhan 2013). They indicated an intimacy which goes beyond simply copying to encompassing Jesus in their very being. Cairn’s understanding of the nature of God includes His ability to participate in a person’s sensations, thoughts and emotions, as well as shaping their circumstances. So, whilst disciples seek to “look like” Jesus, they also host his presence. Rich frames the movement’s desire to see followers become proxies for Jesus: “Disciples are to follow Jesus so closely that He is incarnated in them and then, through them, to others.”

To frame it another way, Lempert’s (2014) writing on imitation considers how there is almost always some discrepancy between original and copy, “unless materially embodied and teemed with indexicality (a sign-object relation based on contiguity, in which a sign is felt to point to or indicate its object, like clouds to rain),” (387). When Cairn’s architects speak of incarnation, they present one such exception; they are invoking the disciple’s goal to become an indexical icon of Jesus. They do not intend to become God but endeavour to cleave so closely to the Holy Spirit that they not only signpost but manifest Him; both resembling and channelling Him. Teaching on incarnation is a reminder that becoming a disciple is not fully contingent on the individual’s will – e.g. their mastery of the Kairos circle and diligent journaling - but must include the incorporation of the Holy Spirit.

Here I speak to a well-established line of thought in the Anthropology of Christianity of the last decade, considering in/dividual Christian personhood. Dumont, Mauss and Weber have directly associated the rise of the western individual - “the independent, autonomous and thus essentially non-social
moral being” - with the development of Protestant Christianity (Dumont 1986:25). In consonance with this line of thought and drawing on ethnography of Urapmin Christian conversion, Robbins posited that Christian personhood should be considered “unrelentingly individualist” (2004: 293). In 2010 Mosko sparked a lively conversation by disputing this point, arguing instead for the Christian as “dividual”. Daswani (2011: 257) described dividuality as “the close proximity and unexpected pull of others in one’s life – including humans and non-humans – where individuals are also seen as composed of relationships and substances,”. Werbner (2011: 193) added that dividuals are “composite”, “partible” and “permeated”. Anthropological discussions on this topic evolved from a debate of opposing sides to calls for ethnographic understandings about how different modes of personhood might emerge and interact in different moments and circumstances (see Bialecki & Daswani 2015).

We have established in this chapter that disciples are to be personally responsible, intentional, organised etc. in ways which chime with ideals of the late modern, bounded individual. But ideally, Cairn’s disciples are also vessels for divinity. Their interactive relationship with God might be said to constitute an “interbeing” (Mosko 2010). As vessels for the divine, proxies for Jesus, the disciples’s actions and thoughts are not only subject to their own will but intertwined with another. Moreover, Cairn’s principle of imitation rests on the inevitability that a person’s life is influenced by the “unexpected pull” (Daswani 2011) of those close to them. Disciples are cautioned that – by effort or not – a person influences those around them. The incorporation of the divine and permeability undergirding Cairn’s theory of influence complicate disciples’ autonomy, painting them as, at least partially, dividual subjects. To say that Cairn situates agency in the individual and that disciples are self-governing is not to say that their will is sovereign in the way it may be for a non-Christian counterpart. As I have previously outlined, Christianity’s influence in forming the notion of the bounded, modern subject is well documented (Dumont 1986, Keane 2002, Cannell 2006). Yet, when we take into account Cairn’s prophetic spirituality and its concomitant forms of personhood, it is clear that the movement’s subjectivity cannot be reduced to models of the western/modern/neoliberal subject precisely because of its Christianity.
Conclusion
This chapter has examined the Cairn movement’s practices of subjectivization and their mandate to “make disciples who make disciples”. I have explored how disciples seek to know “who God made them to be” and to “take personal responsibility for their faith” by reflexively working on their character. This imperative to reform oneself connects with Foucaudian techniques of modern subject creation, contemporary concerns about authenticity and neoliberal responsibilisation. It is also fundamental to Cairn’s plans for national Christian revival as self-reformation is cast as contagious through imitation. The emphasis on selves “as sites of restoration” scales up as “individuals constitute the nation, and [that] the character of each individual determines the quality of a nation” (O’Neill 2009). Cairn locates both authenticity and agency in the disciple’s relationship of co-being with God. By shifting the responsibility for reform from the church institution to in/dividual beliers, Cairn invokes a form of governmentality which critiques the so-called “legalism” of traditional church. Relocating agency to individuals, all identified as “leaders” with unique character and calling, reconfigures church social structure and the movement’s approach to mission. I unpack this in the following chapters.

53 I will continue to use the word “individual” in the following chapters to refer to one disciple. I ask that the reader bear in mind the individual and diindividual elements combined in disciples’ subjectivity as explicated here.
Chapter 4. Church in Transition

In 2015, Castlebank Baptist Church (CBC) contacted Karl looking for “pulpit supply”. However, when representatives from Central Church visited the church their diagnosis was more severe. The leaders who had held up Castlebank Baptist Church for decades were stepping into old age with no successors ready to relieve them. Central saw a church which had lost momentum and vision. They stated that they would not fill the pulpit for CBC to continue existing in its current, outdated form. Instead, they would offer to send a team who would “transition” the church, implementing a new church model with a focus on community engagement. They called it a “replant”. Central’s leaders pitched the vision with grand dreams of what could be and holding a dying church in their hands, the congregation accepted. The shift was not without challenge. Many existing members left the church over this time, as their initial positivity waned with the realities of what some began to call the “take-over”. One original member recalled that many of her peers left and went elsewhere, protesting, “We’re not having these young people coming in and changing our church.” By the time I arrived in Castlebank, a couple of years into the new leadership, just half of the original thirteen members remained.

I watch from one of its windows as the number six bus drives from the polished, industrial buzz of Central’s Tollcross to Castlebank: a residential suburb, west of the city centre. Passing boxy, pebbledashed tenements I arrive in a warren of two-story council houses punctuated with little roundabouts. The bus lands at the small car park of a multi-unit commercial building comprising a dental clinic, a Greggs bakery and a Tesco supermarket. On the side of the building are glass double doors with “Castlebank Baptist Church” and Sunday service times printed on the panes. Through the doors and up the stairs, there stands a lady in her early eighties wearing a long black skirt and vibrant, lime green jumper. She takes my hand to shake it but then lingers, holding my hand in hers as she examines me. Her eyes are dusted with matching lime green makeup and framed by a thin, dark line of eyebrow pencil. “Have you been here before?” she asks, quite rhetorically, followed immediately by, “Are you from Central? We have a lot of folks from Central here.” Joy hands me a Bible from a matching burgundy set on the bookcase and then a “Mission Praise” hymn book. “You
won’t need it. It’s just in case that thing breaks,” she nods with disdain at the PowerPoint projector casting the CBC logo on the far wall. The church occupies the light, airy loft space of the newly built commercial block. (Before the replant, with an aging building and dwindling funds, CBC had sold their plot to developers on the condition that space for a church be included in the new build). Rows of new blue chairs face a semi-circle stage with a simple wooden lectern and a vase of supermarket flowers.

The congregation of about thirty people half-fills the blue chairs. Two families, each with children under eight-years-old, chatter by the stage while deterring a mischievous toddler from determinedly climbing its steps. Joy takes a seat in the second row, her own green cushion already there waiting for her. Her husband, Gordon, sits by her side: a small, quiet man with a rarely heard, raspy, Irish accent and a pale brown suit. I sit nearer the back next to Emily, a theology graduate. Her Birkenstocks sit abandoned under the chair in front as she curls her legs up on her seat. She is draped in an oversized jumper and scarf and tucks untamed, blonde waves behind dangly earrings. She sits next to her flatmate, Jess, a PhD student from Chicago. Jess wears all black with a velvet choker necklace and knee-high suede boots, matched by her sleek, black hair. Originally attenders of Central Church, Emily and Jess were drawn to the missional vision of CBC’s replant and answered the call to move to the area and join the team.

The lead pastor, David, stands at the lectern with microphone in hand and invites everyone to find a seat. The gathering is small enough that his warm “hello” is met with direct replies from congregants – I note the stark contrast to Central where there are often one hundred people between me and the speaker. David, around thirty years old and wearing a partially ironed, checked shirt, is humble and relaxed in the way he holds himself. I first met him at Central church where he was apprenticed to and then worked under Karl for a few years before being appointed to the replant. He slings an acoustic guitar over his shoulder. “Let’s pray,” he says, as he bows his head and closes his eyes. He speaks clearly and simply: “God, thank you for the community you have gathered in this church. We pray that we would turn our eyes to you this morning and that your Holy Spirit would be present among us. Amen.” He looks up: “Maybe you’d like to stand?”
Gradually, everyone takes to their feet as David strums the guitar and lyrics are projected on the wall: “When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the King of glory died...”. A tall, young man (Harris) with skinny black Joys and a pierced ear plays cajon while a woman (Jennifer), also in her mid-twenties, sings into the microphone with a bold, soprano voice. The music is mostly modern worship songs: often hymn lyrics with new, easily learned, upbeat melodies. Most congregants stand with hands by their sides as they follow the lyrics from the wall projection. Clara, David’s wife and co-leader of the church, stands at the back of the room behind all the chairs and sings with eyes tightly closed, head tilted back and arms reaching upwards and outwards. At the front, Joy upturns one palm, held close to her face. Intermittently, she picks up a bright blue, plastic tambourine, loudly rattling and tapping it through the choruses, nearly drowning out the voices.

Cairn seeks to reform Scotland’s churches, claiming that the dominant model of the past fifty years is no longer fit for purpose. The movement accuses “traditional” church of a conservativism which has suffocated its true purpose and calling. This “inward-looking”, “maintenance” approach is thought not only to have exacerbated the church’s exile from the public sphere but also to have warped its authentic, God-intended form. The “renovate” branch of Cairn purports to “transition” existing churches from this obsolete model to a style conducive to revival.

Our training aims to help teams reset their culture, recalibrate their practice and reach out to their communities. (cairnmovement.com Last Accessed: August 2017)

The movement contends that the ideal form of church was exemplified by the first century apostles portrayed in the book of Acts and was faithfully recreated in fifth/sixth century Celtic Christianity. In a bid to recover authenticity and dynamism, Cairn’s reformers seek to undo the “religious” practices which they feel made church errantly more formal, hierarchical and prescriptive. David and Clara claim that one of the greatest challenges which faced them on arriving in Castlebank was rewiring a “religious culture” in the existing church.
In this chapter, I explore the interaction of Cairn’s reform model with the “traditional church” it critiques. I engage the comprehensive scholarship on Christian language ideology by comparing the styles of prayer and Biblical analysis of replanters, with those of the original CBC members. This comparison exposes competing approaches to the configuration of agency, authority and authenticity in church life. I show how the organising principles emergent in CBC’s opposing language ideologies reverberate through various other church practices and attitudes, mapping two different ideals of social organisation. This chapter connects agency with power relations, not in the well-rehearsed terms of domination/resistance but regarding organisational and spiritual authority. Taking CBC as an example, I explore how Cairn’s reform process touches on deep contentions about locating human and divine authority.

Chatting to Jesus
David delivers a twenty-minute sermon about “identity”, followed by a prayer and a final hymn sung from the projected lyrics. After the last chord plays, he looks expectantly at the congregation and two people make their way to the communion table at the front. The thick, white tablecloth is lifted, uncovering the bread and “wine” (little shot glasses of diluting juice). Two over-sized, throne-like wooden chairs with decorative carving are sat either side of the grand table, facing the gathering. Chairs were recently reintroduced to communion proceedings at the request of an older member at a church meeting. While the request was accepted on the grounds that it allowed elderly congregants to remain seated, the ceremonial furniture was felt by some replanters to emphasise the already excessive formality of the ritual. Gordon (Joy’s husband) takes his seat. Emily examines the other chair, swithers and awkwardly perches on its edge. David explains to the room that communion is an opportunity to remember what Jesus has done for us and importantly, to do so as a community. He outlines the process of handing out bread and wine and then makes clear that, while all are most welcome, there is no pressure to partake. He provides this disclaimer of personal choice at each communion, even when there are only established church members present. Stepping back, he signals for Emily to pray over the bread. Emily takes to her feet, adjusts herself to a relaxed stance and closes her eyes. Her prayer is conversational, at
relaxed pace, with repetitions and hesitations marking its improvisation. It is intimate and informal with sentences beginning, “Yeah...Jesus, we just pray that...”. After “Amen”, in silence, she and Gordon proceed down the aisles, passing around neat squares of white bread piled on ceremonial wooden plates. There is the occasional whispered “thank you” but mostly just polite nods. Back to the thrones, Gordon remains seated as he prays for the wine. Emily uncomfortably perches again. His prayer style starkly contrasts with hers. Gordon’s speech is formal, deferential. “Glorious heavenly father, we do pray...” he announces. He uses reverent language: “we give ye thanks and we give ye praise.” And speaks solemnly of sacrifice: “there is no recompense without blood.” Sentences begin “Oh, Lord,” and feature “in your mighty name” and “by a mighty move of your spirit”. This brief, ceremonial speech is made without pauses as if well-rehearsed. We hold on to our shot glasses until everyone is served and David gives the go ahead to “drink together as a community” on his cue, “Jesus’ blood poured out for us.”

This contrast in prayer style between the longstanding and the new CBC members is consistently evident. For difficult circumstances, Emily prays frankly, “Urgh, Jesus, this stuff just really sucks!” She will speak of “having a great time with Jesus” and blissfully melt into her chair after worship sighing, “He’s just so good!” On the other hand, when a former CBC leader was asked to lead prayer on his visit one Sunday morning, he stood in his over-sized grey suit, thick glasses and slicked-back grey hair, clasped his hands and grandly announced, “Let us pray.” He spoke in a bold, Scottish voice, clipped with harsh consonants, proclaiming unhesitant statements. His words were heavy with gravitas and sacredness, referring to the space as the “sanctuary”, the collected money as “love gifts” and asked for the “almighty Lord’s blessing as we go forth”.

I argue that the contrasting prayer styles of Gordon and Emily are indicative of competing ideals and social structures at CBC. Language ideology has proven to be a productive model for Anthropologists of Christianity studying the links between social formations and their ideas about language. In the substantial range of cross-cultural research on Christian language ideologies, there emerge striking similarities which bear a “family resemblance” (Bialecki & Hoenes del Pinal 2011). At the core of this consistency is the “sincere subject” put forward
by Webb Keane (2006). Keane’s (2006) seminal work on the Anakalangese of West Sumba, Indonesia explains how their conversion to Calvinism included embracing the belief that God sees inside people and judges untruthfulness (Haynes 2016, Robbins 2001). The believer’s language therefore, must be sincere and portray transparently the internal sentiments. Key to Keane’s work is the argument that this Protestant language ideology cleaves to the notion of modern subjectivity: individualised, “abstracted from material and social entanglements”, acting as its own authority and the locus of meaning (Keane 2002). Crucially, sincerity’s “tight coupling of intention and meaning” is not only a matter of aligning expression and sentiment but implies the desire to do so. Sincerity thus relies upon the ethical character of the speaker (Robbins 2001, Keane 2002). The ideal Protestant/modern interlocutor ought to use language which is honest and without any distorting elaborations. As such, the Anakalangese converts are critical of the routinized, formulaic speech used in ancestral rituals and Catholic ceremonies and deem spontaneity a sign of authenticity (Keane 2002, 2006; see also Shoaps 2002).

Sincerity undergirds a Christian language ideologue which ethnographers have found recurrent (whether embraced or challenged) across contexts:

> Viewed as a gestalt, then, the Christian language “ideologue” put forward in this literature could be identified by a rather small though recurrent constellation of features, chief of which are a marked predilection for sincerity, interiority, intimacy, intentionality, and immediacy as an ethics of speech, and a privileging of the referential aspects of language. Concomitant with this, there is a tendency towards discomfort with, if not an outright rejection of the social, material, and historic substrate of language (among which we might count ritualized speech genres), which sometimes extends to a suspicion of fixed texts and other non-personalized instances of language use. (Bialecki & Hoenes del Pinal 2011, my emphasis)

Both Gordon and Emily, in line with Protestant tradition, understand God as an all-knowing power who compels truthfulness. I suggest however, that more can be gleaned from the different ways they characterise God in their speech. I
contend that the ways Gordon and Emily speak to God reveal how they perceive His nature, the attendant rules of engaging with Him and concomitantly, the appropriate social organisation of church. As Emily put it to me, “everything starts from who we know God to be”.

For Castlebank Baptist Church’s original members, sincerity is entwined with reverence; to be appropriately earnest is to demonstrate acknowledgement of God’s almightiness and the sacredness of prayer. This is marked with seriousness; with formal language placing the speaker as clearly subordinate to God. On the other hand, the replanters’ sincerity is expressed in spontaneity, a plainer way of speaking, more consistent with conversation in other areas of their lives. Crucially, for speech to be ruled sincere by the replanters it must be personalised. Personalisation is a persistent value in the replanters’ practice: note that David does not instruct congregants to stand but asks if they might like to; he does not assume participation in communion but frames it as personal choice. Not only is prayer speech ideally personalised for the replanters, so too is God’s response (Bialecki 2017:83-102). Emily experiences God as speaking to her in an utterly unique way in line with the bespoke identity He gave her (Shoaps 2002). Whilst both original and replant factions at CBC believe strongly that God answers prayers, the replanters foreground a sense of immediacy in their expectation that God may speak in the moment, emphasising the dialogical nature of prayer. As such, the language is informal and unfolding, like confiding with a close friend. As Luhrmann (2004) puts it, “This God is not without majesty. But He has become a pal,” (518). The intimacy of replanters’ prayer conversations sits in contrast with the markers of reverence in Gordon’s language.

Some features of the Protestant language ideologue described by Bialecki and del Pinal (2011) clearly apply for both factions of CBC: Thursday evening prayer groups involve unrehearsed prayers, composed in direct response to a Bible study or prayer request. I heard no prayers being read from prepared text, or any liturgical practices of call and response. Yet, Gordon and Emily still diverge in their efforts to be sincere. For Gordon, ethical and efficacious Christian speech is often linked to reinforcing the integrity of scripture – as we will see in the following section. Whereas, for the replanters, “being real with God” involves showing consistency between how they address Him and how they
speak in the other friendly social interactions of their lives. They echo the critique of Christians using elaborate, formal language as posed by Bialecki’s (2017) Vineyard informants who exclaim: “do they order hamburgers like that?” (124). Note, Cairn’s understanding of authenticity as including consistency (in speech, behaviour, attitude) in all spheres of life is a theme we have already encountered in this thesis: recall the integrity of a “prophetic lifestyle” discussed in chapter two. This will recur in the following chapter and in the way CBC replanters combine the everyday with the miraculous. Here we see the connection between the notion of sincerity - truthfully portraying one’s interior world – and Cairn’s value of authenticity which includes living out one’s unique God-given identity in a way which is consistent across all social spheres.

James Bielo (2009, 2011b) reminds us that language ideology does not only pertains to speech. He draws attention to the connected textual ideologies present in Bible reading. Alongside Sunday mornings, CBC congregates also on Thursday evenings, sharing a meal and singing worship songs before delving into Bible study. The format of the study begins with one person reading aloud a piece of scripture while everyone else follows along in the matching, hardback church Bibles. Questions are displayed on the projector and discussed in small groups. Jennifer (vocalist in the worship band) was leading a session on reaching out to the local non-Christian community and read out one of the questions from the PowerPoint: “What did it cost Jesus to leave heaven to come to earth? What does it cost us to leave our reality and walk in another person’s shoes and enter their world?” Jennifer joins my group and at first, as we listen to a Northern Irish nurse in her early thirties, the conversation seems to be going as planned. We nod as the nurse tells her story of interacting with patients and colleagues at work and ponders the need to forgo our own comforts and biases in order to “really meet someone where they’re at”. Throughout our discussions, Jennifer encourages everyone to participate and offer their personal examples and opinions. Her questions are prefaced with phrases such as “So, what do you find hard about...” and “When have you felt...”. She turns to Gordon who is yet to contribute and gently invites him to speak: “Would you like to add anything, Gordon?” Gordon slowly sits forward, thumbing the page of the open Bible on the table and clears his throat. “Well, it says here in [Philippians 2] verse seven ‘He [Jesus] was made nothing.’...In the authorised version [King James
translation], it reads “of no reputation”. Gordon eases back in his chair. There is a short silence before Jennifer nods politely and moves swiftly to another group member. Jennifer had hoped to illicit personal conversations undertaken with “emotional honesty” in which the church community could reflect together on how to build close relationships with non-Christian others. The replanters tend towards an analytical style focussed on textual application, discussing how scripture is relevant to individuals’ intimate concerns (Bielo 2009, by contrast see Bielo 2011). Whilst Gordon also believes firmly in using the Bible to guide one’s actions, he and Joy often seemed unaccustomed to the level of personal reflection encouraged on Thursdays, preferring to refer directly to scripture.

As demonstrated in Gordon’s group participation, he and Joy are firm believers in the King James translation (KJV) of the Bible as the most accurate and therefore the only version to be believed. Verbatim knowledge of this veracious translation was a mark of dedication in Joy’s eyes. One of her favourite churches, she told me, is a Free Church Continuing because the women still wear their hats and “they really know their Bible”. Joy and Gordon are concerned with the fixity of the scriptures: the teachings of which are to be applied practically but without too much interpretive license which risks mishandling the text’s authority. Here Joy and Gordon echo the sentiments of Bielo’s (2011b) Lutheran informants for whom “scripture prevails over any other source of knowledge” (634), unparalleled by other informants or experiences.

The contrast is striking when we consider Emily’s approach. Reflecting on a recent training event led by Glasgow Prophetic Centre, she told me, “They just kept emphasising, ‘The Bible is the highest authority. The Bible is the highest authority’. No! Jesus is the highest authority!” she implored. Emily approaches the Bible as someone who knows the author intimately and locates ultimate authority in “the person of” God (Bialecki 2017:90). The replanters see the Bible as being of fundamental importance but it is treated as a dynamic text to be grappled with in dialogue, “live and direct”, with the Holy Spirit, acting as close friend and teacher (Engelke 2007). Emily went on,

*If we get fixed on the content having to be one hundred percent literal and directive, we’re limiting Him. There can be so much more depth and truth when we can trust it as metaphor. We’re so Greek*
in how we think, needing things to be literal. But in the Jewish tradition it was about interpretations, layers of meaning. [...] If the Bible dissolves in your hand, do you go back to Jesus?

The intellectual exercise of theology and my faith are separable. I can take them apart and work on the intellectual side of things and then put them back together. The intellectual can help shape my faith but my faith in the person of Jesus isn’t dependent on it. I can wrestle with things I don’t understand and read about different theologies but I need to be able to put that down and go back to my faith in the person of Jesus.

Emily advocates an approach in which the scripture is dynamic, allowing for wide reading of different translations and nuance in contextualising its teachings and debating meanings. The authoritative teaching of the Bible comes to Emily through active collaboration between Her and its author. Whereas for Gordon, its authority comes precisely from its fixity and exterior authorship.

Bialecki and del Pinal (2011), among others, have argued that studying “what constitutes ethical and effective language” (582) in a given context has allowed ethnographers to make intelligible connected phenomena such as exchange, kinship, time, etc (Bialecki 2011). The contrasting styles of language at CBC, when analysed, highlight the replanters’ priorities of personalisation and of the disciple’s collaborative (thereby intentional, agentive) relationship with God. In the “traditionalists”, we discover a belief that fixity and exterior authorship are marks of authority. For Joy and Gordon, the appropriate use of human agency in engaging scripture is to constrain it, preserving the accuracy of the text. I now go on to demonstrate how these principles are woven throughout various other aspects of the church models at play in Castlebank Baptist Church. Sincerity has been a key concept in studying Christian language ideology and here I show how it applies more broadly to social organisation and practice.

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54 Note, Emily holds a graduate degree in theology but reading theological/Christian literature was a practice common among the replanters.
Leadership

With David away on a Stag Do, Clara gave the Sunday sermon in his place. This raised the thorny subject of female church leaders over dinner at the following Thursday gathering. “What’s wrong with it?” Emily asks. Her question rests on the table in front of us; a volatile little parcel, placed gingerly between empty plates. She sits on my left and Joy to my right, putting me squarely in the middle of the tense discussion. “It says in the Bible that a woman shouldn’t speak in church. She shouldn’t teach a man or challenge his authority,” Joy states plainly. Another original member supports Joy by referencing a Bible verse which speaks about it being “a disgrace” for a woman to speak in church. “You don’t mind, do you?” Joy asks Emily. I hold my breath. “Well, yes, I do mind.” Emily retorts, frankly. “Oh. Sorry…” Joy’s eyebrows gather apologetically, “You do bring a good word. I’ve heard you speak once.” “Well, come again! I’ll bring another good word!” Joy doesn’t respond and just forces a hearty laugh while Emily’s expression tinges with carefully tamed frustration. She pauses and goes to ask something but then stops herself. “I don’t want to get into an argument because… that’s where you’re at and that’s fine but…” Joy quickly reiterates that, “It says in the Bible that women shouldn’t teach,” and the fellow original member who had supported her, pipes up with the verse which he has now retrieved from the Bible app on his phone. Joy dismisses his proffered scripture because it’s NIV (New International Version), commenting “I don’t believe in those versions, only the authorised version.” “But…it’s contextual,” Emily reasons, “so, some things in the Bible are written for a particular place at a particular time.” Joy tries to draw a line under the conversation, plainly stating, “I’m just going to laugh.” Emily tries to illustrate this contextual nature of some biblical commands: “It also says that we should cover our heads in church(!!)” This doesn’t have the desired effect. “I used to always!” Joy proclaims proudly, “Right up until I was the only one left in the church wearing a hat. Times have changed since I became a Christian. It’s different now. Shame…” Emily sees an opportunity to deflect the tense conversation and perhaps explore Joy’s viewpoint: “How did you become Christian, Joy?” Joy’s eyes light up and she turns in her chair to face us more directly and regale us with her cherished testimony.
Joy’s life as a Christian included many years as a Sunday school superintendent and a speaker at various women’s Bible study groups. When I highlighted that she has regularly been lead speaker at church events she quickly defends, “Oh yeah, you’re allowed to speak at the women’s meeting! ‘Cause it’s only women – there’s no men.” She has also delighted in open air evangelism, joining groups proclaiming the gospel around the streets of Edinburgh. This fervour continues with her now in her eighties. She tells me about her weekly routine: “Well, I go to Zumba on a Monday. But there’s not much opportunity to witness there.” “So, would you describe yourself as an evangelist?” I ask innocuously, naïve to the scolding that would follow: “Not for a woman!” She strikes my arm with the back of her hand, correcting me. “Oh... Ok. What about ‘evangelical’?” “Oh yes!” she replies earnestly. “I always like opportunities to tell people about the Lord.”

Joy’s argument that women should not teach in church is not based on the view that they are incapable; she concedes that Emily “brings a good word”. Rather her objection, supported by her literal reading of scripture, pertains to a hierarchical, gendered division of labour in church. Joy’s distinction between the office of “evangelist” or “preacher” maintains gendered boundaries around who may take these roles. Rose expressed baffled frustration at Joy’s opinion: “She tells people about Jesus, she’s always praying for people...she’s a preacher! How is it different?!” For Rose and her fellow replanters, Joy’s capability represented sufficient qualification - if not the imperative - to teach in church or call herself “an evangelist”. The replanters’ approach to roles within the church aligns with Cairn’s model of the “disciple” as addressed in chapter three: each individual has particular giftings and the responsibility to take a role which utilises them. Ideally, every member of the church should be actively engaged, taking initiative in volunteering themselves for jobs, or offering innovative ideas without awaiting permission or prompting from David and Clara. As discussed in previous chapters, Cairn situates agency and authenticity in the individual. (Note that, even in strong disagreement with her theology, Emily lends priority to Joy’s personal narrative; “where she’s at” in her journey with God.) Leadership, in Cairn’s reform model, is about the personal attributes and gifts of the believer: authority rests in the disciple’s God-given identity. This is framed as a direct critique of traditional configurations of leadership as a
“title,” determined by rank and role; something externally imposed. Whereas Cairn situates authority as interior, in the individual’s relationship with God.

Emily, like many replanters, often reflected on finding and fulfilling her role as a “leader” in the church.

*If the church in the UK fell tomorrow what would it do to your faith? You don’t go [to church services] to be [spiritually] fed - you need to feed yourself. And you have people to work it through with. But often when David is preaching, sometimes the leadersaren’t really listening! As a leader, we’re being aware of others like, ‘how’s that landing with that person’. You take responsibility for your own faith. But it’s not totally individualistic - you do that in community.*

Whilst I’m not sure David would be thrilled to think his audience wasn’t always captivated by his sermons, he too describes his task as pastor to be enabling his congregants’ active participation in the church’s mission. He echoed Karl’s description of a leader as helping each person to “work out” their gifting and “step into it”. David and Clara often encouraged others to lead services and Thursday gatherings based not on formal, theological qualification but on perceived spiritual gifts/skills. Clara pointed out that some congregants are reluctant to view others as “leaders” in the same way that David and she sees them: “Because of education and weird culture, we have such a weird thing about hierarchy and how leadership works in this country! This thing around ‘the minister’.”

This ethos of embracing one’s gifts, seemed a little challenging for Joy. One Thursday evening, Clara asked us to turn to the person next to us and discuss what we’re good at; what gifts God has given us; what we have to contribute. In the large circle of chairs, I was seated next to Joy. As often happened, Joy immediately asked that I re-explain the task. I do so and then tell Joy that I think she is a powerful character and like a mother to so many in the church. I add that she’s welcoming to everybody. She smiles modestly. I ask if she’d agree with those things and whether she’d add anything. “I do miss children’s work. For a lot of my life I did that and I loved it.” “I bet you were good at that,” I

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55 Emily is recognised by David, Clara and peers at CBC, as a “leader”. Though, she is not a registered Deacon.
encourage. “Yes...Oh! I shouldn’t say that,” Joy reprimands herself. “No, it’s ok you can!” We continue with the set discussion. Of myself, I suggest that I like to be encouraging of others and to look after them. “Yes, I’ve noticed that about you,” Joy nods enthusiastically. After a thoughtful pause Joy leans towards me and says softly, “This is very different from anything we’ve done before in prayer meetings.” On another occasion, one of the replanters answered “How are you?” with “I’m great, thanks.” Joy quickly chastised the young, female speaker: “You shouldn’t say you’re great. You wait for other people to say that about you.” Those of us present tried to explain the turn of phrase: “She means she feels great, or things are going great.” But Joy seemed unconvinced.

Joy’s concern about boasting reflects what some have identified as a typically Scottish Protestant attitude of self-denial and self-deprecation. In 2005, the (then) Scottish Executive backed the creation of a “Centre of Confidence and Well Being”. An article from the Glasgow Herald (McLaughlin 2005) discussed reactions to this new initiative at the time and exposed various perceptions of Scots’ temperament including a “cannae do” attitude, “self-destructive” tendencies, a penchant to “downplay our successes and over-emphasise our failures”. This assessment echoes the findings of Carol Craig, director of the new Centre and author of “The Scots’ Crisis of Confidence” (2003). Her book describes Scots’ “fear of failure, suspicion of success and Presbyterian inhibition” which some have critiqued as presenting “familiar and cliched stereotypes” (see review by Cohen 2004:160).

Cliché or not, these familiar characterisations of Scottishness sometimes emerged in Cairn’s discussions of national revival. In Karl’s writing and teaching about leadership, he speaks of Scotland’s problem with “tall poppy syndrome”. (Curiously, this is a commonly recognised phenomenon in Australia and New Zealand, said to reinforce their high valuation of egalitarianism. See e.g. Peeters 2004. Pierce et al 2017). The phrase speaks of a reluctance to “get above one’s station” and chastisement from peers for those who appear to do so. So it goes, it is the tallest poppy which is scythed down. Karl’s book traces elements of this phenomenon back in social history to the influence of the feudal system. Without European feudal hierarchy, he suggests, the United States embraced the attitude “everyone can be a lord” (reflected in the Declaration of Independence) whilst the UK adopted the stance, “everyone can be a serf”
Described by another minister as “the dark side of Scottish egalitarianism”, tall poppy syndrome was often cited by Cairn followers as a barrier to reforming church leadership and growth in Scotland. This mixture of conservatism and a stubborn wariness was spoken of as a Scottish trait and especially rooted in the Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland. William Storrar’s (1990) work on Scottish Presbyterianism, as shaped by John Knox, suggests that it saw people as ultimately depraved, in need of external control on behaviour, so Christians were encouraged to monitor and correct one another. Carol Craig discusses Storrar’s analysis and concludes that this form of Presbyterianism “promoted guilt and emotional repression” in the Scottish psyche (Craig 2017:164-167). Cairn’s encouragement of all congregants to take initiative and be entrepreneurial is seen as being challenged by the restrictions of the Presbyterianism and other denominational processes, with their many tiers of approval and accountability. Cairn trainees worried consistently about how they were going to implement the movement’s bold new missional ideas whilst operating within denominational systems which seemed designed to limit trailblazers and to maintain the status quo. Cairn architects, frustrated at churches’ reluctance to commit (particularly financially) to the movement’s training, sometimes described this as characteristically Scottish: Scots will hold back and want proof that it works before they buy in, rather than boldly getting behind a new innovation. (Note, many Cairn leaders were born in England and moved to Scotland in their adult life. But this critique of Scots’ stubborn wariness was also corroborated by “born and bred” Scottish leaders.) It seems the Scottish audience presents unique challenges to Cairn’s notion of every disciple as an entrepreneurial leader.

With regards to church leadership, the replanters’ location of authority in the disciple’s personal relationship with God stands in opposition to the traditionalists who see authority as externally sourced and unequally distributed. This distribution of authority echoes the preceding discussion about Christian language ideologies hinging on interiority versus fixity. While replanters see leadership as a potential residing in every person and specialised by their gifts, the traditional model sees the role of leader as socially designated and part of a clear, gendered, division of church labour. And to defy this hierarchy would be presumptuous and boastful under the Scottish logic of tall
poppy syndrome. It is one thing to be a leader under the permission of a title, it is quite another to embrace that role as something you are uniquely gifted and called to do. This dynamic of creative personalisation versus organised structure continues in the following section as we turn to the notion of “Sunday best”.

Reverence and Informality

As is perhaps clear by now, Castlebank Baptist Church is a place of continuous negotiation, punctuated with moments of subtle altercation. At one Thursday evening gathering with dinner plates cleared, the room bubbled with chatter. As they walked past one another, distributing Bibles and hymn books, Joy exclaimed to Emily, “What’s wrong with your hair?! It’s a mess!” Emily bursts out laughing, drawing the attention of the nearby table of young women. Most chuckle in partial disbelief at Joy’s characteristic boldness, but one remains stony-faced and catches my eye: “It’s not ok. And not surprising, is it? She [Joy] should know better,” she shakes her head and makes no effort to hush her voice. Joy stops handling Emily’s curls and softens the disapproval on her face: “I don’t mean to be hurtful.” “I take no offence,” Emily replies through continuing laughter. While Emily and her agemates have no qualms about coming to church in their slouchy dungarees, hair still damp from the shower and bare faces, Joy upholds the notion of “Sunday best”, never seen in trousers or an outfit which does not include matching jewellery. I only saw Joy in trousers when I visited her home. Attending church seemed to call for a different aesthetic; formal and gendered. On seeing Jess in a floaty, black dress one Sunday, Joy complimented, “Yes, it’s important to look nice for the Lord’s day.” To which Jess smiled and respectfully but firmly corrected, “Every day is God’s day.” Discussing this idea of “Sunday best”, Emily reflected,

> With the older generation there’s still a value placed on appearances – things like the “Sunday best”. My grandparents were really traditional in a lot of ways. They didn’t support women preaching. They didn’t like that my mum dressed me in jeans for church. Mum explained that I understood Jesus as like my close friend so I would wear that sort of thing. I used to get a bit annoyed

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56 A.k.a. “overalls”
about them. But my Dad said this wonderful thing: that they’re just following the conviction they feel they have from God.

The casual dress of the replanters challenges the tradition of “Sunday Best” often associated with the kind of church they seek to reform. It is common for churches such as Central to emphasise on their websites a “come as you are” policy, to combat the assumption that Sunday services are formal (read, stuffy) occasions. Openness to casual attire is intended to paint the church as accessible. Emily alludes to the formal dress of traditional church being interpreted as a concern with “appearances” as opposed to the reformers’ focus on what is “real”, “raw”, “authentic”. (Note that Emily, once again, affirms the relationship between the individual and God as overriding her theological disagreement with her Grandparents.) To replanters, the perceived restrictiveness of wearing formal attire smacks of the same inconsistency as their concern with formal language. To the Vineyard critique, “do they order burgers like that”, they might add, “do they go to McDonald’s dressed like that?”

It is not only the women who are subject to Joy’s comments on appearance. Harris – the ear-pierced cajon-player – was also caught out. His wife, Rose, drew my attention to the interaction happening behind us as we sipped tea after the morning service: “Joy’s telling off Harris for wearing his hat. It’s “disrespectful” apparently.” I turn back to see the conversation continue with Joy pointing to the offending cap. She goes on to remind us how she always used to wear her hat to church. (My cheeky suggestion that she could wear Harris’ was not dignified with a response.) Dot, a fellow original member, reminisces about the days when Joy would pick her up for church in the mornings and would always arrive in a matching skirt, suit jacket and hat. “You always looked lovely. But it’s nice that you’re more casual now,” Dot encourages. But Joy continues her nostalgia, bemoaning how she only stopped wearing her hat because she felt awkward being the only one. For Joy, wearing, or not wearing a hat in the correct context obeyed diligently the commands in scripture, properly gendered the congregation and fostered a kind of dedicated reverence which she fears the casualisation of recent years is erasing.
When we met to record her testimony, Joy divulged to me her sadness at how the church has changed since she was young and “for the worse”. As well as abandoning the practices of formal dress, Joy tells how the church has become lax in its abstinence from various “things of the world”: including drinking, smoking etc. Sharing her narrative on becoming Christian, Joy tells me, “The girl that led me to the Lord – people do this nowadays but then we didn’t – she said to me, ‘You know, we [Christians] don’t like going to the pictures (cinema).’ And I said [eagerly], ‘Oh it’s alright, I’ve stopped going now!’.” Arriving back home to her family on this transformational day, Joy announced “I’ve become a Christian. I’ll need to behave now.” Joy laments the abandonment of various customs, but her point of greatest concern is the loss of “reverence”. “See, I’m not happy in this church with all the laughing and giggling going on...I can’t take that. And to me it’s like going to the pantomime.” She mocks loud laughter. “When there’s all the laughing and giggling, you don’t feel the lord’s presence anyhow.” I probe, “You are quite joyful in your worship and things? Is that different? You’ve mentioned ‘the joy of the lord’?” “Aye, the joy of the Lord. But not the laughing. Really praising the Lord, oh that’s alright. Have you heard of the thing of Holy laughter?” she smiles. “What’s the distinction?” I ask. “Well, I remember, I think I’ve only done it once. Years ago, I was in a meeting [Sunday church service] and just the Holy Spirit comes upon you and I... I was dancing up and down. When I finished, I opened my eyes and I’m standing at the front of the church and all the people are... [shocked expression]. Oh dear, *laughs* I was mortified! Some of the girls that come [to CBC], they dance in the spirit. I like that. If it’s in the spirit.”

For Joy, there is Holy laugher and there is joking laughter and the latter is inappropriate for church. Whereas, in the replanters’ ideal church, people are encouraged to be “completely themselves” and relaxed humour is commonplace. During a Thursday Bible study indirectly based on prophecy57, Emily’s fiancé, Alexander, spoke about his growing confidence in hearing from Jesus. “And you’re like 95% accurate!” Emily exclaims. She turns to address me: “Jesus will tell him things about me that I haven’t said to him yet.” “They’re

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57 Recall from chapter two that “prophecy” carries controversial conversation. In this session about “hearing from”/ “listening to” God, the term “prophecy” did not feature.
talking about you behind your back?” I reply, to which Jess – Emily’s flatmate - erupts with laughter. “Ha! ‘Talking behind your back.’,” she loudly giggles. As we reach 8.40pm – the usual finishing time - my discussion group realises we should close in prayer just as the other groups are doing. Alexander prays aloud, bending forward a little in his chair. He speaks softly and calmly with meandering prayers addressed to “our heavenly father”. As he hesitates and muddles a couple of sentences, he unwittingly says the words “we must not joke”. Not realising this unintended phrase, he continues his prayer but Emily and Jess instantly share shocked and amused glances and their shoulders begin to bounce with silent laughter. The moment he mutters “Amen” the girls exclaim, “We must not joke?!” He looks confused as the girls struggle to contain their hysterics and explain his blunder; especially humorous given just how uncharacteristic such a statement would be for laid back Alexander. He laughs at his error. But it dawns on me, Joy would have meant it, earnestly. I glance to the table behind me and her eyes are tight in an affronted scowl, she shakes her head and tuts toward my giggling group before returning to her bowed prayer position.

Allow me to clarify; Joy is certainly not without a sense of humour. I recall one occasion where I had the pleasure of making her laugh. She was inadvertently speaking over David’ attempts to begin sung worship and I quietly but theatrically shushed her, holding my finger to my lips. Thankfully, she found my playful role reversal amusing; she laughed, quickly stifling her giggle and apologising to David. Joy is a cheerful lady, but in her view, exuberance in laughter and movement are either “in the spirit”, or “of the world” and only the former belongs in church proceedings.

Bialecki (2011) identifies two common orientations in Christian language ideology which he describes in the illuminating terms “centripetal” and “centrifugal” which,

> provide a way of speaking of the tendency to either highlight the outward origins of language, and of the exterior cardinal orientations that fix subjectivity [centrifugal], or to use metalinguistic reflection to lock down language’s polysemous nature, deny its physical substrate, highlight personal agency, and
to repress the alterity present in any socially grounded communicative act [centripetal]. (682)

I propose that we can think of laughter through these terms. Joy perceived Holy laughter as centrifugal. Authored by an external force, it eschews the believer’s agency, signalling submission to God’s authority. Worldly laughter would constitute a centripetal orientation of agency, which is problematic as the individual believer is, for Joy, an inappropriate source of authority for church. To Joy, the light-heartedness and conversational joking are a far cry from the real, steadfast “dedication to the Lord” she witnessed when the Church in Scotland was thriving.

In the “traditional” model, of which I suggest Joy is a representative, church should be a site of evident religious piety where appearance, apparel and conduct clearly index the sacred object at hand. The perceived trend at Castlebank and many other churches in Scotland, toward lessening these rules of propriety are, to Joy, a fall in the standards of reverence which ought to mark a truly dedicated church. What is more, without the correct conditions of reverence, Joy warns connection with God’s presence may be impeded. Cairn’s deforming approach to church reform poses great risk to the model of church Joy espouses by seemingly prioritising personalisation over orthodoxy.

While Joy is concerned that personalization draws focus away from the fixed authority of God and His scripture, the replanters contend that “religiosity” lends authority to manmade traditions, losing track of what is authentically real: the disciple’s dynamic, intimate connection with God. “Religious” is generally a negative descriptor when used by the replant team. Sermons often warn against the behavioural dictates of unhelpful “religiosity” associated with “traditional” church. David explained in one sermon that – though often rooted in good intentions – Scotland’s churches developed some entrenched traditions of social policing. The replanters are openly critical about what they see to be the failings and bad habits of the church (UK-wide and internationally). Many speak of their negative past experiences in other churches and of times when they have stopped attending altogether, frustrated with the churches’ misrepresentation of Jesus, power abuses in leadership, and misplaced focus on behavioural dictates (echoing the complaints of the Emerging church
movement as highlighted previously, c.f. Bielo 2011). The replant vision comes from a place of critique, even rebellion, against these experiences. Emphasising the sense of being untethered from traditional practices, Emily explained, “We don’t have a static idea of what church should be. So, we’re open to different ways of doing things.”

Following a Sunday morning service from a guest preacher – a former Church of Scotland minister – I joined Rose, Emily, Jess and Becky (a new member also in her twenties) in sipping tea and nibbling home baking. We comment on the end of today’s service in which the minister prompted “sharing the peace” in which congregants turn to one another, shaking hands and speaking “peace be with you”, replying “and with you”. Describing it as “a Church of Scotland thing”, my tea-drinking friends had enjoyed this novel close to the service. Conversation turned to other such denominational practices. Emily mentions missing the liturgy of her Anglican upbringing. They speak about the silent reflection of Quakerism and wanting to incorporate some of that too. (“But the Jesus-loving kind. The others are a bit new-agey,” Emily qualifies.) Becky talks about Taizé\textsuperscript{58} worship having recently visited the Taizé community whilst volunteering in France. Emily cheerfully suggests we should have a worship night incorporating all these different styles. They thoughtfully ponder what else to involve. “What could we take from Catholicism?” “…the pope!” Rose jokes and is met with laughter. “Errmmm…” “Maybe the smelly stuff?...Incense!”

The replanters revel in the mutability of their worship styles which they take as demonstrative that style is “secondary” to the real essence of faith. Potential means of accessing Jesus’ presence are perceived to be multiple and governed by personal preference. In their understanding, God too is flexible in the styles of worship in which He will participate. For the replanters, God’s ability to see inside them means He too is unconcerned with elaborations of formality. The critique of “religion”, central to Cairn’s model of reform, sees human-authored traditions as risking distortion of the disciple’s direct connection with God; understood to be the seat of authenticity. Where, for Joy, the careful

\textsuperscript{58} The Taizé Community is an ecumenical Christian monastic fraternity in Taizé, Burgundy, France. Their worship style includes prayer marked by several repetitions.
delineation of sacred from profane maintains a reverence which appropriately indexes external authorship over the believer’s agency.

Conclusion
When Joy handed me a hymn book on my first visit, she told me I probably wouldn’t need it - it was just in case the shiny, new, digital projector failed. In hindsight, this seems to reflect a broader story at Castlebank of traditions rendered defunct and a lingering distrust of new ways. This chapter has taken a close look at one instance of Cairn’s church reform project. As we see in the ongoing negotiations at Castlebank Baptist, Cairn’s ideal model critiques actively the existing/traditional church. The well-established scholarship on Christian language ideologies has proven productive in analysing the distinct styles of “replanter” and “traditional” factions within CBC. Whilst CBC of course houses a variety of viewpoints, Emily and Joy have provided helpful illustrations of the two diverging ideologies. Each party seeks to be a “sincere speaker” but of quite different kinds. The principles behind the competing language ideologies at Castlebank reverberate through various other church practices and attitudes, mapping two different church models. Prayer and Bible reading; leadership structures; attitudes to clothing, worship styles; even laughter, all serve to demonstrate the disjunction between Cairn’s ideals for reform and the traditional approach which it critiques. This disjunction rests on competing approaches to the configuration of agency, authenticity and authority in church life. The “traditional” approach finds authority in fixity and in exterior authorship which eschews the believer’s agency. Whereas, for Cairn, embracing spontaneity and dynamism serves to indicate the aesthetic/stylistic elements of church as “secondary” to an underlying “realness”. Cairn locates authority in the individual’s relationship with God and personalisation stands as fundamental to recovering authenticity in the church. This logic of personalisation as authentic continues in the following chapter which explores how Cairn’s evangelism relies on the individual disciple cultivating transformational relationships.
Chapter 5. Being Church: Relational Evangelism

If you entered Central Church a few years ago, you would have been met with a large sign reading “98%”. This was said to be “the percentage of people in Scotland who don’t know Jesus.” The Cairn movement perceives Christians to be a small minority in Scotland, surrounded by staunch secularity. Much anthropological literature on secularity has devoted attention to “macro structural changes” (Webster 2013:39) My research explores the unique dynamic of everyday secularity formed in a “post-Christian” country, largely apathetic to its religious history. This chapter will begin by looking at Cairn’s understanding of Scotland’s religious landscape as “post-Christendom”. I go on to look at how missionaries in Edinburgh engage with their “post-Christian” audience. Here, I draw on ethnography of a small missional group in Edinburgh’s city centre, including women who have witnessed the rapid decline of Scotland’s church during their lifetime. I will show how these ladies take a gentle, “relational” approach to mission, keenly aware of the city’s ambivalent religious memory. This relational approach to evangelism is a critique of “traditional” forms deemed impersonal and therefore inauthentic. As Cairn’s missional approach deprioritises religious institutions, viewing them as problematic vehicles for evangelism, agency is shifted to Christian individuals, charged with “being church” for the secular masses by intentionally cultivating transformational relationships. Returning to the case of Castlebank Baptist Church, I will elaborate on the nature of these evangelical relationships and Christian ways of being in the secular sphere. As we have seen, Cairn’s model of agency impels disciples to act whilst their ethic of authenticity determines good, revival-making action. We have seen how the “personal” is regarded as authentic (rooted in the individual’s bespoke, God-given identity) and in the current chapter, I show how this person-centred ethos extends to Cairn’s desire to be “relational”. In this chapter I will argue that Cairn’s “relational” evangelists, in their pursuit of authenticity, must strike a careful balance of relatability and distinction: a balance fraught with both risk and potential.
A Brief History of Scottish Evangelism

As we have established in this thesis so far, Cairn is consistently critical of the “traditional” church of the last fifty years or so. It is important at this point to consider the recent historical context of the Cairn movement. So, let us look at some key milestones of evangelicalism in Scotland and significant precursors to missional movements like Cairn. I turn first to the “Tell Scotland” movement as described by Rev. Dr. Frank Bardgett (2008), Scottish church historian and Church of Scotland minister.

The Tell Scotland movement founded in 1952, advocated that the congregation – not just specialist evangelists and missioners – should be actively engaged in evangelising the nation. Preceded by BBC-sponsored radio missions, the interdenominational movement was ground-breaking in its scale and the ecumenical unity of eight denominations (including Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church and Baptist Union of Scotland). The movement relied heavily on “visitation” as the method of evangelism, seeking to bring the message of the gospel to places where people normally gathered – work, home, leisure settings – rather than designated religious spaces. When asked at the 1953 public launch press conference why such a movement was needed, two of the primary reasons proffered were about failings of the existing church:

i) We are recognising the inadequacy of traditional methods of evangelism. (ii) We are conscious of the apparent failure of the conventional life of the Church to respond in compassion to the needs of the world. (Bargett 2008: 112)

Tell Scotland’s large-scale evangelical movement was immediately followed by steep decline in Scotland’s churches and broadly it has been deemed a failure. A popular criticism of the Tell Scotland movement was its affiliation with Billy Graham’s “All Scotland Crusade”. On Tell Scotland’s invitation (which was strongly contested within the organisation), this U.S. evangelist came to Scotland to hold mass, evangelical rallies in the spring of 1955. Given the conflict between this mass event and the initial principle of Tell Scotland to put evangelism in the hands of the laity, unrest and resistance to the movement grew quickly. Tell Scotland became almost synonymous with rally style evangelism and that divisive association has persisted to this day. The impact of
the “crusade” on Scottish church attendance was judged “negligible”, though it did seem to increase commitment among existing church members. However, Billy Graham’s crusade is not the only reason given for Tell Scotland’s failure. The movement’s vision of empowering the laity placed an unprecedented demand on congregants who up until this point had simply been expected to attend Sunday services. There persisted the underlying assumption that evangelism was the job of the ordained. This assumption was held both by the congregants and ministers who were loath to trust the laity with such responsibility, doubting their theological ability to witness properly. Tell Scotland had called for a huge reconsideration of the division of spiritual labour and evidently, old habits were hard to break.

Fast-forward to the 1990s and the Church finds itself with drastically dwindling congregations and a new urgency to revive Christianity. A significant milestone for contemporary evangelicalism in the UK was the foundation of the Alpha Course. First launched in 1993 from Holy Trinity, Brompton, London, the course was designed as an accessible space for non-believers to learn and ask questions about the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Over eleven weeks, participants (of average age 18-35) sit in small groups and share a meal before a short talk on the week’s theme which they discuss at their table. Alpha leaders are trained not to “give answers” but rather to facilitate conversation and allow participants to arrive at their own conclusions about questions like “why and how do I pray” and “who is Jesus”. The course is often run outwith church buildings in cafes, pubs, or living rooms. Alpha represented a significant shift from “telling”, to interactive conversations predicated on apologetics. Almost every church I encountered during fieldwork had hosted Alpha courses.

During my fieldwork, I found that there were a couple of documents - produced in the early 2000s - which were touchstones in situating Cairn’s movement as part of a larger shift in the Church becoming more “missional”. The first was “A Church Without Walls” produced in 2001 by a specially commissioned team in the Church of Scotland, tasked with re-examining the purposes of the Church. The report found that, “The Church ‘works’ where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is

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39 https://www.alpha.org/about/
through these relationships that the Gospel is spread. In each place the church is different. There is no one model that fits all.” (2001:6) Key focuses of the document included “friendship” and “locality”. Locality was also fundamental to the “Mission-Shaped Church” (2004) report. This report by Church of England (CoE) was regularly referenced in conversation and was a staple for the reading lists of Cairn’s various training offerings. It casts back to a 1994 publication (“Breaking New Ground”) which signalled CoE’s acceptance of church planting as a missionary strategy, though still perceived it as “a supplementary strategy that enhances the essential thrust of the parish system” (CoE 2004: 6). The 2004 report rules this approach inadequate; “one size” doesn’t fit all and missionising contemporary British society requires “a mixed economy” of traditional parish and “fresh expressions” of church. “Fresh Expressions” was a common reference among my interlocutors. It speaks to a movement founded around 2004 by the Church of England and Methodist Church. The principle was to establish alternative forms of church, diverging from the classic model of Sunday services in a steepled building. The most successful instance is “Messy Church”, first established in the south of England and now very popular across the UK and practiced by many Cairn churches, focusing on family crafting and other “messy” activities. This adapted approach is seen as relatable for an “unchurched” population. The “Mission-Shaped Church” report emphasises that society has changed (noting shifts in mobility, housing, media etc.) and contains diverse “cultures and contexts”. As such it implores that the church must master contextualization; “Church has to be planted, not cloned,” (2004:7). In contrast to the declarative evangelism of “Tell Scotland”, this CoE report advocated an “incarnational” approach wherein missionaries should seek “to be with people where they are, how they are” (ibid: 12). In short, the message was that the Church must adapt in order to engage effectively with its audience.

Some concerns and complaints about these earlier evangelical and missional efforts endure in Cairn. Cairn’s principles that all disciples should be engaged in evangelism and that the church must adapt its traditional form (based on invitation to the Sunday service) in order to connect with a local, non-Christian

60 Established as an organisation in 2005.
audience have historical roots. In this chapter, I will explore how the movement places itself as a critique of traditional church forms and advocates a missional approach which is seen as effective and appropriate for twenty-first century Scotland. I show how Cairn places responsibility for evangelism in the hands of each disciple and emphasises personal relationship, decentring the role of the church institution.

Blessing the Shopkeepers
It is that week of spring when Edinburgh’s green parks suddenly burst with pink blossoms. I walk the fifteen-minute journey from my city centre flat, along tree-lined paths of the Meadows park, towards Barclay Viewforth Church of Scotland. It is one of Edinburgh’s striking, steepled buildings with ornate, stained glass windows. But the church itself is not my destination this Monday morning. Adjoined to the grand architecture is the church house where Elaine lives. In the shade of the steeple, I look for the green plant pot she mentioned as marking her front door. Already stood on the welcome mat are two women, perhaps in their sixties or early seventies. They smile and make warm introductions. Barbara is a slight lady, with dainty, wire-rimmed glasses and white curls. Helen stands taller and sturdier, her blonde bob held back by a velvet hair band. She speaks with an accent I place somewhere between elocution-lesson-English and South African. Their faces are friendly, with gentle lines earned from a lifetime of expressive smiles. Elaine holds open the door and embraces each of us in turn as we step inside. Breakfast is set out on the table – yoghurts, fruit, muffins – with the smell of coffee and bacon filling the homely wee yellow kitchen. Laundry hangs from a pulley above us and an old, black and white dog hobbles around our feet. Another two women arrive bringing jolly hellos and punnets of fruit. Una is the smallest in the group. She edges in with the aid of a crutch but her hardy expression defies her limp.

“Well...we’re a band of war-wounded warriors, aren’t we?!” Elaine announces, sitting at the head of the table. We encountered Elaine in previous chapters as she overcame denominational bias in embracing the prophetic and was helping to deliver the Prophecy Course. Elaine, pastoral associate at Barclay Viewforth, has multi-faceted involvement with Cairn. Barclay Viewforth was one of the first
churches to engage with the movement and undertake its Learning Community training. Elaine is also a graduate of Cairn’s Training Hub. In line with Cairn’s ideals of “multiplication”, she now runs Learning Communities for other churches and facilitates at Training Hub weekends. She is the founder of Tollcross Community Pastors; one of Barclay Viewforth’s handful of “missional communities”. This Monday morning was the first meeting of Tollcross Community Pastors (TCP) following a break over winter. The community had entered a hiatus amidst a series of tragic events which plagued them in quick succession. Barbara lost her husband. Una suffered a stroke. Helen had urgent surgery on her gall bladder and is still healing the open wounds. Elaine endured several personal bereavements and family upheavals while continuing to counsel many others through theirs, in her demanding role as church pastor. Yet, with determined smiles, they look to one another with nods of empathy and steadfast encouragement. As we eat, the ladies inquire after each other’s health and family. Their friendly conversations are evidently based on mutual familiarity with the details of their lives. Barbara chats about her involvement with numerous church communities, charity activities and reading groups. Widowed less than a year ago, she later tells me about how we all face different seasons in our lives and she is now exploring a new phase, learning what it is like to be by herself. Una’s recovery is ongoing, but she recently had a fall in her garden. The ladies tut at her for not wearing her care-call alarm, but Una shakes her head at the fuss. She says that after she “came-to” from the fall, she realised there was blood on her nice new white top. So, naturally, she went inside the house, put it through the wash and hung it out to dry before putting the kettle on and having a lie down.

After a period of prayer, both for personal concerns and for this morning’s task, we look to one another and smile, raising from our bowed prayer positions. “Right!” “Ok!” “Let’s go!” goes up the scattered chorus, as we don our jackets with a sense of purpose. Today’s plan is to buy fruit and offer it to the shopkeepers while going about the fortnightly visits. Barclay Viewforth has been teaching on “fruit of the spirit” (the personal characteristics associated with the influence of the Holy Spirit, including love, joy, peace and patience) in this month’s sermons. “So, the fruit is to bless the shopkeepers and maybe it’ll spark significant conversations!” Elaine explains, hopefully. We buy the fruit
from a greengrocer directly opposite the church. The woman serving us smiles politely as she passes the fruit in to our baskets, the draping fabric of her hijab grazing the counter. As we step back in to the sunshine with cheery goodbyes, I ask whether this shop has ever been included in the TCP visits. The ladies explain that the owners are very devout in their Muslim faith so did not want to engage. It’s unclear whether this disinterest was explicitly expressed or assumed. But Barbara goes on to emphasise that they are always so friendly when Elaine pops in for groceries. The presence of Muslim shopkeepers in the area occasionally prompts comments borne of respectful fascination with Islam among the Tollcross ladies.

We split in to two pairs: one to conduct visits on each side of the road. Elaine and I start by nipping in to see the owner of Acorn Cafe with a bundle of WiFi password cards Elaine had offered to print for her: “Just a simple way to bless her and do something kind,” she tells me. Our next port of call is a restaurant where the employee behind the bar meets us with straight-faced suspicion. “We’re handing out fruit to the shopkeepers, would you like some?” Elaine announces cheerfully. I hold up my fruit basket and smile. “Why?” he curtly replies. “Just to bless the shopkeepers,” Elaine says, straining to look even friendlier in the awkward pause. “…Is it real?” he almost smiles. We force a relieved little chuckle and he accepts a solitary strawberry before we shuffle out shouting, “Have a good day!” Just outside, a bearded guy in his twenties is cleaning the windows of the Physiotherapy clinic. We go to speak to him but his brow furrows. “I’ll call you back,” he mutters, removing earphones which we realise connect to the phone in his back pocket. “Oh, sorry!” Elaine replies “Would you like a piece of fruit?” His face lights up in pleasant surprise, “Are...are you just going around giving out fruit?!” “Yes, we’re just going around blessing the shopkeepers.” Continuing my silent role, I present my fruit basket and my grin. “Aw that’s lovely!” he beams, accepting a strawberry and saying “Thank you! Have a great day.” Elaine and I bound up the street with a satisfied skip in our step. “See, that little act of kindness just put a big smile on his face,” Elaine commentates back to me. We go on to visit the owners of the gallery, tailor, jeweller and gift shop who are familiar with TCP’s visits, allowing for easy-flowing chit chat about summer holiday plans and how business has been lately. Every so often, TCP meet a new shop employee and introduce themselves as
“the ladies from the church [who] come round and say hello and see how you’re doing”. The response is often surprise and/or confusion about the women’s intentions or expectations but while some are unforthcoming, usually they join in polite small talk. Over time, the ladies delight in learning more about the people they visit, remembering details offered about families and hobbies and asking after them.

Visits complete, we head back to the Acorn Cafe to rendezvous with the rest of the team over coffee. “Lattes? Skinny?” the waitress asks as we greet her by name and take our seats around the usual table. Sipping coffee from chunky white mugs, the ladies talk enthusiastically about how they receive a friendly reaction from almost all the shopkeepers now. Una and Helen are excited by how well their visits have gone, especially at the florist. The florist had been missed out of the rounds recently as their reception had been quite cold. But today, the ladies tried again and the staff showed great interest in TCP’s plan for a newsletter. Helen beams and nods as they tell us of this breakthrough. Barbara adds that, overall, they are being met with increasingly warm receptions on their Monday rounds; great progress since they began two years ago. She points out the marked change in dynamic with two business owners in particular: one being the Muslim owner of a convenience store and the second, a seller of stereotypically “hippy” clothing who tours alternative music festivals in the summer. For over a year, these men had been very suspicious and reluctant to engage with the women of the church. However, Barbara reflects that by consistently turning up and demonstrating that they were not there to be forceful with their faith, these men have grown rather fond of them: a success story in the women’s mission to connect with the community.

In this chapter I ask why this missional group dedicate time and effort to these regular, friendly encounters which do not appear to include an explicit invitation to Christianity. How does this bring Christian transformation in line with Cairn’s vision for revival?

Gentle Evangelism in Post-Christian Secularity

In the space of just sixty years, Scotland’s church has been demoted from one of the country’s most influential institutions (Webster 2013) and has – as I heard
one Church of Scotland minister put it – “manoeuvred [itself] into irrelevance”. Cairn understands its context to be “post-Christian” or “post-Christendom”: Scotland has ceased to be a Christian majority country and the place of the church has been side-lined. However, Cairn does not lament this position of “exile”. In fact, I was repeatedly told that Christendom was never a good thing; Christianity should never have operated as an enforced state religion and it always works best “on the edges”. In one of Cairn’s training seminars, Alan, a Cairn Glasgow leader and Church of Scotland minister, presented a photograph showing a bridge over a dried riverbed, with a newly formed river running adjacent to it. He commented,

They didn’t build the bridge in the wrong place; the river moved. We built appropriate for the time, but our culture has moved. What was useful and made sense then, no longer does. [...] Christendom assumed church has the right to speak into culture, to have a place in society. We’re not there anymore. We need the humility to re-earn the right to be heard

Having been a majority Christian country for centuries, the church remains engrained in Scotland’s social memory: at best, a benign community group of the grandparents’ generations, at worst, an outdated advocate of conservative moral policing and intrusive preaching. Most Scots born before 2000 have been taught Bible stories and The Lord’s Prayer since primary school and until relatively recently, most weddings and funerals were facilitated by the church (Bruce 2016:5). The statistics on church attendance and Christian affiliation have dropped to an all-time low (Rosie 2014). Bruce (2016) highlights that this shift in Scotland’s religious landscape has not been a wholesale adoption of atheism but, rather, a burgeoning indifference (3). Largely, the secular public which Cairn’s Christians engage is apathetic to the faith. This secularisation feels close to home for the TCP team. Despite having been taken to church and having been baptised as infants, most of TCP’s own children no longer affiliate with Christianity. Planning her upcoming sermon on doubt, Elaine once put it to the group, “what makes you doubt in your faith?” After a thoughtful pause, Helen replied, “I doubt when my daughters think I’m mad for my beliefs. They tell me, “Mummy, you’re weird!”” She chuckles, then qualifies, “That doubt’s not lasting though; just a feeling in the moment.” Others are quick to agree and
echo Helen’s language: their families also think they are “mad”. Their expressions are tinged with a deep disappointment which is quickly replaced as they encourage one another. “Think about John the Baptist! How weird he must have looked!” Barbara exclaims, recalling how this prophet of Jesus wore camel hair and ate locusts dipped in honey. The ladies laugh as they steel their faithful nerve and reaffirm their continuing belief, even in circumstances where they feel part of the minority.

TCP’s chosen response to the irrevocable shift in Scotland’s religious climate is to proceed with a gentle persistence. The two male shopkeepers who had been brisk and dismissive at first had become polite and even rather warm in welcoming the ladies’ brief visits; their preconceptions gradually softened by familiarity. As the women work towards reconnecting the church as part of the community, their chosen approach is tactful. Concern about being overbearing persists in TCP’s conversations about engaging non-Christian others. As a cautionary tale, Una once told us about a friend from her Christian holiday club: an older lady and “straight down the line”. “She does this thing where she speaks to someone [a stranger, presumably non-Christian] every day about salvation.” Una found this embarrassing as the woman would “harangue people who were just trying to have coffee. And that can do more harm than good. We should be more gentle,” Una concluded.

This aim to be “gentle” was clearly highlighted where written text was concerned. At Christmas, the ladies handed out little boxes of homemade sweets along with a Christmas message. As we sat around a table in the church hall, sharing mince pie recipes and assembling the parcels, Barbara read out the message she had chosen: “Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly special Christmas. Best wishes from the TCP team”. It is met with resounding approval and she comments, “It’s...well it sounds bad but...it’s not too Christian?! You know what I mean?” Una nods, “It’s not too in your face. People don’t like to be got at, especially at this time of year.” Around the same time, Barbara told me about her participation in an art group at the church hall: “We were doing Christmas decorations. One of the ladies was very keen to tell me that she wasn’t Christian, wasn’t with the church. And so, she didn’t want to put the star on her decoration; she wanted a sun instead. And of course, I said that’s not a problem and helped her with it.” Barbara smiled at me and added,
“...Well it’s all about the son anyway, isn’t it?” For Barbara, it was a higher priority that the woman feel welcomed and have a positive experience among Christians than to argue which son/sun this festive period was really about.

Anna Strhan (2013) writes of contemporary British conservative evangelicalism that there is an emphasis on verbal evangelism as crucial to mission. As the church pastor in her fieldsite put it. “It’s a wonderful, godly thing to care for your neighbour, to love others. But it is not Christian mission unless the gospel is being proclaimed verbally.” Similarly, for Susan Harding’s (2000) fundamentalist interlocutors, language is utterly essential to Christian conversion: “speaking is believing” (33). This contrasts Cairn’s approach to mission which emphasises social transformation and seems to value action above language when encountering their non-Christian audience. I found that explicitly religious language was often thought to create potential for alienation and rejection. In part, this is because open expression of religion in the UK secular public sphere has become “highly contentious” (Woodhead 2012:25). Cairn’s disciples were certainly not opposed to speaking about their faith; they would gladly welcome the opportunity, but the receptivity of their interlocutor was an important prerequisite and such discussions should occur in the context of “building relationship”. Ideally, evangelists pique their interlocutor’s interest such that the non-believer initiates conversations about faith (see Middleton & Yarwood 2015 for a similar approach by UK Street Pastors). Once a “significant conversation” (as Elaine put it) is underway, the choice of language should be contemporary and colloquial. Inciting religious conversation with a stranger or using seemingly classic evangelical phrases like “accept Jesus as your Lord and saviour” were deemed off-putting and thus ineffective and inappropriate.

This concern not to “shove religion down people’s throats” in a largely secular society is shared by Engelke’s (2012) English Bible Society informants. When choosing how to decorate the local shopping centre for Christmas, the Bible Society group opted for abstract angelic kites, inviting shoppers to dwell on them unprompted, subtly tapping into a more general spirituality. Engelke argues that his interlocutors opt for a form of “ambient faith” which undercuts the normative distinction of public versus private religion. Unpacking the sensory concept of ambience, he emphasises how ambient music and ambient
advertising extend an invitation for the consumer to implicate themselves or not. Of ambient music he says, “what it does to or for the listener, is supposed to be up to the listener”. TCP also hopes to challenge the public/private religion distinction and they share the Bible Society’s dislike of forceful evangelism. However, while TCP are subtle in their approach, they are not ambient in the same way.

While the Tollcross team might not opt for direct, verbal evangelism in the first instance, nor do they hope to make a sensorial Christian background. Instead, the ladies themselves are the vehicles of evangelism as they try to build personal relationships. A few months before making the “not-too-Christian” Christmas parcels, the ladies were drafting a written introduction to TCP for some leaflets. Elaine and Barbara agreed not to “have mention of Jesus in the middle of it, or it will just get binned.” Instead, their brief paragraph focussed on the “quirky Tollcross community” and the fostering of “collaboration” between businesses. With the annotated slip of paper in her hand, Elaine emphasised “This is a good start. But what’s important is then building relationship. We don’t want to go in telling them Jesus is their lord and saviour! We need to be that to them; to live it out.” I received a fuller explanation of what Elaine meant by this at a TCP fundraiser.

One Wednesday evening, I arrived at the church at 7pm to help set up for the Beetle Drive. The event would raise funds for the local butchery’s plans to install a defibrillator machine outside their premises. As Barbara cuts carrots into batons and arranges them around pots of hummus and dips, I am delegated the role of climbing the step ladder to fetch the wine glasses from on top of the cabinets. The event is mainly attended by about twenty older women from the Barclay Viewforth congregation, plus – to Elaine’s disappointment - just two of TCP’s shopkeepers. The usual, polite post-Sunday-service murmur of the church hall is replaced with the frantic rattling of dice and the war cry, “BEETLE!!” Sitting in tables of four, Elaine is our larger-than-life compere and guides us through the goal of each round: to be the first person in the room to draw all the parts of a beetle which each are assigned a particular number on the dice. There is an interval with wine, tea and home baking when Elaine announces the funds raised and the cause they will support. Elaine emphasises that this is a great demonstration of what happens “when church and community work
together” and thanks everyone for donating to a cause that “will benefit many in the community”. After a couple of hours, everyone is tired out. We calculate the scores and the winners claim one of the donated prizes – wines, chocolates, homemade jams – before heading off home. As I lay my hard-won bottle of whisky aside, fold away tables and stack some chairs, Elaine begins to reflect on the evening’s event with me and suggests we sit and chat. She leans forward in her chair, keen to explain to me what this Beetle Drive – as an instance of TCP’s mission – had meant. “We’re modelling Jesus; serving the community,” she implores. She tells me she has had disagreements with one of Cairn’s “expert evangelists” recently as he has suggested the group could be more “out there” or “forceful” in their evangelism. But Elaine defends TCP’s gentle approach as appropriate to their context of “building relationship in the local community”. Elaine points out that there were some brief references to Jesus and the Christian faith in her interval speech. She deemed this suitable for the church-hosted event but not so intense as to be off-putting to (present or potential) non-Church guests. Elaine tells me they have done “street stuff” before – as Cairn’s expert endorsed – where they had a whiteboard outside the church and asked people to write what Christmas meant to them. Then, engaging “light of the world” symbolism, they gave the passers-by a candle and wished them well. “But... that’s not building relationship!” Elaine emphasised.

Relational Evangelism, “Being church”
“Relational evangelism [...] prioritizes one-on-one interactions with non-Christians and the sustained attempt to build meaningful relationships” (Bielo 2009:116). In Cairn’s training, disciples are encouraged to “be intentional” about potentially evangelical relationships. So, whilst disciples should not be forceful, this is not a form of evangelism which happens by accident. Cultivating closeness in these relationships takes effort. The defining project for evangelicals is nurturing a close, personalised relationship with God (Bielo 2009). Bielo (2009) theorizes that the expectations of this intimate bond with God are echoed in the ways evangelicals hope to connect with others: “close, individual, unmediated”. (This logic resonates with Emily’s statement in the previous chapter: “everything starts from who we know God to be”.) As such, evangelicals pursue “a spirituality consumed with intimate relationships” (77).
For this connection to be facilitated, relational evangelism is said to require a degree of “relevance”. Cairn warns against taking “relevance” to mean that church should pander to its audience, doing whatever makes it more attractive. However, the movement does contend that Christianity should “make sense” in the context of a person’s life and not demand that they be removed from it – i.e. to a pious church group - in order to encounter Jesus. Cairn seeks for its evangelism to be “relevant” in the sense that it is relatable, primed for personal connection.

Cairn’s relational evangelism stands as a critique of traditional forms of evangelism deemed impersonal, superficial and therefore inauthentic, such as handing out bible tracts on street corners, or open-air preaching. In Cairn’s context, it is considered more authentic and effective to establish a relationship before considering inviting a non-Christian contact to church gatherings, if that invitation is ever deemed appropriate. Whereas more traditional approaches were thought to foreground church events and swift incorporation into a church congregation. Again, we see here Cairn’s notion of authenticity as person-centred and combining with the everyday; a form of consistency which challenges partitions between church and non-church spaces and activities.

Norman, a church planter in Glasgow, explained the turn from traditional approaches towards relational or “incarnational” evangelism in your local mission field where (ideally) you live full-time. (This is expounded in chapter six.) Closely echoing Bielo’s (2011) description of the shift from modern to post-modern society, Norman explained to me that,

*Modern evangelicalism is all about conversion and the word. So, it’s all about argument. [Modern] mission is about convincing people of their guilt and their need for salvation. So, we were drilled in apologetics. Alternatively, post-modern, [we see a] Kingdom of God style mission [...] which is about demonstration.*

Note that “being drilled in apologetics” applies to evangelism through the Alpha course. Such an intellect-based form of reasoning and convincing is said to be giving way to means more compatible with post-modernism: personal and demonstrative. “Demonstration” is situated in opposition to traditional, declarative evangelism which is criticised for centring on “events”. Take for
instance, the approach of The Faith Mission, an evangelical organisation known to establish pop-up meeting halls in various locations around the country with the hopes to draw in the “unsaved” and see them convert. This is anathema to Cairn’s sustained, personally invested approach. A phrase I often heard used to capture Cairn’s evangelical ethos was “belong, believe, become”. In other words, a non-believer should be made to feel a welcome part of a Christian community before they come to believe in Jesus and only via this belief in – or “relationship with” – Jesus should their behaviour begin to conform to becoming a disciple. This is seen as the reverse of traditional methods which put heavy emphasis on “behaving like a good Christian” as prerequisite for acceptance in the congregation.

My interlocutors expressed a desire to distance themselves from forms of evangelism which are “transactional”. We saw initial examples of this in chapter one where Learning Community trainees expressed discomfort with evangelistic approaches that paint relationships as instrumental and friends as projects. I once described Omri Elisha’s (2011) ethnographic work on accountability in evangelism to interlocutors at CBC and they cringed. When Castlebank Baptist Church replanters had been helping a new mother in the neighbourhood, Emily (unprompted) made clear to me, “I just want to love and support her. It’s ok if she never comes to church.” For Elisha’s (2011) Tennessee interlocutors, what distinguishes a merely kind action from Christian outreach is accountability; the expectation that compassionate acts will garner results, ideally in the form of Christian conversion. Cairn’s followers are wary of this common dynamic in evangelism. Whilst their enduring hope is to see others “meet Jesus” and become Christian, the explicit encouragement to disciples was to “invest” in people, persist in loving those around them and to “live out their faith”. Recall from chapter three, that the practice of “discipling” begins before a person confesses or even shows interest in faith. This relates to Cairn’s soteriology wherein becoming Christian is seen as a process rather than a moment of conversion. Whilst disciples are called to lead (influence) people towards God, the responsibility and timing of a non-believer’s spiritual encounter and conversion is seen as beyond human control. Emily from CBC expressed this limiting of her evangelical duty in stating, “I’m not responsible for other peoples’ salvation. My job is to love them and be their friend.”
belief that only God can ultimately convert people places a limit on disciples’ agency. Whilst they should intentionally seek to introduce others to God, they cannot complete the action of salvation. This allows my interlocutors to distance themselves from the instrumental, transactional forms of evangelism they detest.

For Tollcross Community Pastors, Edinburgh is an environment where the idea of church and the language of religion carries a weighty collective memory, bound up in ambivalence. These women believe that the most appropriate vehicle for evangelism in this post-Christian landscape is personal relationship. As builders of God’s Kingdom, they are called to “connect” with non-believers. This is a deeply personal approach. In line with the responsibilized and agentive subjectivity of the disciple, these relationships are to be “intentionally” cultivated. Ideally, through authentic, sustained relationships, a connection will be built which facilitates spiritual transformation. In demonstrating faith through their own lives and actions and living closely alongside non-Christians, these women work to “model” Jesus. “Modelling Jesus” seems to involve imitating and incarnating Him (recall chapter three) in such a way that they behave as His proxy for the people of Tollcross. With church organisations crumbling, the responsibility for spreading the gospel and building the Kingdom is placed on individual disciples. They must be church: Not simply signpost a steepled building with a congregation but rather, provide Christian community and Jesus’ presence through personal connection. This is an active, agentive position for Cairn’s disciples but once again their agency is necessarily limited: religious conversion is ultimately under God’s control. So far, this chapter has established that personal relationships are core to Cairn’s missional efforts. I now move on to consider more closely the nature of this potentially transformative relationship. For this, I return to Castlebank Baptist Church.

**Making Friends in Castlebank**

After welcoming everyone to the Sunday morning service, David (lead pastor) delivers the weekly notices, affectionately termed “Castlebank Stories”. Reaching the final notice, he announces, “On Wednesday [Hallowe’en], Rachel and I decided, impromptu, to set up a table outside with sweets.” He paused,
knowing that this may be met with surprise and concern by some congregants, given fairly common associations between Hallowe’en and the demonic. “Now...we don’t celebrate Hallowe’en and we don’t mean to make light of things that are very real,” he assured. “But the whole community was out! And we’d have been silly not to go out and say ‘hi’.” David showed consistent desire to make connections with the surrounding community which included engaging with the local schools and making a concerted effort to know the neighbours. In these early days of outreach, David emphasised to the congregation, “making friendships with people in the community is as important as telling people about the Bible.”

Castlebank Baptist’s replant – echoing TCP’s approach – pursues a relational, rather than more traditional, declarative form of evangelism. David followed “Castlebank Stories” by directing the congregation’s attention to some old maps of Castlebank on the PowerPoint projection. He reflected,

*The landscape here has completely changed over the last hundred years; especially in the last sixty. The same is true for Christianity in the UK and Western Europe. What it means to be Christian and live out our faith has changed. Looking round the churches in Edinburgh...in some, the pews are largely empty. Traditional models of church are being abandoned. We have to accept that the landscape has changed. God asked us to make disciples who make disciples by sharing our lives – not to fill our churches. [...] Stuff doesn’t have to happen in church buildings to matter to the Kingdom of God! I will say this ‘til I’m blue in the face! We don’t just gather on Sundays but look to bless the community of Castlebank. We spend 90% of our time out doing things and so we ask that Jesus be present in it all. It’s about not just doing church on Sunday but being church for the city through the week.*

At Castlebank, the correct approach to evangelism in an age of church decline is contested. Joy and Gordon’s prayers focus consistently on rebuilding church attendance and notably, on the power of the spoken word. They pray that God, ...

*...would bring more people out to the Sunday evening service too, just as with the morning. That every seat would be filled... We pray for*
your anointing on the services this weekend...that men and women
would come off the streets of Castlebank under the sounds of your
mighty word.

They harken back with a longing nostalgia to a time when affiliation with church
and its presence in society was far more pervasive and it was perfectly
conceivable that one’s few non-church-attending friends might decide to come
along (especially to the fun evening services with their “upbeat hymns”). Joy and
Gordon demonstrate a great desire for the “unsaved” to come into a church
service, hear the word of God and thereby be compelled to accept Jesus as their
saviour; just as they did in their adolescence (Lie 2018). Joy happily recalled to
me her involvement in “open air preaching” at The Mound in Edinburgh’s city
centre, where she joined in reading aloud scripture and handing out pamphlets
to passers-by: an approach which is directly opposed to Cairn’s relational ethos.
The replant’s approach to “being church” for the surrounding community
involves mixing with them, connecting closely outside the church service. It
avoids “sermonising” and seeks to be relatable, “making friends”. Relational
evangelism calls for an intimacy with the non-Christian sphere which is deeply
problematic for someone like Joy.

Distinctly Christian Lives

In my day you wouldn’t go to the pictures61, you wouldn’t be
drinking, you wouldn’t be smoking or doing any of the things...For
us, it’s like living in a different world altogether and the spirituality
is not the same. I loved it [in my day]. Because your whole mind and
everything was set on the Lord Jesus Christ. You were separate.
Because the bible says ‘Love not the things of the world, neither the
things that are in the world. If any man loved the world the...the
thing of the father is not in him62.’ But today, it’s changed.

61 A Scottish term meaning “the cinema”.
62 Here, Joy is recalling 1 John 2:15 (KJV): “Love not the world, neither the things
that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
Separation is a key concern for Joy. In the previous chapter, I explained some of the ways in which she wishes the church and its social life to be marked off as sacred and distinct. Her ethos of clear differentiation extends to everyday religion in the public sphere. She argues that one lives successfully as a follower of God in this world by resisting its ways of being, by standing apart. Such separation was a key principle of Billy Graham’s approach, advocating that Christians renounce swearing, drinking etc. (Bruce 2016: 104). This concern for the blurring of Godly and worldly is shared by Elisha’s (2017) neopentecostal evangelists in New York. His ethnographic work sees a church grappling with the distinction between “ministry” and “performance” as they participate in the New York Dance Parade. While the other, non-religious groups participating are seen to be purposeless in their purely aesthetic performances, the neopentecostal team works hard to demarcate their dance ministry as worshiping God and evangelising a sinful, secular audience. Demarcation work is required, Elisha explains, due to issues of “proximation”: “a variable closeness between categories of activity otherwise regarded as separate and autonomous” (75). In the New York Dance parade, ministry and performance, ordinarily considered exclusive categories, became linked in a way which allowed evangelical opportunity but also risked a dangerous conflation. Keeping these things apart, Elisha shows, requires processes of ritualization such as praying and fasting as part of rehearsals. For Joy and Gordon at Castlebank, bringing faith into such close proximity with “things of the world” represents a great risk of overlap and so Christian behaviours and language must be ritualised to maintain separation. However, Elisha describes the effects of proximation as “a veritable wellspring of possibilities and problems” (75). And, while Joy is primarily concerned with its problems, the replanters see evangelical possibility in engaging closely with the secular.

Two of the replanters, Rose and Emily, work for organisations whose offices are housed in Central Church’s building. Rose works for a small, Christian book publishers. Emily works for a prison ministry charity. We arrange to meet at a nearby bar which is popular for five o’clock drinks among city centre workers. We sit on benches in the edgy, candlelit basement area surrounded by exposed brickwork and artfully displayed craft beer brewing equipment. Holding our artisanal gin and tonics with eco-friendly paper straws, we’re one of many
groups of middle class “millennials” bemoaning the nine-to-five. Their admin-heavy roles as entry-level employees are beginning to grate as they want to feel more fulfilled in their jobs. Rose is recently married and Emily on the cusp of engagement, so we go on to talk about romantic partners: birthday present ideas, the challenges of moving in together (in their case, after marriage). All three of us rent flats in the city and begrudge the difficulty of getting on Edinburgh’s ruthless property ladder.

Much of our conversation is indistinguishable from the similar groups around us and yet, amidst the unremarkable everyday of these Edinburgh twenty-somethings are layers of supernatural faith. Our conversation about work at Central included discussion of the recent spiritual attack on the building. Lots of the Sunday school children have become ill and the publishing company Rose works for has had repeated, unexplained problems with printing and delivery. Both are attributed to the influence of a malevolent spiritual force, opposed to their work for God. But this conversation seamlessly makes way to talking about hand-making Christmas presents this year to suit a tight budget. Emily’s nonchalant mention of how she hasn’t seen (through prophetic vision) any angels since her university days is capped with her standing to say “It’s my round. Same again?” She utters words such as, “Yeah, I was talking to Jesus about it and...” with the same casual intonation as when she mentions phone calls with her mum. Rose and Emily do not clearly divide spiritual from non-spiritual in the way that is important to Joy. Whilst Joy prays alone, outside church regularly and sees God as guiding her whole life, she maintains a clearer boundary between sacred and profane, and a stark difference between a secular versus a “Christian life”. For the replanters, authenticity implies consistency between social spheres. My conversations with Rose and Emily seemed to blur the distinction between the mundane and the miraculous; there was no fear of combining the two and God’s participation in their lives did not seem to require any demarcation by way of respectful address, or pious behaviour. For Rose and Emily, the miraculous suffuses their everyday and Jesus will gladly come to the pub with us.

Cairn’s missionaries emphasise the need to “meet people where they’re at”. Rather than needing to take them to church, it is in the context of friendship with someone who already knows Jesus, that the non-Christian will also meet
Him. It is imperative that Christians are therefore relatable. Cairn’s missionaries cringe at forms of evangelism seen to be alienating to non-Christians, such as emphasising sin and damnation, or the use of antiquated religious language which cast Christians as odd and off-putting. To establish transformational relationships, Christians must live closely alongside – “do life with” (Bielo 2011) – the unbelievers they hope to evangelise. But at the same time as Cairn’s missionaries seek to be relatable, they also strive for a form of Christian distinctiveness: “the salt must remain salty”\(^{63}\). As I elucidated in chapter three, disciples see the transformation of their own lives as the prerequisite and the method for enacting for widespread change. Cairn training emphasised to attendees that “their lives” – what they prioritise, what they spend money and time on, how they parent - reveal what they “value”. It is taught that this is noticeable and potentially influential to those around them. Disciples were keenly aware that their lives should “point to Jesus”; their lives should be different because they are Christian. The way they choose to live is God’s publicity (Engelke 2013). As I heard one Cairn trainee put it, “Folks might not read the Bible, but they’ll read you.”

Whilst Strhan’s (2013) conservative evangelical informants are more cautious about mingling in the non-Christian world, one point of consonance with my own interlocutors is in their “two-drink” approach to navigating drinking culture. For Cairn’s disciples, after-work drinks present a great opportunity to build (potentially transformative) relationships with co-workers. However, to become drunk would sour their lived example of faith. (The particular concern often expressed to me was the tendency to swear when drunk.) So, some will set themselves a two-drink limit to avoid unseemly behaviour. I found that this boundary-setting was less pertinent when drinking with fellow Christians, perhaps because the responsibility to exemplify a Christ-led life is lessened in company who already know Him.

Strhan’s (2013, 2015) Londoners seek to situate themselves as “aliens” through seemingly “countercultural” behaviours such as avoiding drunkenness, abstaining from sex before marriage and tithing. When I spoke to Owen, a Cairn

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\(^{63}\) This refers Matthew 5:13 in which Jesus calls his disciples salt and light.
trainer and church plant leader, he also spoke of these behaviours as distinctive signs of his faith. However, he certainly would not wish to be an alien within the non-Christian sphere. In fact, he drew my attention to the imperceptibility of some of his wife’s and his own Christian behaviours: “people wouldn’t know our bank accounts or our sex life”. People are also unlikely to see when he chooses to scroll through the Bible app instead of Facebook. Or, when he has internal conversations with Jesus on the bus. His distinction does not always have to be performed for it to be significant. But it offers the possibility of discovery and should this faith-filled life of integrity be exposed, the evangelical potential seems to be considered more effective than if Owen has simply proclaimed his faith and/or marked himself out by separation from the secular. In fact, it seems that when distinctiveness comes to the fore in the context of everyday closeness it does so more productively. The element of surprise in seeing that a Christian life need not be one of separation from the rest of the world (as “tradition” would have it), is seen as uniquely evangelistic. Recall chapter two where we discussed surprise as a key characteristic of God in Pentecostal/charismatic theologies. Bielo (2009) suggests that believers’ intimacy with God is the model of how they relate to each other. It seems that surprise applies here in a similar way: perhaps the unexpected discovery of Owen’s supernatural faith parallels the surprising nature of a God who “turns up” in the midst of the mundane.

Folding tables and hoovering the church carpet after a community meal, Rachel (a Castlebank Baptist replanter) reflected on an interaction with her colleague. Rachel, just like many of the other church members, had keenly invited her non-Christian friends to the meal and a fellow primary teacher had agreed to come along. She told us how her colleague had been very positive about the event, commenting that the pot-luck catering had fortunately resulted in plenty of food for the unexpectedly high turnout of guests. Nodding, Rachel had light-heartedly responded, “It’s ok, if there’s not enough, we just pray and it multiplies.” As she chuckled at her off-hand comment, the colleague’s face froze. Trying to repair the shock of this ontological whiplash, Rachel added “I was only joking…well…also not!” She giggled as she retold this encounter to fellow church members. Harris laughed with her adding, “Yeah, one of those weird situations where you’re like, I was joking but actually yeah that’s also
true, that happens.” Rachel had exposed a moment of jarring between the faithful and secular layers of her life. It was a jarring that was familiar to fellow relational evangelists and seemed to be met with a kind of satisfied amusement at the sudden clarity of Christian distinctiveness. Being recognised as distinct is key to the replant’s model of mission but so too is their ability to closely co-exist and participate in the secular everyday. The consistency between spheres which Cairn holds as authentic does not mean erasing the boundary between sacred and profane. Rather, they render it productive in a way similar to the spirit/strategy combination we saw in the opening chapter. For Cairn, making the miraculous everyday (and the everyday miraculous) functions to highlight the divine, foregrounding a down-to-earth, relatable God rather than polluting His divinity.

Conclusion
Bruce (2016) notes that the charismatic movement – with its modern worship, informal dress and general “unchurchy”-ness - has lent increased authority to the individual. Whist “superficially more supernaturalist” than the mainstream, he suggests that the charismatics have shifted authority from the church or the tradition of biblical interpretation, “to the contemporary individual believer”. Making Christianity more compatible with popular culture, Bruce contends, has simply allowed Christians to free themselves from the dogma and asceticism, which used to be the tests of Christian fellowship, whilst “not letting the side down”. He concludes that “Far from resisting secularization, the charismatic movement has inadvertently collaborated with it.” (Bruce 2016: 154).

I contend that for Cairn, there is nothing inadvertent about it. That is, if Bruce’s use of secularization is equated (as it seems to be) with the demise of what Cairn would call “traditional church”. Bruce’s impression of religious commitment appears to be rather similar to Joy’s, who would likely agree with his assessment of informality as a concession to secularity. But for Rose and Emily, the relatability of their faith to their non-Christian friends and their desire to personally introduce them to a God who will join for G&Ts, mark a deeply authentic form of evangelism.
Cairn’s approach to mission is undoubtedly shaped by its perception that Scotland has transitioned to a post-Christian secularity in recent decades. The movement hopes to respond to this shifting socio-religious landscape, being sensitive to latent religious memory. Cairn’s approach is also shaped as a critique of “traditional” forms of evangelism which are deemed ill-fitting for the contemporary context. This critique centres shifting agency to the individual. “Being church” is now the demand placed upon disciples. This is part of the intentional, responsible, agentive disciple figure we have explored in previous chapters. Evangelism is no longer to be the remit of an organisation. Cairn’s disciples are called to live out their faith whilst engaging in close relationship with non-Christians. Through this, they act as proxies for Jesus and it is hoped that the relationship will be transformational. Cairn training highlighted that disciples are to be “intentional” about their relationships; conscious of the evangelistic influence they bring. Though, as Emily explained, the disciple’s responsibility and agency are – once again – subject to limits, in this case, due to a soteriology wherein only God ultimately converts people. The nature of the relationship disciples seek to build is complicated. They work to build relationships, yet they must avoid connections which feel manufactured or transactional (another layer of the organic/organised dilemma which we encountered in chapter one). The word “authentic” when used explicitly by my interlocutors, was mostly used to describe ideal relationships. Intimacy is thought to be inherently authentic, mirroring – as Bielo (2009) shows us – disciples’ intimate connection with God. To achieve this intimacy with non-Christians, evangelists must leave behind the church’s formal role of issuing moral warnings and instead be relatable, loving presences. At the same time, a disciple’s life must necessarily be distinct from non-Christians’ because they must be seen to be transformed by knowing God. To feign relevance at the expense of one’s calling to lead a Christ-like life would lack integrity; it would be inauthentic. We have seen that disciples’ hope to live in a way which is consistent across social spheres does not mean collapsing the distinction between church and home, sacred and profane, but renders it evangelically productive. I heard it said that authenticity in relational evangelism entails a relentless “[struggle] with the line between being an authentic Christian and
just being too much of the world.\textsuperscript{64} But holding this balance is thought to offer unique evangelical potential.

\textsuperscript{64} This quote comes from a one-on-one discipleship session in which the young mother being discipled was grappling with how to live as Christian whilst avoiding dogmatic “religion”.
Chapter 6. Mapping the Kingdom

In the previous chapter, I explored how Cairn’s disciples approach the “post-Christian” public as evangelical Christians. This chapter probes further, Cairn’s approaches to participation in the public sphere, looking more closely at “mission”: perhaps the most ubiquitous term of my fieldwork. Cairn’s aim to be “missional” serves their fundamental conviction that Christians/churches should be oriented “outward”, engaging and “transforming” the surrounding communities. Looking beyond organisational reform of the church, Cairn’s vision video describes revival as involving the “transformation of every sphere of culture”. This chapter explores Cairn’s transformational ethos and the utopian ideal (the “cultural project”, in Ortner’s (2006) terms) toward which their mission pitches: “the Kingdom”. First, I demonstrate how Cairn imagines its mission field(s) as spatially demarcated “communities” which God plans to “restore”. Looking to Castlebank Baptist as an example, I unpack Cairn’s inherent social critique as missionaries identify the area’s social and socioeconomic issues which are to be “restored” and “redeemed”. I then turn to the “cultural” expertise required to pursue this missional redemption. Skill in “sociology of mission” is considered crucial to impactful Christian influence because Cairn suggests “the gospel is contextual”, i.e. what Christian “good news’ looks like” varies according to the specificities of a location and its people group. Through exploring the church planting process of “mission auditing” I argue that the “local” is not only an organising logic but also part of the Cairn movement’s ethic of authenticity. All Cairn’s missional efforts are pitched forward towards a socio-spiritual utopia. The movement’s goal is the actualisation of “the Kingdom”: a divine order, in accordance with God’s intended design for this world. Whilst existing anthropological literature has attended to the temporality of the Kingdom, I look at how the Kingdom is emplaced.

Local Community
I follow Rose and Clara into the 1930s housing estate which surrounds Castlebank Baptist church. We walk along a series of parallel streets, past
patterns of terraced houses and semi-detached buildings divided into flats. As we weave around puddles, Clara points to various homes naming people I’ve met once or twice through the church’s community events (the Easter Fun Day and Christmas Fair in particular): “That’s Alan’s house. And Chloe and Charlie are around that corner. That’s Steve’s.” We continue into the warren of matching houses until Clara stops to creak open a metal gate. We climb the steep concrete steps at the side of the pebbledash building, leading to the upper floor flat. Clara knocks on the door, then looks back and whispers, “Maybe stand back a bit. We don’t want to be intimidating.” Rose and I back away from our huddle at the door and retreat down a few stairs. Silence. “Sometimes they don’t answer. We’ll give it one more try.” Clara knocks a second time. “Who is it!?” comes a slightly hostile shout from inside. “It’s Clara! From Castlebank Baptist!” Clara calls back, her English accent with received pronunciation, seems high-pitched and delicate in contrast to the broad Scottish greeting we had received. A woman appears at the door. I can’t see her face in the dark. “We’ve brought these for James. We’ve been worried about him!” Clara holds up a card and box of chocolates. “That’s really nice of you,” the woman’s voice warms, quickly replaced by yelling over her shoulder, “James! Come ’ere!” Mum and Clara chat about James’ sports’ accident and subsequent trip to the hospital this afternoon and agree that he could manage seated activities at church youth group on Sunday. Rose and I stand somewhat awkwardly with friendly smiles during the brief exchange. We say goodnight and shuffle back through the metal gate, sharing relieved remarks that James seemed alright.

As we round one of the seemingly identical corners, Clara spots a lady she recognises and offers an excited “hello”. I have seen her around the church a couple of times (though never at Sunday services). Usually she was confiding in Clara whilst her three lively children are entertained by other church members. Their familiarity is evident in Clara’s demeanour which seems a little more relaxed now than with James’ mum, whom she is yet to befriend. Clara (re)introduces Rose and I as Annie joins us, walking to collect her daughter from dance class. “Annie’s amazing,” Clara tells us. Annie chuckles bashfully as Clara tells us what a wonderful mother Annie is to her children, and how she makes sure the kids get to all their hobbies even though she’s rushed off her feet.
Annie smiles shyly as Rose and I join with commending her. As we reach the doors of the church, we wave goodbye. “I enjoyed that little tour of Castlebank,” I comment, as we take down our hoods and shake off umbrellas. “Just bumping into people in the streets – welcome to my Castlebank experience!” Clara beams.

A few weeks after our trip to James’ house, Clara and I met for coffee in the city centre. Most days, she commutes by bus from Castlebank to study law at the university (her second degree). Smartly dressed, she arrives at the glossy café with her typically warm demeanour. Holding eye contact, she listens intently and smiles as I speak. Curling forwards, resting her elbows on crossed legs, she looks away pensively before responding,

_The bus has recently become a bit of a mission field for me. Literally about two or three times a week there’s someone from Castlebank who I know on the bus and I sit down and chat to them. The other day it was my friend Carrie who’s got two kids and tells me she’s feeling a bit lonely at the moment, scared about getting back to work. And then I bumped into Mike, my friend who’s just out of prison and - he was so sweet - he got off early ‘cause he wanted to walk and catch up. That’s the cool thing about being a local is like… I’m a year in to living here and there was one twenty-four hours when I was walking down the street and bumped in to like twenty people I knew! Like, what the heck?! Clara grins widely and shakes her head in amazement. She sips her coffee. […] Loads of [church members] who feel insecure in their role at Castlebank always want a role on Sundays. I’m like, “Why do you want a role on Sunday? Just make friends with your neighbours! That’s what we need you to do.”_

“Bumping into people” was held as a significant sign of progress for the replant as these unforced – thereby authentic - encounters showed a proximity and familiarity which, as we saw in the previous chapter, are key to evangelically transformational relationships. Clara was pleased with her knowledge of the area and intimacy with its residents as she sought to experience Castlebank as
“a local”. Here, Clara hints at Cairn’s spatial demarcation of mission into “local communities”.

Whilst I heard about some instances of “network” mission in which the target group is bonded by a hobby or common cause, the majority of Cairn’s mission was (also) mapped geographically. Some mission fields align with Edinburgh post codes or electoral zones, often relying on practically invisible divisions between neighbourhoods. (I recall a CBC prayer walk in which we spent some time deliberating where the unmarked boundary was between Castlebank and neighbouring Craigston. (Perhaps a distinction which would be obvious to longstanding local residents.) With its far larger congregation, Central Church’s missional communities are numerous and dispersed across Edinburgh with the church as a whole, taking “the city” as its locus of mission. Tollcross Community Pastors’ field of mission, on the other hand, is simply the street on which their church sits, lined either side with small businesses: cafes, hairdressers, gift shops etc. During my time with the Tollcross ladies, they launched their “neighbourhood” newsletter and distributed it to the businesses surrounding the church building, introducing them to one another with a brief paragraph and a photograph. The church itself also featured as one such “neighbour”. As we collected blurbs from the business owners, Helen pointed out that the newsletter boosted TCP’s goal of community building because “people feel part of something when they hold a stake in it.” In conversation and prayer, TCP’s members do not explicitly term their visits “evangelism” or “outreach”. Instead, the women foreground a desire to “build community” in “the patch”, as Helen affectionately calls it. After one of the occasional evening meals which TCP holds at the church hall for neighbouring shopkeepers, the ladies reported back to leader, Elaine, “It had such a warm atmosphere and a real family feel. It wasn’t ‘us’ and ‘them’. They were comfortable, and we were all mucking in! You know, everyone was in and out of the kitchen serving each other…” “Like a family!” Elaine exclaimed, proudly. The desire that TCP - and eventually their church as a whole - be integrated peers in the local community was clarified when Helen, Una and Barbara took issue with the group’s name, “Tollcross Community Pastors”. Helen expressed discomfort with being called “pastor” and praised Barbara for having come up with a solution. As Helen beamed at her, Barbara shrugged modestly: “Well, I mean, you just keep praying and... I don’t think I was
even thinking about it; it just...popped into my head.” Helen placed her hand on Barbara’s arm and continued, “She suggested ‘Tollcross Partners’! Isn’t that wonderful? I don’t feel like a ‘pastor’. Pastoral suggests they are in a receiving position,” she shook her head. “We’re just part of the community like anyone else – we’re partners,” Barbara concluded.

These hopes that missionaries would cultivate and embed themselves in the social life of the local area stand in contrast with common Christian imaginations of the city as a site of moral danger. Strhan’s (2015) evangelical informants see “London as a lost city in need of redemption”. The church sits as a separate community of salvation for the city, which is a space of moral disorder, hostile to Christians. Their imagination of the city as a place of sin and evangelical opportunity is resonant throughout the history of conservative Protestant churches and mirrors biblical narratives. Strhan explains how her interlocutors experience “cultural and moral fragmentation” living in urban modernity which they ought to experience as “aliens and strangers”. In Strhan’s case, the church is a glimpse of God’s Kingdom: an “outpost”. Cairn, on the other hand, seeks close partnership and neighbourliness. Rather than retrieving lost souls to church outposts, they seek to “transform the city” itself. The various areas which comprise Edinburgh are often seen as nested scales: each church restoring their “patch” contributes to revival of “the city”. As David put it to his Castlebank congregation, “Think about Nehemiah’s wall\textsuperscript{65}: in the process of transforming the nation, we work on our bit of the wall.” This scales out further to the vision of national revival, which Karl describes as “a starter for re-evangelising Europe.” Cairn’s concern with local communities is therefore part of a broader missional geography.

Whilst Cairn does not share the same trepidation about the city as do Strhan’s Londoners, the movement is critical of aspects of urban life which exacerbate loneliness and contribute to a loss of “community”. Strhan (2015) draws upon Georg Simmel [1909] who explores how the city – its concentrated population, proximity of different groups and bustle of commerce - influences social interaction. He describes how the “overwhelming quantity of stimulations” in urban life leads people to retreat into themselves, interacting with others in

\textsuperscript{65} In the Book of Nehemiah, he leads the effort to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
“rationalized, impersonal ways”: avoiding eye contact and “ignoring the weird intimacy of the crowded subway” (Strhan 2015: 5). CBC pastor, David, echoed this description. He recalled that during several years of living in city centre flats he never knew his neighbours. There was anonymity and transience in being a university student in the bustling city centre. This he contrasted with mission life in Castlebank marked by impromptu encounters on one’s doorstep and inviting the neighbours over for drinks. Two of the replanters even agreed with the couple living next door, that they would take down the fence between their gardens and share the space, surely epitomising neighbourliness.

In social science, the city is typically said to epitomise the cultural conditions of late modernity which have been associated with “losing, forgetting, and otherwise being disconnected from a sense of place” (Bielo 2011). Some scholars have identified a growing response in which people increasingly are attempting to restore a sense of emplacement (Bielo 2011, Delanty 2003). Locality is deemed so important to CBC’s approach that anyone looking to commit to “the team” is encouraged to live in the area. This is key to Cairn’s method of “incarnational mission”, and a sign of commitment to both the church and the place. Karl likens this approach to God’s incarnation in Jesus: “God put on flesh and moved into the neighbourhood.”

Emerging Evangelical informants put it, “[If you are going to care for people, you have to care about what they do,” (187); moving to the mission field makes that neighbourhood’s issues your neighbourhood’s issues. Applying this logic to cases like Castlebank, it seems that becoming “local” might be done in an effort to mitigate some of the socioeconomic class difference between missionaries and the field by asserting a personal stake in the issues of the area. (I return to the theme of class later in the chapter). The replant holds to this logic of transforming communities from the inside and one fundamental issue thought to be facing Castlebank was social disconnection.

The replanters hope to revive a sense of community in Castlebank. David cited “reaching the lonely” as a key motivation of his work there. During my fieldwork in 2018, the UK government appointed a “Minister for Loneliness”. I regularly

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66 This is paraphrasing John 1:14 in The Message translation: “The Word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood.”
heard this fact used by Cairn’s disciples as evidence that churches should address the crying need for “community”. Community, as Delanty (2003) describes it is essentially, “related to the search for belonging in the insecure conditions of modernity.” He writes that “community” has been surrounded by discourses of loss - through the conditions of modernity - and recovery. Initial concerns about loss of community as a result of urban industrialisation have been displaced by new concerns about whether globalised cities have lost their connection with community, resulting in “the last vestiges of locality [being] destroyed,” (Delanty 2003:51). Cities transformed under capitalism, are thought to lose a sense of place and attachment which is only tenable in small localities. Delanty shows that the discourse of losing and – more recently – recovering community can be both nostalgic and utopian. The 21stC has seen various efforts at community renewal. One form to which Delanty draws attention is the way in which “community” becomes a basis of alternative welfare provision (which we will see in Cairn’s “restoration” goals). Such initiatives can generate a sense of community attachment: “One of the unintended consequences of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place, arousing a longing for community.” (67).

Castlebank Baptist Church replanters identified a sense of disconnectedness and isolation in the Castlebank area. I was told that when the replanter team arrived, some existing church members and the children who became involved in the church youth work, demonstrated a reluctance to trust these incomers. Clara identified a “fear of abandonment” in the area as the children would ask her questions like “what could happen that would make you leave?”. She described some of the barriers to socialising including that “people around here” did not readily invite people to their homes, and alternative local venues for socialising were very few. The CBC leaders take as their mission the transformation of social relations in Castlebank and building community, addressing what Muehlebach (2012) describes as “relational poverty”.

“One big restoration project”
Over our second flat white coffee in the city centre café, I asked Clara, in standard Cairn parlance, “What’s your vision for Castlebank?” She replied,
...it’s almost quite overwhelming to be asked that question openly, ‘cause all I think about is my vision for Castlebank! *laughs*. I think the overarching general thing is that people would know that they are loved by God. That they’re known. That the lonely are set in family. That children can play freely without being encumbered with stuff that they shouldn’t be. I think I see it as a huge restoration project. Restoration of fatherhood, family, motherhood, womanhood... All these concepts of God’s original, intended plan for the life everyone was supposed to have. I hope that what that will look like in practice is... What I really want to do is create a space for people to gather, like a physical gathering. I want the Busy Bee! [A nearby abandoned pub with a dubious reputation which, I was told, appears in the film “Trainspotting”.]

I want to build a huge building there that will contain a place where Christians can meet and worship God together. [she hesitates]...a “church”, but “church” has connotations for people. [I mean] A place for free counselling, free legal advice. A place where entrepreneurs can set up businesses ‘cause unemployment’s a massive issue in the area and setting up your own business is a great way to overcome the issues that come with having a conviction. [Note, Castlebank neighbours Saughton prison with which the church has pastoral involvement.] I’d love it... [A CBC congregant] put it really well when he said, “I want to put hope back in Castlebank.” A place that is hopeful is a place that is aspiring – where people see more for their lives than just what happened before. I think there are so many different ways. I think God has better ideas of what that actually will look like. But one big restoration project.

This vision as set out by Clara includes physical redemption of an unsavoury space – the Busy Bee – for what Cairn would term “Kingdom purposes” (more on this later). Preferring premises other than classic church architecture was a trend among Cairn’s church planters. I discovered that there was a particular attraction to space which might seem surprising as residence for a church, such as a pub of ill repute. Repurposing unlikely venues was seen to combat off-
putting preconceptions of traditional church associated with steepled buildings as well as symbolising mission’s redemptive drive. Ideally, missionaries hoped for a space which was central, accessible, and welcoming; somewhere people could “hang out”, not just attend worship on Sunday mornings. (“Café churches” are popular). Clara describes her wish to physically renovate the Busy Bee, as serving her larger project of social “restoration” by creating social space for “building relationships” as well as provision of welfare services.

As a replant released from Central Church (Cairn’s flagship), Clara and David were invited to feedback on their work in Castlebank. Attending one Sunday evening service at Central, Clara stood in the centre of the horseshoe audience with a microphone. She offered a story of a “highlight” – one I heard retold thereafter by fellow CBC members, as a success story. Clara had been walking home through the residential estates of Castlebank and saw a young boy playing in a neighbour’s garden. The owner of the garden had noticed and responded in anger, yelling at the boy who fled, upset. At first Clara had kept walking but had felt prompted by God to turn around and approach the man’s house. Provoked by what she light-heartedly described as “a combination of naïveté and the Holy Spirit”, she knocked on the door and gently confronted the angry neighbour, saying she had witnessed the hostile interaction. To her surprise and relief, the man’s demeanour instantly softened, saying he shouldn’t have flown off the handle and regretted having been so harsh on the boy. Thanks to her endeavours to connect with local families, Clara knew the boy in question and was able to bring him round for a mutual apology with the man; a “reconciliation” as she described it. The interaction was portrayed as symbolic of the replant’s broader project and the involvement of the Holy Spirit confirmed God’s active part in the ongoing restoration of Castlebank. Clara concluded: “We’re just loving joining in on what God’s doing here.”

This story stood as a representation of what Clara saw to be God’s broader project of reconciliation within the Castlebank neighbourhood. Clara’s vision specifically mentions family, children, and parenthood as relational dynamics in need of restoration.67 During my fieldwork, CBC invested most of their effort in

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67 Family was a significant category throughout Cairn. Notably, a significant proportion of Castlebank’s population are parents and children so there is also a practical element to this categorisation. I should also clarify that Clara’s notions of
connecting with schools and running a youth club for local young people through which they endeavoured to get to know the parents too. Various families in the area were described as experiencing challenging circumstances: financial hardship, parents’ unamicable separations, incarceration of family members and children with challenging behaviour. The replanters saw it as their purpose to “support” these families, for example cooking meals for new mothers, counselling parents in distress, and encouraging positive behaviour in children. Recall in the opening vignette how Clara chose to praise Annie’s parenting, via Rose and I, on our walk through the neighbourhood. Nurturing healthy and harmonious social relations, within and between households, was presented as a priority of CBC’s mission. They work toward a social utopia which reflects, as Clara put it, “God’s original, intended plan for the life everyone was supposed to have”. Cairn’s missionaries are motivated to realise this social ideal through active involvement with the “local community”.

As well as nurturing harmonious social forms, Clara’s vision for Castlebank spoke about the transformation of socioeconomic factors including provision of welfare services. In seeking to boost the employability of those with criminal records, providing affordable support services, and reinstating aspiration in cases of generational unemployment, Clara’s mission for the church includes addressing the practical challenges associated with the area’s socioeconomic deprivation. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2016) situates Castlebank in the most deprived 30% in Scotland. When David described the area to me on my first visit, he explained how Castlebank sits in a largely “orange” zone on the SIMD map (which codes the most deprived areas in red, while cooler colours on the spectrum represent more affluent localities).

“motherhood” and “fatherhood” would not reflect conservative gender roles. Rather, her concern is with the prevalence of “generational trauma” in which “bad parenting” causes harm to sense of identity and relationships with others.

68 These are the figures the replanters had during my fieldwork. 2020’s figures show areas of Castlebank in the 4th decile.
Whilst the SIMD offers quantitative measures of economic deprivation, the lived experience of social class in Scotland is difficult to define. Shrouded in taboo, class is rarely discussed explicitly (Law & Mooney 2006). Class in Scotland includes a constellation of markers, beyond financial wealth: tastes in food and fashion, postcodes, accent and dialect, political views, educational attainment, family background, hobbies, physical comportment. While each of these markers can carry classed connotations, as with most categories of identity, assessing social class is no simple tick-box exercise. The boundaries between class categories can be blurred and traversed; a person can combine attributes from across the class spectrum, and these can shift over a lifetime. Moreover, we must consider that public perceptions and self-identification of social class are not always consonant. Whilst sometimes elusive and dynamic, the experience of class is tangibly real, variously manifesting in dynamics of conviviality and discrimination, a sense of identity and sometimes of internal fragmentation.

69 Available at: https://simd.scot/#/simd2016/BTFTFTT/13.808060146826834/-3.2729/55.9245/ [Last Accessed: 24\textsuperscript{th} May 2021]
As mentioned earlier, the Castlebank replant calls upon its team to relocate to the area. This involves replanters moving from largely middle class areas of Edinburgh and resettling in places understood to be more working class. That said, some of the replanters pointed out that Castlebank is less easily categorised than the more infamously deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh. Situated conveniently on the route of the new tram line and with relatively low property prices, Castlebank attracts fairly affluent young families and first-time buyers. Meanwhile, significant sections of the estate are owned by Housing Associations (i.e. social housing), mostly inhabited by families seeking financial support through the state benefit system. And then there are older residents like Joy and Gordon who moved to the Castlebank of the 1980s and have witnessed it shift with the economic and political waves of time. Castlebank proved a tricky area to characterise.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, David struggled to tease apart the intersections of social class with other factors like age and the “religious culture” of CBC’s “traditional” congregation: “A big thing I’m working out: When I make a decision people don’t like, is that because it’s a working-class community, or is it just because it’s a religious culture? What’s the difference? And where is the similarity between those two things?” David went on to say that in “middle class culture” plans for events like weekly Bible study can readily be cancelled and rearranged, through a group text and some rearranging of busy Google calendars. In contrast, he finds that in “working class communities” this changeability doesn’t work well; it’s more important to stick to the weekly schedule. David suggests that some people in the area are more in need of this regularity, perhaps because they are living somewhat “chaotic” lives; or simply that they approach time management differently. Having mused on class temporalities, David’s pauses and looks thoughtful as he reconsiders this assessment. He wonders if the need to stick rigidly to a schedule of church activities is in fact a symptom of “religious culture”.

Note, “middle class” has a different meaning in the UK to the US. Middle class in the US covers a broader stretch of incomes, where in the UK it tends to refer more specifically to higher earners. That said, income alone is an insufficient criterion for assessing social class in Scotland. For an interesting perspective on class in Scotland, see McGarvey 2017.
For David, and other church leaders, class differences and attitudes to religiosity were “cultural differences” to be understood and negotiated. “Culture” is a ubiquitous term in the Cairn movement, and one which seems to say a lot. Class traits are folded into the category of “culture” which perhaps exemplifies the “obliqueness of class” (Mendez 2008), the widespread preference to speak about class implicitly. Certainly, we have established that class is not only taboo but rather confusing and elusive. I return to the significance of “culture” momentarily.

Some of Cairn’s missional initiatives were based in affluent city suburbs. These areas were often said to present unique challenges to evangelisation, namely that middle class self-sufficiency creates a closed off attitude to spirituality and reliance on Jesus. However, the majority of existing and aspirational mission efforts I encountered, were aimed toward less affluent communities. In these settings, the “community development” style of Cairn’s mission work was especially clear. As part of my research into Cairn’s “innovate” branch, I attended a residential training weekend for church planters. One of the leaders, Diane, is a professional community development consultant, often employed by churches. She chipped in during a seminar about new missional initiatives.

If you’re starting with needs, you’re starting with a deficit mindset.
As if you view the community negatively and lacking in something, rather than looking at assets. Vocabulary and attitude is important.
Don’t go in with a ‘needs analysis’.

Alan – Diane’s husband and an experienced church planter – nodded. And to put theological stuff to that: don’t start with a doctrine of total depravity as your idea of humanity. As opposed to the brilliance of creation. The difference in the Genesis narrative.
The Reformation had such focus on depravity. Whereas, if you start in the first part of Genesis and see that the essence of humanity is our creative goodness, that shapes your posture.

Diane and Alan demonstrate how the principles of Asset Based Community Development were seen as compatible with scripture. The idea that God is intent on “transformation”, “restoration”, “redemption” etc. was a given among Cairn’s disciples and seemed to marry nicely with the aspirations of
community development. (Of course, Christian interest in development work has a long history, predating the contemporary field of Asset Based Community Development (see eg. Gifford 2016.) The principles of community development emerged also in Karl’s vision for the Church in Scotland. His description mirrors Clara’s interest in social support services but he goes further in explaining how these services would operate.

“I think the church needs to recapture its place at the heart of culture but not at the heart of government,” he told me. “I think the church could retake its place at the heart of the solution to healthcare, and the solution to education, and the problem with over population and poverty.” Karl goes on to speak about how an aging population is putting huge strain on the NHS. This elderly population are living longer but can have a poor quality of life and suffer loneliness. The church – which has “a building at the heart of every community” – should be part of the solution to this dilemma providing food and interaction.

“And the other thing I think is that we should stop doing foodbanks.” Karl’s grin grows as he sees the mixture of surprise, confusion and disapproval on my face. “Oh…ok?” I respond. He laughs. “...By which I don’t mean we should stop doing foodbanks!” Foodbanks, Karl went on to explain, are short-term solutions and need to be connected to programs – including education and employment support - which set clients up for sustainable change. He continues, “So, I think we should do [foodbanks], but we should do it connected to a program that says, if we’re going to do a big feast, everyone has to contribute. No one gets it for free because that’s not the way the world works. So, you either serve, or you cook, or you wash up, or you clean, or you go get the food, or you pay for the food, or you do something. That brings dignity to procedure.” Karl adds that the church should play a role in ending cycles of poverty, including running job clubs, and providing job opportunities: “do a deal with Tesco that says, well if we employ people for a year and give them a good reference, will you take them on?”

Karl suggests that the church ought to be part of the “solution” to poverty and to an overstretched National Health Service. It is important to consider the economic backdrop against which Cairn’s 2015 inception and this 2018 quote from Karl are set. The recession of 2007-2009 was followed by an austerity regime, brought in by the UK government in 2010 (and supposedly ending in
2019), which saw a significant rolling back of the welfare state (Emejulu & MacLeod 2014). Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) came to prominence during the austerity regime. Emejulu and MacLeod (2014) researched community development in Scotland and argue that “ABCD is a capitulation to neoliberal values of individualisation and privatisation” (1), justifying the decrease of the welfare state “through a discourse of empowerment and control”. A key driver in this discourse of empowerment was David Cameron’s 2010 “Big Society” initiative which sought to correct a “top-down, top-heavy, controlling” form of governance in favour of “local innovation and civic action,” (quoted in Kisby 2010: 484). Critics state that ABCD excuses the responsibility of the state for social problems, shifting it to individuals and communities in the name of “empowerment” and has been termed “neoliberalism with a community face” (Emejulu & MacLeod 2014).

Connectedly, Muehlebach (2012) finds that amidst the widespread disintegration caused by economic crisis, the “moral neoliberal” has emerged, exemplified in the extensive volunteerism in Lombardy, Italy. With the volunteer sector having more than doubled since the 1990s, Muehlebach identifies a rise in “ethical citizenship”. As a result, Muehlebach observes, the dystopic breakdown of welfare is replaced with a “utopic vision of community welfare”. This social form of citizenship is not focussed on state or nation but on the “subjects’ will to belong to a number of smaller-scale relations such as the family and the neighbourhood” (Donati 1995:313).

Cairn emerges amidst a proliferation of volunteering and community development which have been variously analysed as plugging the gaps and enabling neoliberal policies. Throughout this thesis, I have identified points of affinity between the movement and neoliberal logics. However, viewing Cairn’s “restorative” efforts as simply enabling such policies would overlook emic theologies and theories of transformation; emic approaches to fostering the good (Robbins 2013). Karl argues the Church’s focus should not be government but “culture”. Again, “culture” appears to offer an oblique way of engaging a topic commonly deemed controversial in British public life: politics. Though my interlocutors were mobilised by a sense of injustice about, for example, the refugee crisis, climate change, and poverty, they rarely spoke directly about the government, other than to pray that Christian influence would reach and shape
the political sphere. Instead, Cairn’s Kingdom ideals positioned their social critiques as suprapolitical. Rather than direct political criticism, Karl focuses Cairn’s transformational energy on “culture”. According to Cairn’s understanding: “culture” - including values, traits, attitudes - is the substrate for all social, political and economic action. In chapter one, we saw Rich draw a pyramid in which the base “cultural” elements of church were to be honed as a prerequisite for “healthy” function and activity. I saw a similar bottom-up logic applied to widespread social and economic change, which says that reformed socio-economic circumstances/policies/government require transformation on the level of identity, values, expectations, norms – i.e. “culture” - which exist “below the surface” as Rich put it. Cairn’s approach to “cultural” transformation via “incarnational” mission might be viewed in terms of “prefigurative politics” whereby they seek to enact change not by lobbying but by living out their ideal (Swain 2019). As we saw in chapter three, Cairn sees reformation in nested scales wherein individual, self-reformation spreads somewhat contagiously, building towards a revived nation. Similarly, Cairn’s incarnational mission is thought to bring metaphysical change by first actualising utopian ideals “locally”. It seems that just as the nation is made up of individuals, the Kingdom is composed of restored neighbourhoods.

Culture Experts
So far, we have established that Cairn imagines the mission field in terms of “communities” which are to be “developed” in line with God’s broader plan of “restoration”. The “local” emerges as an important category here, exemplified by the focuses on Castlebank as a neighbourhood, or TCP’s “patch”. Cairn believes each local “context” to have a unique “culture” and attention to these sociological specificities is thought crucial to effective mission. Where the “traditional approach” would erroneously apply the same church styles and evangelical techniques indiscriminately across contexts, Cairn teaches that “contextualisation” is crucial (c.f. Bielo 2011). We saw in the previous chapter’s review of influential British church publications (e.g. “Church Without Walls” and “Mission Shaped Church”) that adaptation of the church to its audience has been widely identified as key to its survival. One Cairn minister posed the question, “How do we tell the story of the people of God in a way that is faithful
to scripture, creatively engaging and contextually appropriate?” In this section, I explore how Cairn’s missionaries are therefore required to be specialists in “culture”.

The brief dialogue between Diane and Alan which I presented previously (regarding ABCD and its theological principles), was taken from a “Forge” training weekend. Forge is an international church planting organisation and a partner of Cairn. Alan is both a leader in Cairn’s executive team – specifically its “innovate” branch - and director of Forge Europe. A large man, with a slow, soft spoken Glaswegian accent, dry wit and laidback demeanour, Alan is a veteran church planter and Church of Scotland minister. I found that he was highly respected in many church circles, known for persistently challenging the Church of Scotland from the inside and successfully pioneering the denomination’s first church plant. This weekend was the induction to Forge’s year-long training program for “pioneers”, with a cohort of twelve from across (sub/urban) Scotland, all establishing, or aspiring to establish, new innovative Christian initiatives focussed on non-Christian audiences. Sitting two to a desk, facing the PowerPoint screen, the pioneers introduced themselves. Leah leads in a church plant from one of Edinburgh’s largest city centre churches, focussed on meals for the homeless. Katie and Dom hail from the suburbs of Aberdeen, keeping company with middle class families and business professionals who are hardened to the levels of vulnerability required to rely on Jesus. Ashton dreams of evangelising to Muslims, having recently converted from Islam himself. Liam is about to begin youth work in the affluent burgh of Kinross. Alice is part of Alan’s new church plant team in Ruchazie, an impoverished housing scheme in the east of Glasgow. John’s context is also a housing estate but in Dundee. Susie set up a café in wealthy Bearsden, Glasgow. In a session entitled “Introducing Mission Audit: Understanding our Context, Knowing our People, Sharing in God’s Mission”, Alan contended that church should not “look” the same across these various settings. Pioneers were going to need to understand and respond to the “cultures” they were approaching.

The mission audit is the most significant key to help translate what you’ve carried with you to the place you’re trying to connect with. For example, what’s the difference between Kinross and Perth? How do people think differently? What does church look like in
those contexts? We so need to understand that we have to drop our baggage [preconceived ideas about church style and traditional evangelism]. Otherwise you’ll consistently clash and there’ll be cultural disconnect. And if you’re to be effective in reaching people then you need to understand that they’re not where you are. So, there’s barriers in language, education, class, cultural classifications, value systems, identities etc [...] What does the Kingdom of God look like here?

The concept of mission audit is in scripture. What we’re trying to do is gather info about people and place. Also looking for spiritual insight; God’s heart for them. Looking for information and revelation to discern. Understanding, having the facts but also asking God what he’s saying in the midst. From that, leading into vision and strategy. We particularly see that in Nehemiah. The letter was information, prayer was revelation, vision came and strategy for the wall. This is a really practical thing; creating a strategy to impact the folks. It’s a practical and spiritual exercise. [...] Nehemiah wasn’t just into mission audits; he was a competent community developer(!) Alan smirks.

The mission audit, complete with narrative and statistical portrayal of the mission field, requires church planters to turn their hand to a kind of social research. As one of Bielo’s (2011) Emerging Evangelical informants said about church planting, “To be a church planter, you have to be an economist, you know? You have to be a sociologist and demographer and an urban planner.” (187) To produce a comprehensive document about the mission field, Alan advised that missionaries attend to three sources. First, statistical data: demographics figures, attitudes surveys, the index of multiple deprivation. Alan highlighted that the Church of Scotland website holds helpful community profiles: “For all their shortcomings, the Church of Scotland are great at stats.” Secondly, “key workers” such as head teachers, social workers, hairdressers,

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71Alan’s sarcasm here is characteristic of his personality and nods to the presence of his wife: a community development expert. It also arguably connects with chapter one’s discussion of humour as buffering the application of economic logics to spiritual affairs.
pub landlords – figures whose professions offer them an insight into the social life of the area. “Call them and ask to buy them coffee,” Alan encouraged, “The more perspectives you get, the closer to the truth of the community you get.” Finally, “talk to local people”. For instance, in auditing Ruchazie, Alan’s team conducted a focus group with a mums-and-toddlers group. With cake and coffee provided, they laid out a map of Ruchazie, asking the participants to use sticky notes to label the positive and negative things about the area (starting with the positives, to reflect an “assets-based approach”). Crucial to the audit, Alan argued, is that the very process of meeting and talking to people is itself, an act of mission. As we saw in Castlebank “building relationships”, knowing names and faces, is a key goal for Cairn’s missionaries. So, both the product and process of auditing are tools of effective mission.

The mission audit is intended to reveal the socioeconomic status of the area plus its “cultural traits and values”. For Ruchazie, they identified a high poverty level and “a difficulty around processing death and grief”\(^\text{72}\). They also found evidence of sectarianism associated with Celtic and Rangers football clubs. Following the audit, the church plant team “discerns” their response to what they have found. Whilst some traits are “received” or “redeemed”, others – such as the sectarianism – are to be actively “rejected” by the new church. The latter would constitute a distortion of, as Clara put it, “God’s original, intended plan for the life everyone was supposed to have”. The culture of the locale is filtered for elements which stand in alignment or opposition to the ideals of the Kingdom. Appreciating the uniqueness of its local community, the church plant is expected to adapt its approach in response to the audit’s findings, contextualizing their mission.

Mission audits serve to characterise spatially demarcated populations with particular traits and values. In Cairn’s understanding, this constitutes a community’s “culture”. While Bielo (2011) talks about his informants “imagining the missionized subject”- the individual they aim to reach - Cairn’s imagined subjects of mission are locales: “Castlebank”, “the patch”, “the city” (see O’Neill 2010). The audit process results in “a sense of place mediated by a

\(^{72}\) This seemed to connect to a story about locals reacting with violence and vengefulness when a man from the area was killed.
clear sense of evangelistic purpose,” (Bielo 2011:187). The data gives locations personalities to which church planters should tactfully appeal in their missional approach. The movement’s concern with contextualization seems to echo the logic of personalisation of disciples, which we have seen in previous chapters, where high importance is given to diversity of gifts, characteristics and callings. However, I never heard it said that God designed a community to be, for example, untrusting, matriarchal, or sectarian. Rather the mission auditors trace these qualities to historical and sociological causes. I was offered one example of an ex-mining community which the audit evaluated to be “matriarchal” and “superstitious” due to its history, in which the men would be absent from the home and working in treacherous conditions, leaving the women to run the village and rely on superstition to calm their worries for their husbands. The cultural characteristics identified were to influence the missional approach to that community. I was told that for this ex-mining village, a church which appears patriarchal and closed off to spirituality would fail to connect with the locals. Just as Cairn’s disciples seek to understand other people – whether through personality tests or weekly visits – to connect evangelically, so too must communities be characterised and comprehended. Appreciating the diversity of mission fields was emphasised consistently in Cairn training where the teaching of a model or method was qualified with emphasis on the need for contextualization: “It’s same DNA, different skin”. The reference to DNA suggests an underlying commonality which validates the training underpinned by logics of replicability. But whilst Clara has attended training through Forge and Training Hub, a fundamental skill for her as a good missionary is the ability to understand the local area and intuit which elements of her training are applicable. As we have seen throughout this thesis, Cairn states an aversion to most “one-size-fits-all” approaches, seeing authenticity in the uniqueness of individuals or “cultures”. So, to try to establish a church in Castlebank identical to the Tollcross “patch” would be ill-fitting and ineffective. The importance of contextualization and being ready to adapt or abandon a plan in response to the “terrain” presents another instance of Cairn’s resistance to the over-application of economic logic. Contextualization ensures the strategic approach remains authentic.
Kingdom

Eilidh, Director of Forge Scotland, delivered several seminars (including spiritual formation and leadership) with bubbling enthusiasm. Having overcome the restrictive expectations which come with being the “minister’s wife”, she shares with attendees how she embraced her own desire to pioneer mission in non-traditional contexts. Exuberantly, she implores,

*Don’t preach to people but rather bring the Kingdom! It’s less about getting them to church and more about restoration. Of your contexts ask, what’s the spiritual atmosphere? What are the Kingdom signs? Where do you already see God at work? What would an increase of Kingdom look like? [...] In my context, I’m hanging out with women on the margins. Bringing them to Sunday service is alienating; that’s not where the discipling happens. I see the Kingdom stuff where women are coming off methadone, keeping their family together, retrieving kids from the care system by living stable lives, sustaining marriages. Not bums on seats and baptisms!*

Eilidh identifies behaviours and lifestyles which are the stuff of the Kingdom: recovery from addiction, avoiding divorce. I describe the Kingdom as a socio-spiritual utopia for this reason: the movement see spiritual revival and social redemption as inherently interconnected. In Eilidh’s session, she emphasised the importance of “recognising God at work,” and “remembering that Jesus goes ahead of us.” Cairn’s disciples believe that God calls them to “collaboration” in His project of transforming the world. This implies that while believers are to work towards creating a world in line with God’s original design, they should also be ready to identify signs of His Kingdom “inbreaking” as God is already and always on mission. This notion of working toward the Kingdom whilst it is also working toward you points us to the unique temporality and agency of the Kingdom which I consider below. I will go on to expand this to incorporate Kingdom spatiality.

Kingdom theologies have been found to indicate time and agency, allowing the anthropologist to further understand the politics of identity and organising logics of a given Christian culture (Bielo 2011). “Millenarian” theology sees the
Kingdom as a physically distant place to which believers will ascend only after waiting through life on an unsalvageably sinful earth. In direct opposition to millenarianism, there is “preterism”, or “fulfilled eschatology”, which believes that the Kingdom is here and now, because the prophecies in the Book of Revelation have already been fulfilled during the 1st century. Consequently, “preterists see themselves as ‘partners with God’ and ‘active agents’ in making the Kingdom known to all.” (Bielo 2011) That partnership impels active participation, immediately. Sitting somewhere in between these theologies, Bialecki’s (2017) informants see the Kingdom as “now and not yet”. Believing that this divine order cannot be actualised until Jesus’ second coming. Meanwhile, they identify evidence of the Kingdom in glimpses such as miraculous healing and moments of political justice. These Vineyard members focus on organising social engagements which might “reveal” the nature of the Kingdom to non-Christians. However, because the Kingdom cannot be properly realised here and now, Bialecki explains that the now/not yet theology creates space only for “a low-ceilinged agency” and consequently, a limited political imagination (Bialecki, 2017, Bielo 2011). Cairn is similar to Bialecki’s “now/not yet” context in that they agree the Kingdom utopia is not fully realised until Jesus returns. However, the “ceiling” on Cairn’s agency is much higher and they share some of the preterists’ fervour for collaboration with God in actively “building” the Kingdom.

Cairn takes a relatively active, “intentional” position in their aspirations for the Kingdom. Many scholars have observed that Christianity is essentially hopeful and waiting expectantly for Christ’s return, for new earth and for eternal life in heaven (Formenti, 2017, Bloch 1986, Crapanzano 2003). Bloch describes Christianity as “genuinely utopian” because Jesus’ life foreshadowed a “utopia of eschatological fraternity” and his ascension promises the transformation of the world. Crapanzano (2003) too speaks of a project of hope rather than desire, “insofar as it considers human agency insufficient to attain collective life and depends instead on God’s action for its fulfilment.” (Crapanzano 2003 in Formenti 2017) By contrast, this thesis demonstrates the imperative for Cairn’s disciples to be agentive. Just as Engelke says of his interlocutors, “waiting around is not an option,” (Engelke 2013: preface). Cairn’s experience of being “pitched forward” represents a more active hopefulness; the Kingdom is to be

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manifested through effort in concert with divine intervention. Cairn’s rhetoric of Kingdom building gives the sense that there is much work to do and that significant progress toward the Kingdom is possible (imperative, in fact), “in my lifetime and in yours” as Karl says. Eilidh’s encouragements to identify “Kingdom signs” and “God at work” alludes to an immediacy of the Kingdom.

Kingdom theologies are revealing of Christian temporalities; a well-documented subject in the anthropology of Christianity. By the 1970s, most branches of Protestantism had “embraced a millenialist orientation toward time, focusing on waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the subsequent end of time,” (Formenti, 2017). This time of waiting has been described as “an unfinished pause” (Agamben 2005, 64) and a “future unfolding” (Harding 2001, 240). Guyer (2007) describes this dispensationalist temporality as emptying the near future. In contrast, Cairn’s near future is laden with the imperative to act. More closely resembling Haynes’ (2020) description of the “expansive present” - and municipal planning temporalities as argued in chapter one (Abram 2014) - Cairn’s disciples are not content patiently to await the eschaton and are instead concerned with building the Kingdom in the present and the near future.

The movement’s Kingdom temporality has significant implications for Cairn’s soteriology because ideas of afterlife are backgrounded. Emphasis on the personalised journey with Jesus during one’s lifetime, eschews the binary oppositionality of salvation. This sits in stark contrast with “traditional” church approaches, as exemplified by Joy and Gordon at Castlebank. Gordon recalled to me his first visit to Castlebank Baptist church back in the late 1980s:

> So, the first time I went along to the service, of course [the minister] would shake hands with everybody going out the door. He knew that I was different – I was a stranger of course. He says, “are you saved?” And I said “yes”. And I thought, that’s the man for me if he’s asking that question!

To become official members of CBC, the replanters had to face a membership interview. The panel consisted of Joy and Gordon. Emily described this as a “funny” experience, as her testimony of how she became a Christian does not include an identifiable “moment” of salvation which, for Joy and Gordon, would
be essential. She explained, “I had to kind of adjust my story to fit their expectations...I’m not sure I would have got in otherwise!” she laughed. Cairn’s focus is squarely on living alongside Jesus and Kingdom building in this lifetime, pushing concerns about the afterlife almost out of sight.

Cairn’s Kingdom theology structures the temporality, agency and soteriology of the movement. As evidenced earlier in the chapter, the Kingdom also implies a particular social order of family harmony, knowing the neighbours. I found that Cairn engages the Kingdom as an ontological\(^73\) category. The Kingdom is not only a set of beliefs or an ethical framework for the Cairn movement but a state of existence; a reality with its own dimensions of time and space. In concluding this chapter, I would like to return to the theme of place as it has emerged in Cairn’s demarcation of mission into local communities which I will contend constitutes a project of mapping the Kingdom.

Mapping the Kingdom

Whilst time represents well-trodden ground in the Anthropology of Protestantism, the scholarship on space is less established. We might look to geography, religious studies and social theory in helping us to address the topic of Christian space. Here, many conversations are shaped by a series of dichotomies, hinging on the problem of im/materiality. The literature tends to allude to two types of religious spatiality. “Church-type” spatiality (Hervieu-Leger 2002) focuses on expanding Christianization by claiming territory, which Kong (2001) describes as a “locative orientation”, bounded and emplaced. On the other hand, “sect-type” spatiality downplays earthly attachment. It is a “utopian” approach which emphasises the unbounded and transcendent. The latter reflects understandings of Protestantism as particularly “place-phobic” and centring on “grace, not place” (Kaell 2010: 94, 76). We might also look to

\(^{73}\) ‘Ontology’ is a hotly contested term in Social Anthropology (e.g. Carrithers et al 2010; Heywood 2012; Laidlaw 2012; Pedersen 2012; Laidlaw & Heywood 2013; Heywood & Pedersen 2017). Rather than making an overarching, analytical statement about a dichotomy of ‘ideas’ and ‘matter’, my invocation of “ontology” is an ethnographic one. My interlocutors spoke of and engaged the Kingdom in ontological terms: as a reality which is distinct from but connects with the plane of existence I inhabit as a non-Christian. Following my interlocutors’ ontological framing invited me to examine how they negotiate the interaction of these realities. I pursue that line of inquiry in this chapter’s discussion of mapping.
the Anthropologies of Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity where there has been thorough exploration of the significance of space, particularly in relation to shrines (Kaell 2017), pilgrimage (Peña 2011), and claiming religious territory (Bandak 2014). Over the last decade or so, scholars have complicated understandings of Protestantism as “place-phobic” (Kaell 2017:94), producing ethnographies of Protestant place-making practices. Some add to the literature on pilgrimage (Kaell 2010, Goh 2020) while others present Christian spatialities in which the earth’s inferior importance to heaven is emphasised (Huang 2014). Robbins (2014) highlights that the approaches and levels of importance given to heaven/earth maps, presents a fruitful comparative study to be pursued by the Anthropology of Christianity. I take up this invitation.

Omri Elisha (2013) highlights how the connection is built between the immediate and transcendent through the place-making practices of citywide prayer movements in the USA. The facilitators of citywide prayer initiatives are seen to be “advancing a ‘theology of place’ which requires that participants become attuned to the historical and social circumstances of the cities where they live” (Elisha 2013:318); knowledge which is prioritised in Cairn’s mission audits. So, although his evangelical interlocutors are ultimately concerned with messianic time and the celestial Kingdom, these are “tied to moorings of situated time and place” (313). Elisha (2013) quotes Bialecki (2010) who finds this logic to be true of evangelical revivalism more broadly: that they enable Christian communities to “see their situated particularity as their point of entry to the universal” (ibid: 704). Elisha’s (2013) Knoxville interlocutors are seeking to re-orient secular space; altering the ways they engage their city and the challenges which prevent it from glorifying God’s Kingdom. Through their terrestrial place-making, they invoke superior heavenly geography. Cairn too connects earthly time and place to the Kingdom and in ways which seem to interconnect heaven and earth.

Perhaps the most comprehensive contribution that anthropologists have brought to the discussion of Christian spatiality, regards spiritual mapping. Kevin O’Neill (2010) writes that his Guatemalan, Pentecostal interlocutors use

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mapping practices in their mission to claim the nation for God. He defines “spiritual cartography” as “the practice of mapping a city along moral lines” as it assesses geographically the devil’s strongholds against which Christians might direct their spiritual warfare (O’Neill 2010:88-100). Through this cartographical imagination, Christian groups envision how the spiritual realm marks communities, buildings and nations. In Guatemala, O’Neill saw these practices unfold through use of maps in prayer rooms and fighting the demonic through placing prayer stones (imbued with power of the Holy Spirit) in strategic areas of the city. McAlister’s (2005) Haitian context echoes this cartographical approach to moral geographies. Pentecostal discourse, McAlister explains, “maps space into unambiguous theological geographies”: territories are either Christian or demonic (McAlister, 2005:252). Spiritual mapping organises space not in terms of political borders, or architectural features, but varying spiritual charge.

Cairn’s mission auditing represents a kind of spiritual mapping which differs from the Pentecostal approach of locating the demonic for spiritual warfare. Cairn’s notion of the “inbreaking Kingdom” suggests that the heaven map is closely layered under the earthly map and seeps through like ink through folded paper. Eilidh at Forge encouraged pioneers to be on the lookout for things of the Kingdom: “Where do you already see God at work?”. This expectation that God’s ongoing work of transformation will be made known, cultivates what Bielo (2020) calls “the promise of presence”. This expectation and the perceived breakthroughs are organised according to “context”. The Kingdom does not emerge uniformly as a rising sea level, but actualises in different ways, in different intensities and moments, in different “contexts”.

Cairn approaches Kingdom building through the units of “local communities”. Mapping by community is not only a matter of physical, spatial demarcation but concerns localised people groups and their cultures. O’Neill (2010) speaks of “cultural placement” as his interlocutors understand rural and urban Guatemalans as fundamentally different kinds of people, not only geographically but morally. We see a sort of cultural placement in Cairn missionaries’ identification of the traits and norms unique to Castlebank, or the Tollcross patch. Cairn’s attachment of people group to location in some ways resonates with the concept “ethnie”, coined by Anthony D. Smith (1987) in his
studies on nationalism. An ethnie is, “a named human group, claiming a homeland and sharing myths of common ancestry, historical memories and a distinct culture” (Smith, 1992: 438). Bialecki (2017) highlights the applicability of the term to the Christian nation and to Christian communities who refer to themselves in ways akin to race. “Ethnie” generally carries a sense of belonging to an imagined community. As I am considering Cairn’s localisation of people groups, rather than the feelings of said “locals”, I cannot speak about ethnies in the sense of camaraderie: I do not know if Castlebank residents feel bound by this sense of belonging. Rather, the similarity to “ethnicities” I draw here is in the way Cairn missionaries speak of localised people groups as shaped by the social and economic histories of the places where they live. For instance, the examining neighbourhood still shaped by this way of life generations later. Note that both O’Neill (2010) and Smith (1987) address directly the category of the nation whereas, for Cairn, contextualisation seems to be more important at the level of the neighbourhood (and also the individual, if we consider personalisation to echo the same logic of particularities). I encountered very little discussion of “Scotland’s” culture but witnessed great concern about the need to appreciate the diversity of little pockets within Edinburgh or Glasgow.

“Context” is the emic term Cairn uses to tack place, people, and culture together. Mission auditing takes topography and layers upon it socio-economic statistics, social norms, and spiritual discernment. God is known to have particular plans for Castlebank, for the Tollcross, for Ruchazie – He too, seems to work according to a map. The Kingdom “looks different” depending on the context so missional efforts to actualise it ought to be contextualised. In mapping mission through auditing, Cairn’s missionaries are mapping the Kingdom.

Conclusion
Practices of place-making in relation to constructing the “local community” are often associated with concerns about modernity and “globalized” cities. Living in Edinburgh during my fieldwork, I saw the local emerge as desirably authentic in various non-religious settings: preferences for “shopping local”, the popularity of social media pages dedicated to neighbourhood pride and support
for “community gardens” in public parks. This concern for the local resonated with and took on a unique form, among Christians seeking to build the Kingdom of God. Localisation is important to Cairn organisationally. Recall David’s comment about churches in different areas building their section of Nehemiah’s wall. Dividing the task of national revival into smaller scale projects had strategic salience (just as we saw the nested scales in chapter three regarding self-reformation). Cairn’s strategic nature is also reflected in the auditing process where data collection is bounded by locality. Furthermore, localisation has theological and missiological importance in the Cairn movement. Cairn sees their missional approach as “incarnational”, emulating how God “put on flesh and moved into the neighbourhood”. Cairn seeks to represent a “down to earth” God whose Kingdom is not (only) a transcendental, otherworldly place but is “inbreaking” tangibly, here and now. It is said that He has “plans for Castlebank”, “plans for Edinburgh”. This is a God who works geographically. Replacing consciously the notion of church as a weekly event in a special building, Cairn’s incarnational mission seeks to situate church in the everyday. This “whole life” approach demands authentic consistency across the spheres of a disciple’s life and does not allow for mission to be a bounded activity to which one commutes. Another core theme of this thesis and marker of authenticity is personalization and in this chapter, we see that logic extend to localisation. Cairn is suspicious of any “one-size-fits-all” approach and sees “good” transformative action as appreciating and adapting to diversity. So, it follows that proclaiming the gospel in one style across contexts is deemed inappropriate, ineffective, too top-down and institutional. Cairn training dictates that cultural literacy is crucial to evangelical receptivity so missionaries must be ready to translate the gospel in ways which are locally relevant.

The established literature on Kingdom temporality connects closely with agency. Kingdom temporality speaks to the urgency and/or waiting which characterises Christian agency. I found that Kingdom spatiality directs and organises that agency. Mapping the Kingdom in this combined sociological and prophetic way structures agency as imminent and organised. Consonant with the tensions running throughout this study, just as Cairn’s disciples work to build the Kingdom in their neighbourhood, that Kingdom is also inbreaking toward them. They are called to exercise agency in creating the Kingdom whilst
also identifying how God is already actualising His plan — His map — by divine agency. We might look at “contexts” like Castlebank as Kingdom “chronotopes” (Coleman 2015): They map space together with an agency-rich temporality, all characterised by expectation of transformation.
Conclusion

Overview
This thesis began with Rich’s story of being “led” to Edinburgh by God. This God-ordained process did not allow for passivity on Rich’s part. He reasoned through the family’s options, measuring the pros and cons of each location. But it was vital that Rich resisted engineering the situation by his own power and that the prophetic process be untainted by his friends’ agendas. Rich needed to be able to declare that it was “God’s initiative, not mine.” Both the methodical, logistical decision-making and the prophetic efforts to hear God’s voice were considered to be God-ordained. This story demonstrated the need to exert and submit human agency: a recurring theme of this thesis. Chapter one explored this tension in terms of Cairn’s training environments which are suffused with teaching diagrams, goal-setting grids and strategic thinking. This organised approach served to bind the movement’s followers to a common aspiration and afforded a sense of momentum, tacking imminent goals to the ultimate utopia of the Kingdom. However, this active stance was carefully limited; the neatness of the training models was buffered by humour and open acknowledgement of their shortcomings. Whilst the movement sought to be active and organised in its approach, its followers also aspired to organic outcomes. Revival-makers are ardently to work toward transformation which they hope will seem unmanufactured; the product of God’s will above their own. Chapter two saw a continuation of this dynamic as it crystallises in the dual gift/skill nature of prophecy. Trainees on the Prophecy Course learned the importance of honing their prophetic ability; strengthening it like a muscle and building a prophetic lifestyle in which God’s input is continually expected. Yet, “striving” risks muddying the waters and distorting divine revelation with human imagination. Prophesiers must consciously situate themselves as ready to be surprised by God whose timing and message are at His discretion. Cairn manages potentially problematic human agency in the prophetic process by setting the expectation that prophesiers are fallible; separating revelation from interpretation; and teaching that interpretation is collaborative (though not entirely egalitarian). God’s participation in the movement via prophecy is fundamental to Cairn’s status as a spirit-led phenomenon and His involvement is marked explicitly in
training environments. The ability of each disciple to hear God directly is also core to Cairn’s understanding of the subject, as discussed in chapter three. “Disciples” understand that God knows them personally and that He has given them a unique identity. My interlocutors were deeply concerned with understanding “who God made them to be” and acting upon that intended role. Disciples are to focus on reforming themselves so that they can reform others and ultimately the nation. This work on the self again involves organised methods including Lifeshape tools and the guidance of a Huddle leader. Use of these “techniques of the self” resonates with modern, western understandings of the individual which are understood to have been influenced by confessional Christianity (Foucault 1997). And yet, I concluded chapter three by highlighting that Cairn’s disciples do not fully conform to this image of the self-determining individual. Key to the nature of the disciple and to their authority/authenticity is their co-being with God. Cairn’s disciples are not simply autonomous, neoliberal subjects precisely by virtue of their Christianity. The disciple’s intimate relationship with God and the unique callings He puts on their lives situate the in/dividual disciple as the unit of revival and the seat of authenticity. This value of personalisation and the responsibilisation of each gifted individual shapes several parts of Cairn’s practice including church reform, as we saw in chapter four. The case study of Castlebank Baptist Church illustrated how Cairn’s positioning of authenticity as interior to the disciple’s intimate relationship with God sits in contrast with the “traditional” model of church which locates authority as exterior and fixed. Starting from the contrasting language ideologies of the replanters and original members, I traced two competing social models of church premised on opposing configurations of human and divine authority. Cairn’s understanding of the agent as impelled to act and as the seat of authenticity also shapes its approach to missionising the “post-Christian” public. Chapter five followed the reponsibilised individual and the ethic of personalisation to the mission field. With traditional churches classed as unfit vehicles for evangelism, Cairn takes a “relational” approach in which disciples are charged with “being church”. In exploring the nature of the potentially transformational relationships missionaries cultivate, we saw that being authentic means striking the balance of being relatable yet distinctly Christian. The perceived authenticity of living in a way which is consistent across
church, work, and social spheres, traverses the sacred/profane boundary (upheld by traditional church) in a potently effective way. When Christian distinctiveness unexpectedly comes to the fore in the context of everyday closeness it does so more productively. Continuing to explore Cairn’s model of agency and authenticity as it applies to mission, the final chapter showed that the ethic of personalisation extends to localisation. Missionaries who seek to build the Kingdom are to “contextualise” the gospel with the aid of a mission audit. I contend that mission auditing serves as a kind of spiritual mapping which attributes unique characteristics to locations and their people groups. In this context, mapping mission is essentially mapping the Kingdom. Cairn’s Kingdom theology sees disciples as active collaborators with God in building a utopia which is at least partially imminent. Kingdom temporality and spatiality connect closely with and structure Cairn’s agency. As disciples work toward building it, the Kingdom is already inbreaking toward them in different ways, in different places. Once again, we see that Cairn’s disciples are impelled to work toward a goal, the achievement of which is necessarily beyond their control.

**Studying Agency**

“Intentionality” was a significant emic concept in my fieldwork and provoked me to explore the construction of agency in Cairn. The invitations from Ortner (2006) and others (McNay 2003, Maxwell & Aggleton 2004, Fausto & Heckenburger 2008, Schachar and Hustinx 2019) to research the cultural construction of agency have been influential to this study. I found that a focus on agency brings into view Christian subjectivization, organisational structure, language ideology, temporality, spatiality and more. In pushing beyond agency as a universal concept associated with resistance, I was able to trace various influences of its cultural construction in Cairn. This drew my attention deeper into the theologies of my interlocutors and outwards, to factors beyond the church walls. In studying Cairn’s emic model of agency, I have sought to take seriously God’s participation in the movement, and to depict the ways in which He is seen to enact His plan and to govern human agency. Emily at Castlebank Baptist put it to me that “everything starts from who we know God to be.” I take this as a resounding invitation to methodological agnosticism (see Bialecki 2014). Plainly, to overlook the significance of God’s nature and forms of action
in this context would be to miss the point entirely. Cairn’s disciples’ agency is necessarily entwined with His. Exploring this entwinement illuminates the movement’s theologies of transformation; their theories of the good. Moreover, the movement’s “local logic of the good” (Ortner 2006:145) - its model of authentic action - reflects their theological understandings of God’s nature. God is known to be intimate, surprising, strategic, down-to-earth – characteristics which my interlocutors endeavour to achieve in their acts towards revival.

Turning to factors beyond the church walls, a recurrent theme in this thesis’s examination of agency has been the affinity between Cairn and logics of neoliberalism namely, the responsibilisation of the individual and extension of economic logic to other spheres of life. I might add to this a third affinity: flexibility. Cairn’s logic of personalisation and localisation, explored in the latter chapters, connects with a high valuation of adaptability. “Contextualisation” is prized not only by Cairn but several adjacent initiatives seeking to reform and rescue the church. (It features strongly in the landmark “A Church Without Walls” (2001) and “Mission Shaped Church” (2004) reports, for example.) It is now widely held that the church needs to adapt its approach to fit its audience; that the church needs to “meet people where they’re at,” as my interlocutors put it. Cairn’s dynamic approach critiques traditional forms of church as a fixed centre which beckons people inside. This shift resonates with late capitalism’s logic of flexibility which David Harvey argues, superseded the principles of Fordist mass production which formerly characterised capitalist economics (Harvey 1989, Inda 2000). In production, calls to uniformity and conservation have been replaced with flexible working and entrepreneurship. Inda’s (2000) study of Latino immigrant students in California finds that flexibility is not only demanded of modes of production: Individuals are also to develop flexible practices, adapting to acquire necessary forms of cultural capital. I have seen a similar trend emerge in the Church in Scotland’s increased concern for contextualizing mission. Cairn is certainly not the only organisation to be shaped by and/or to leverage the dominant economic logics of the day. We see it too in the fields of Education, Community Development and in NGOs, whether welcomed or denigrated (e.g. McCafferty 2010, Emejulu & MacLeod 2014, Huang 2020). However, whilst I suggest that there are notable affinities
between Cairn’s approach to revival and logics of the prevailing economic era, this thesis has also highlighted the ways in which Cairn resists such logics. Recall the church leaders’ joking about the Learning Square in chapter one which resisted over-application of a neat economic logic to the domestic sphere. Moreover, the discussion of in/dividual personhood in chapter two highlighted that disciples’ co-being with God flies in the face of the autonomous neoliberal subject. Cairn’s interaction with neoliberal logics is part of the movement’s unique cultural construction and significantly shapes its approach to revival but it is not simply a neoliberal movement. Studies of Christianity and economy are productive and fascinating when they avoid reducing Christian practices to economic reasons. I find it productive to study the intersection between Christianity and economy in terms of “Spiritual Economics” (Rudnyckyi 2010, Bautista 2015), considering the various ideologies, practices and agents of exchange present in a given Christian context.

Emic terms like “contextualization” and “intentionality” have guided my exploration of Cairn. Moreover, many of my conversations with interlocutors involved paraethnographic insight. In line with Cairn’s teaching that a disciple’s life should be propelled by self-reflection (recall the Kairos circle), I found that most members I met dedicated considerable time to thinking about themselves and their organisations ethnographically. To be clear, the analysis in this thesis is my own and not Cairn’s account of itself. But on reflection, I wonder how I might have designed this project to be more collaborative. There are several pitfalls to note in pursuing collaborative ethnography. In this case, one of the most prominent concerns would be the question, “collaborating with whom”? The Cairn movement encapsulates a large number of people with heterogenous theologies, opinions, and experiences of the movement. Collaborative writing would also be complicated by the passage of time which we risk overlooking in ethnographic writing which endeavours to transport readers to the fieldsite. In the years since I conducted this research, the Cairn movement and its personnel have altered significantly. Partnerships have been built and broken. Key figures have left the organisation and new leaders have been recruited, and with the shift in personnel, the movement’s social dynamics and rhetoric too have changed. My fieldwork captured Cairn at a particular moment in its foundation and inevitably, it has since evolved. I am aware therefore, that the position of
co-authors within the studied group would be subject to change. Still, I find that conducting ethnographic research and the writing up process in the same city has highlighted to me the potential of collaboration. I can bump into my interlocutors on the walk to university, and I often meet with friends who were also participants in my research. In these moments, we inevitably talk about how my thesis is progressing and discuss my findings which produces yet more paraethnographic data. Another layer of ethnographic understanding emerges in these interactions. In disseminating this thesis and its contents in various formats, I endeavour to enter into dialogue with my interlocutors, generating further insight and new research questions and identifying fertile areas for future research. This proposition – which I urge other ethnographers to consider - blurs an established author/interlocutor distinction within anthropology. Perhaps “anthropologists at home” can lead the way in harnessing these the blurred boundaries and (like Cairn often seeks to do) render those boundaries productive.

Agency, Authenticity, and an Anthropology of the Good
The Cairn movement places itself as a critique of “traditional” church which is seen to mishandle agency by storing authority in a few ministers, making for a passive congregation. “Traditional” church is accused of holding too closely to conservative, man-made (thereby inauthentic) formalities which fail to empower individual disciples to “step in to” God’s calling on their life. In emic terms, Cairn speaks about “intentionality” as an imperative, a responsibility to act toward the Kingdom. This thesis explores the movement’s emic notion of “intentionality” in a way which complicates anthropological discussions of religious agency which oppose intention and submission. Cairn’s intentionality includes a particular relationship between action and consequence in which human agency is vital and also necessarily constrained. If transformation came about only as the result of human effort, it would relinquish the authority of a spirit-led movement. As Rich put it, he wouldn’t be able to look someone in the eye and say, “this is God’s initiative, not mine.” At the same time, disciples are to actively position themselves as “pitched-forward” (Robbins 2013) to transformation, to work toward and anticipate it. For Cairn, passivity is anathema; an unethical response to God’s calling upon their lives. In sum,
Cairn’s ideal transformation ought to happen both because and in spite of disciples’ agency.

Cairn’s model of agency is bound up with an ethic of authenticity. “Intentionality” is not an indiscriminate impetus to act but an imperative to act in particular ways. Cairn’s model of agency which asks disciples to exercise and submit their agency is underpinned by a logic of good action which is concerned with avoiding distortion of God’s will. Like their model of agency, Cairn’s model of authenticity contains a two-sided relationship to the disciple. On one hand, human involvement poses a threat of distortion. Yet, the disciple is also the seat of authenticity by virtue of their personal relationship with God and unique gifts and callings.

In the introduction to this thesis, I highlighted this core paradox about embracing and eschewing human agency. This is not the only seeming contradiction we have encountered. In fact, this study is peppered with boundary-crossing and tensions. The “push” of embracing disciples’ agency affords a means of momentum towards the goal of revival, while the “pull” of submission ensures that God’s will remains central. This push-pull is seen in the strategic/spiritual nature of Learning Community planning and the skill/gift nature of prophecy. Another way in which Cairn renders tension productive is in challenging boundaries which the traditional church is seen to have maintained: the distinctiveness/relatability of Christians in the public sphere; and the consistency of dress and comportment across church and non-church environments. The unexpectedness of this traversal disrupts post-Christian perspectives of church, supporting Cairn’s opposition to traditional models. These various tensions, I argue, propel the Cairn movement. Cannell (2006) terms Christianity to be an “impossible religion” given its basis on a paradox of earthliness and transcendence, incarnation and resurrection, flesh and spirit. This thesis suggests that what makes Christianity impossible is precisely what makes the Cairn movement possible.

Going beyond the narrow conceptualisation of agency in relation to resistance, Sherry Ortner writes that agency is about the “pursuit of culturally defined projects” (2006: 139). Cairn’s stated project is “radical and tangible” Christian revival and building God’s Kingdom on Earth. Theirs is an aspirational project of
wide-reaching transformation. Through studying how agency is reconfigured in Cairn’s efforts to unite and mobilise a movement towards its goal, this research contributes to the Anthropology of the Good (Robbins 2013). I argue that the study of cultural constructions of agency is instrumental in understanding how people pursue the good, and this thesis puts forward a series of elements which researchers might usefully consider in studying that pursuit: imagination and planning, managing divine and human agency, making agents, ideal social forms and relationships, temporality and spatiality.

Focussing on Cairn’s ideology, architects, and church leaders meant that it was outwith the scope of this thesis to engage with the movement’s intended audiences. Further research is required to consider how Cairn’s model of agency and logic of the good, matches or challenges those of their audiences. Notably, the “good” studied in this thesis pertains to a group of people, most of whom would self-describe as middle class. Middle class experiences are an important area for ethnographic study and have only recently garnered anthropological attention (Carrier & Kalb 2015, Weiss 2019, Capello 2020). My thesis contributes to that growing scholarship. However, as highlighted in chapter six regarding the desire for “restoration”, Cairn’s missional – especially church planting – initiatives often focus on less affluent and more “working class” communities. Arjun Appadurai (2004) has shown that the “capacity to aspire” is not evenly distributed. In concert with agency, the capacity to aspire is also culturally constructed. How then might the good and the pursuit of aspiration differ between Cairn’s missionaries and missionized? And in the act of mission, how might these models of the good interact, shaping and challenging one another? The latter question speaks to agency’s is inevitably entwine ment in power relations which would be explored effectively through ethnographic studies of Christian mission. I suggest that research into social class would also produce deeper understanding about emic notions of “Scottishness”. Among Cairn’s architects, “local contexts” were thought to carry deep cultural significance and to be sites of “belonging”. Yet, Scotland was mainly pertinent as a category of location rather than grounds for ethnic national sentiment. Might “localness” and “Scottishness” carry a different valence among the communities which the movement seeks to restore? Notably, I found that a particularly “strong” Scottish accent is, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, understood
to be associated with less affluent areas of the city. This simple observation calls for anthropological investigation as it points to a potential connection between social class and “Scottishness”. Whilst there exist sociological studies assessing conditions of poverty (e.g. McKendrick et al 2014), and rich scholarly works, documenting Scottish nationalist voting trends (e.g. Rosie 2014), I contend that an ethnographic understanding of this intersection between social class and national identity is needed. I argue that agency and aspiration present an excellent lens through which to explore the lived experiences of social class in Scotland.

Looking at Cairn’s revival efforts through the lens of agency and authenticity offers important insights into how the good is made, and by whom. This thesis has contributed ethnographic insights about how a unifying conception of the good is generated among a disparate movement. As such the findings here about constructing and managing agency in pursuit of the good will be of interest to those seeking to study religious, social, and political movements of various kinds. Cairn is one of several Christian organisations and initiatives looking to reform and revive the Church in Scotland. Similar missional and Kingdom building efforts are found across the UK and worldwide. There is an opportunity therefore, to build a rich comparative ethnographic project with agency as a key focus: An Anthropology of the Christian Good, which explores how Christian groups imagine and pursue their ideal. An Anthropology of the Kingdom, perhaps.
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