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Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh: meaning, motive and definition

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Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2020

Signed Declaration

I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, has i) been composed entirely by myself, ii) been solely the result of my own work, and iii) not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Christopher James Medland

2019-12-30

Abstract

This thesis is a research investigation of the ways in which faith-based organisations (FBOs) engage in social activism with the goal of discovering how UK welfare reforms, including cuts in welfare provision and welfare payments, have impacted the complex relationship between religious organisations and welfare provision in Scotland. The research fills a gap in scholarship as the grassroots character of faith-based social activism in Scotland has not been fully explored since the onset of welfare reforms in the twenty-first century. The research for the thesis is focused on data gathered and analysed from three case studies of FBOs in the City of Edinburgh. Data was gathered from participant observation by the researcher, and from interviews and documentary analysis of FBOs in front-line settings including foodbanks, homelessness prevention, housing provision and street safeguarding patrols. This ethnographic and sociological research reveals how meaning making, motivation, and definitions of theological concepts like charity, compassion and redemption align with and deviate from contemporary secular visions of welfare policy. Analysis of local faith-based activism reveals shortfalls inherent to progressive welfare pluralism in Britain, as well as the religious, ethical and theological forces underwriting the third sector in Scotland.

The first two chapters provide an introduction and literature review, detailing the scant academic attention afforded to the significant public role of FBOs in Scotland. Chapter three describes the ethnographic research design of the fieldwork, inducting a qualitative approach to the research question. Chapter four traces the narratives of local volunteers which lay claim to a distinctive phenomenology of place regarding theologies of welfare work in Scotland. Chapter five develops documentary analysis of public FBO representation compared with how volunteers and staff define their work. Chapter six describes how participatory observation across two years of fieldwork can shed light on the social drivers behind local faith-based activism overseen by national trusts. Chapter seven attends to themes

generated via interviews regarding subjective meaning making processes employed by FBO workers within state-sanctioned services. Chapter eight offers a final analysis suggesting a symbolic typology which illuminates the theological ethics exhibited in the three case studies. The concluding chapter summarises the unique theological qualities encountered among faith-based social activists in Edinburgh and points toward further evolution of the research agenda and design.

Lay Summary

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Welfare pluralism as a result of devolution in the UK encompasses a diverse network of various agencies and organisations. Yet the characteristics of volunteers working within prominent faith-based organisations have not been fully described previously. For this thesis, three case studies in Edinburgh locate significant and distinctive contexts for research in faith-based organisations, asking the data: *In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) provide examples of the complex relationship between theology and welfare in Scotland?* Interpretation of ethnographic fieldwork, one-on-one interviews and documentary analysis suggests answers to the research question through describing themes such as meaning making, subjective motivation, and the often-intimate personal definitions for the work. Front-line settings such as foodbanks, homelessness prevention, housing provision and street safeguarding patrols are all considered. This research shows how current faith-based social activism compares with contemporary secular visions of welfare. In-depth interpretation of local characteristics of faith-based organisations reveals the shortcomings of recent changes to welfare pluralism in Scotland, and the theological responses made through faith-based social activism. This study thus sheds light on the religious, ethical and theological factors that are maintaining welfare provision in Scotland into the twenty-first century.

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Finally, my wife, Bethany, provided the highest level of support and love throughout this season of life, and without whose encouragement I would not have been led to Scotland in the first place. My eldest daughters, Abigail and Ellianna, had just turned ages three and one respectively when my doctoral studies began in late 2015. We also welcomed two more daughters, Lillian and Selah, to the fold during the years it took to complete this project. They have all become accustomed to allowing their father the grace to work alone and unfettered – often for many hours – over the course of more than a few years. For all this and more I bless their wee hearts and dedicate this work to them: the next generation. May they witness the end of these ephemeral tribulations; seeing the Kingdom realised. And in the end, to God be the ultimate praise and thanksgiving, from whom all blessings flow.

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Frequently Used Acronyms

This thesis employs many of the following acronyms for the sake of brevity, although this list is not exhaustive. Chapters include indications of their use (e.g. “Ascension Trust will be henceforth AT,” and so on) within the main body of the text, where applicable.

AT: *Ascension Trust*

BCT: *Bethany Christian Trust*

CAQDAS: *Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software*

DWP: *Department for Work and Pensions*

EFP: *Edinburgh Food Project*

ENWF: *Edinburgh Northwest Foodbank*

ESP: *Edinburgh Street Pastors*

FBO(s): *Faith-based Organisation(s)*

PO: *Participant Observation*

SP(s): *Street Pastor(s)*

SSI: *Semi-structured Interviews*

TSO(s): *Third Sector Organisation(s)*

TT: *Trussell Trust*

UC: *Universal Credit*

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Faith-based social activism is an integral part of welfare pluralism in Scotland, as it is UK-wide. This thesis analyses themes related to the meanings, motives, and definitions expressed by volunteers and staff across three original case studies of faith-based organisations (FBOs) actively working in Edinburgh. The results suggest that in the context of FBOs working in localized settings, *diverse forms of personal and symbolic meaning-making underwrite faith-based social activism within voluntary organizations*. Experiences from the fieldwork, interviews, and documentary analysis are described, carefully considering the perspective of FBO volunteers, paid workers, managerial staff, and those in leadership roles. The local work of FBOs takes shape within a milieu that often involves state agencies and national trusts as stakeholders, churches as supporters, and concerned citizens as volunteers. All actors are thus determiners of how aid and care are provided to clients. This process occurs in a wide array of service contexts, e.g. foodbanks, homeless aid/prevention, at risk housing provisions and street safeguarding patrols. While some recent developments in third-sector bureaucracy can be taken as examples of top-down corporate policy structure (and are sometimes legitimated as such by FBOs), the implications of how these initiatives materialise in a local Scottish context have not been fully explored. The results of this ethnographic and sociological research in Edinburgh suggest themes arising from staff and volunteers' expressions, which sometimes align but also often deviate from official organisational policy. In the recent era of economic austerity, exploring local faith-based social activism in practice reveals much about the plural nature of welfare provision in Britain, as well as the characteristics of the people and organisations which contribute in innumerable ways to the third sector in Scotland.

This thesis also enquires into *what kind of work* occurs in three local faith-based organisations in Edinburgh, Scotland. While FBOs continually expand across the UK, and as many outlets (scholarly or otherwise) offer

commentary on the recipients of these services, little is known about the people who comprise the main cohort of those involved in the work. Far beyond the numbers of professional staff and managerial personnel, volunteers comprise a greater majority of those working within FBOs across the UK. These conditions have given rise to a phenomenon of expansive voluntary provision of social services, a process often referred to as “welfare pluralism” since the advent of contemporary austerity policies in Britain during the early eighties (Beresford and Croft 1983).

Encountering street level poverty in Edinburgh is a commonplace occurrence, as is experiencing the many symptoms of a post-industrial society laden with the complexities of social policy that accompany the current economic climate. Better understandings of the experiences of others who are affected by the injustices of the modern welfare state and its acquiescent institutions and agencies is something required of meaningful ‘action research’ (E. Graham 2013). Through the concept of what ethicist Sam Wells refers to as theologically *being-with*, as opposed to more secular and paternalistic approaches to poverty which are considered *being-for* the poor (Wells 2015a), ethnography can help shed light on why faith-based activism has become so prominent.

Research question

This research has as its object of study the experience of labour in voluntary agencies in Edinburgh, with three faith-based organisations each serving as an independent case study. Qualitative analysis helps in the discovery of the extent to which motivation, definition, and meanings (purpose; *telos*) are expressed by those involved in providing voluntary labour. Interpretation of these phenomena occurs in the theoretical context of symbolic meaning-making among these organisations. This interpretive procedure considers, for instance, how these expressions relate to the religious preferences of individuals. Therefore, the primary question to which this research suggests an answer is: *In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) provide examples of relationship between theology and welfare in Scotland? To*

suggest an answer, this thesis explores symbolic meanings which, in turn, underwrite diverse elements of faith for those involved in these ventures. The part I have personally played as a participant observer within each organisation allows for subjective reflexivity and sensitivity to the role of religion in these cultural settings. My analysis also contextualises the phenomenon of faith-based social activism in a wider sense across Scotland. Further interpretation traces how this process takes shape within the United Kingdom's spectrum of FBO and third sector responses to welfare pluralism and, by extension, to social and economic austerity policies affecting the situation in Scotland.

Research design in brief

In the local context of the city of Edinburgh, three specific organisations were selected for this study because each represents a distinct social initiative within the umbrella of faith-based organising. One provides a food bank service, another orchestrates official community safeguarding patrols, while the third aims to prevent street living and to maintain homeless shelters. All three provide open environments for volunteers and staff to assign their own personal meanings to the work being done, a feature of the work which directly contributes to the moral value and effectiveness of the aid being provided. Limiting the inquiry of the multiple case study to the Edinburgh context allows for a granular picture of the work of volunteers to emerge within the larger arena of national trusts and organisations which oversee the local labour.

These organisations address different social and urban problems. The three organisations also differ in how they provide aid, and it is the aim of the research to expose and analyse the different symbolic meanings that may be revealed by these differences in setting and approach to their practical operations. The nuances and deviations which exist between organisational-level vision and the personal expressions that volunteers attach to their actions are evaluated in my research using in-depth interview data, detailed ethnographic observations, and documentary analysis of materials released

by the organisations themselves during the time period of the fieldwork (2016-18). One other angle of approach that I propose in the data analysis is to investigate how and whether there is anything distinctive – relative to secular organisations – in the ways in which these FBOs engage in contemporary social activism. This angle of approach is particularly relevant to theoretical questions about the emergence of what some call a ‘post-secular’ social context in contemporary Europe (Blond 1998; Habermas 2008b).

From the beginning of 2016 until the summer of 2018 I volunteered with foodbanks (Trussell Trust/Edinburgh Food Project), homeless shelters and homelessness prevention services (Bethany Christian Trust), as well as safeguarding services that care for people living and working on the streets of Edinburgh (Ascension Trust/Edinburgh Street Pastors). This involved over two years of participant observation and ethnographic study and included semi structured interviews with seventeen individuals, in addition to documentary analysis of official press releases and other literatures produced by these organisations. Analysis and interpretation focus in part (but not entirely) on comparing the characteristics of the different case studies through an interpretivist lens (Geertz 1973a) while also employing *some* of the qualitative approaches to analysis rooted in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The rationale behind this dual analytical approach is that the analysis of data generated from within each of the three organisations form unique case studies. The logic of comparing expressions generated by the volunteers and staff that comprise these organisational contexts suggests findings that detail how individuals in organisations generate new symbolic meaning for faith-based social activism. Comparing how volunteers and staff engage in activism within each context shows not only how meaning making is represented, but also reveals what is involved in the act of providing faith-based social services.

Thesis structure

This thesis manuscript proceeds broadly along the following trajectory. Chapter two comprises a literature review showing how an abundance of themes, arising from both new and old sources, has emerged in recent literature regarding faith-based responses to urban problems in the United Kingdom. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the diminished status of formerly nationalised state welfare services in the UK, very little literature directly addresses the nature of faith-based activism in Scotland. Rather than attempt to synthesise all that could be found, only one area may be examined: those texts relevant to the Scottish context. For the purpose of answering the research question this will include only those sources which are relevant to faith-based social activism in Britain and the context of Scotland in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This chapter also details the lack of information regarding Scottish faith-based social activism and argues for the originality of ethnographic, multiple case studies focussed on the Edinburgh context as a means of approaching this scholarly need.

Chapter three describes the methodology of applying a qualitative framework to the study's research design and how this approach suggests answers to the problem of understanding volunteers' activism in faith-based organisations. In the local context of Edinburgh, rationale is given for the three organisations studied as each one holds a prominent welfare service role. To this effect, all represent different social justice initiatives within the umbrella of faith-based organising: one provides a food bank service, another orchestrates official community safeguarding patrols, while another aims to prevent street living and to maintain homeless shelters.

The fourth chapter of this thesis provides evidence and 'thick description' (Geertz 1973b) of the environments within local Edinburgh FBOs with a particular focus on how volunteers and staff assign 'personal meanings' to the work. Examples from narratives and interviews are given that demonstrate how this process directly influences the morality, ethics and material effectiveness of the aid being provided. Focus is placed on the

contextual characteristics of providing welfare services in unique case of Edinburgh.

Chapter five outlines how faith-based organisations (FBOs) serve as special platforms for social justice activism, allowing for a diversity of definitions for faith-based social activism to emerge naturally. As such, they provide unique examples of bureaucratised work cultures being brought into tandem with procedural welfare pluralism in Scotland.

Chapter six testifies of experiences and stories from the ethnographic fieldwork and carefully considers the perspectives of volunteers, paid workers, managerial staff, and those in leadership roles. Narratives, lived experiences and documentary evidence help bring into focus the local work and visionary hopes of FBOs as they take shape within a milieu of private and public agencies. The procedural system of devolved welfare pluralism often involves national trusts as stakeholders, thus bringing the bureaucratic structure full-circle and back into a nation-wide context, without official government involvement.

The seventh chapter illustrates how organisations address different ethical, social and urban problems (e.g. housing shortages; food poverty; national benefits reform and reductions, etc), evidencing how all three organisations also naturally differ in how they provide aid, projecting symbolic meanings onto the work (e.g. embodying the 'good Samaritan' or the archetypal 'stranger' from biblical texts like the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25). Exploring faith-based organisations as contributing to these unique forms of contemporary social justice activism suggests that meaning-making is an integral part of faith-based social activism. The symbols intrinsic to faith-based organisations can be employed as rich and multifaceted practical theologies of social activism.

Chapter eight establishes what is lacking in public policy discourse surrounding welfare pluralism in Scotland. The argument progresses towards an interpretation of the multiple-case study that suggests a typology of faith-

based social activism. While this is specific to organisations active in Edinburgh, it does show how the ethos of the organisations become malleable, able to be morphed into adequate symbols that can motivate activism.

The concluding chapter presents possibilities for the further progression of the research, both in theoretical as well as practical terms. This research agenda aims to develop even further as theology informed by activism in reality.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Faith-based approaches to social activism, social justice and poverty, and prevailing conceptions of welfare pluralism in the twenty-first century are well represented in existing scholarly literature. Yet there is a great diversity in disciplinary approaches. An all-encompassing review of the fields of academic research on welfare policy and the third sector, religion and secularisation, as well as prevailing economic attitudes is not an objective here. What this chapter provides is a response to the relevant literature available which maps out texts essential for understanding the current state of the discussion on FBOs and welfare pluralism in the UK. It also traces a broad overview of associated phenomena including Scotland-specific source texts (where they exist) as a representation of what is currently available and relevant to the Edinburgh context.

Formative texts are understood to be spread between disciplinary areas as various types of scholars have grappled with welfare pluralism and faith-based responses to it. Beginning in the period of general British devolution from 1997 onwards, including the re-created Scottish Parliament as initiated by the Scotland Act of 1998,¹ devolution has afforded more powers to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, correlating to the time frame under inquiry. Relevant literature also extends beyond the British context, where the subject matter is related, either by discipline, methodology, or proximity to wider areas of enquiry.

Central texts

This thesis develops upon concepts found in the work of scholars such as Luke Bretherton in *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (2010), Michael Banner in *The Ethics of Everyday Life* (2014), and Sam Wells in *A Nazareth Manifesto* (2015a). From these scholarly voices which see traditional religion

¹ The original Scottish Parliament, a different institution than the modern inception, ceased to function after the Union of the Crowns in 1707.

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh as the starting point for meaning in social justice activism, a general framework also extends towards the ethics of pluralistic welfare policy.

A second strand in the literature which has shaped this thesis is the social scientific study of religion and altruism and their relationship to wider social trends. In this approach symbolic meaning is located within materialist endeavours such as the generation of social capital in modern industrial societies. Seminal texts in this approach include Jeffrey Stout's *Blessed are the Organized* (2010), David Sloan Wilson's *Does Altruism Exist?* (2015), and Chris Renwick's *Bread for All* (2017).

By outlining the importance of the various fields represented this chapter shows how this thesis contributes to academic discourse. While many important composite volumes have recently contributed to academic and public understandings of faith-based responses to poverty,² few singular works take up the topic on a regional level while extending beyond the conventional case study format. This thesis employs case studies and analysis into an interpretive account of over two years of fieldwork in Edinburgh. Alongside the works cited above, this thesis presents findings and reflections to an interdisciplinary audience.

State of the literature

Across the UK welfare services are being provided by third sector organisations that are not under the direct control of publicly-funded agencies (Chaney 2014). Since the turn of the millennium, large-scale volunteer mobilisation has coincided with the transitional context of post-devolutionary British policy (Chaney and Wincott 2014). Third sector services have since experienced a marked increase in local welfare responsibility. This has included faith-based organisations taking on a substantial portion of services like food banks and homeless shelters on a national scale (S. Osborne

² See M. Brown et al. 2014; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2004; Sagovsky and McGrail 2015; Hills, Sefton, and Stewart 2009; Clode, Parker, and Etherington 1987; Beaumont and Cloke 2012; Cloke, Beaumont, and Williams 2013; Pears 2016; Pears and Cloke 2016; Ganzevoort, Brouwer, and Miller-McLemore 2013; Molendijk, Beaumont, and Jedan 2010).

2005). In some cases, these efforts are attributed to religious traits like charitability, resulting in varieties of non-conformist civic engagement and paternalistic neighbourliness (C. Baker 2013). These kinds of prevailing conceptions are already well represented in theories of social capital (Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2004; Putnam and Campbell 2012).

Certain sections of recent scholarship have emerged which describe how faith-based organisations provide aid in the competitive environment of pluralistic welfare services in the twenty-first century. Much research has been generated from various disciplinary approaches (Cloke, Thomas, and Williams 2012; Milbourne and Cushman 2012; O'Shea, Darcy, and Leocnard 2007; Milbourne 2009). Where some sociologists see the rise of faith-based organisations representing ongoing secularisation (Casanova 1994), other scholars are careful not to over-claim religious involvement in civil society, while still acknowledging its unique essence (Stout 2010). In the UK, faith-based organisations are growing within the voluntary sector, notwithstanding prevailing notions of the increasing secularity of British society (C. Brown 1997; Bruce 1995; 2002; 2011).

Yet reductionist evaluations of charitability do not fully account for how faith-based organisations are mobilised effectively over time. Even as the third sector has been negatively affected by recent economic upheavals and public policy shifts in the UK, Scottish organisations have experienced ongoing development and increased expansion over-against government cuts (Osborne, 2012).

Current trends in academic literature on faith-based activism in Britain tend to focus on religious charitability, theories of social capital, the decline of the welfare state, the bureaucratisation of social services, and structural unemployment. These loose categories contain a variety of thought and analysis. This thesis demonstrates some of the broad themes already found in the literature referenced in this chapter, as Scottish phenomena in particular are explored at the micro level in subsequent chapters.

History and economics of welfare

Christians have a long history of providing social care within the United Kingdom. Given the effects of secularisation in the second half of the twentieth century, the relevance of religious approaches to social problems has somewhat waned (D. Martin 2005a; 2008; Gill 1999). The last quarter of the twentieth century in particular saw the established Church of England decline in its power at a previously unforeseen rate (A. Brown and Woodhead 2016). Such shifts seem to align with normative secularisation theory, as discussed at length in the following section.

Regarding the origins of the contemporary welfare state, British historian Chris Renwick writes that,

Rather than a rejection of capitalism and industrialization, the welfare state – understood not simply as cash benefits but, as Beveridge and his contemporaries saw it, a general approach to shaping people’s social environment – was intended to be a tool for social and economic progress. (Renwick 2017, 7)

To this end, the work of politician and social reformer William Beveridge was pivotal in the creation of the British welfare state. Heavily influenced by the the outcome of the Malvern conference of 1941 and the ideas of William Temple, Beveridge’s vision entwined theological reason as well as social welfare concern. As Renwick states, “*Social Insurance and Allied Services*, usually known simply as the Beveridge Report, made him synonymous with the welfare state in popular culture” (Renwick 2017, 5). Published in 1943, the effect of this public policy work by Beveridge, alongside the foundations laid prior by Joseph Rowntree, R.H. Tawney and others began a process resulting in Prime Minister Clement Attlee’s post world war two Labour government establishing a host of nationalisation policies and welfare reform programmes which largely continued into the fifties and sixties.

In the time since these initial foundations were established across the UK a wide variety of community services are now being provided by third

sector organisations (TSOs) not under the direct control of the state.³ This historical reality ties the contemporary work of faith-based social activism with the social reform begun by concerned Christian activists in the first half of the twentieth century, which saw the nationalisation efforts of the fledgling welfare state largely secularise in the decades after the second world war. Today, this same work is largely carried out by volunteers, but many organisations also support paid labourers, managers, and professional staff. Since the turn of the millennium, large scale TSO mobilisation has coincided with the transitional context of post-devolutionary British policy (Chaney and Wincott 2014). Voluntary provision as such has returned to fill the gaps created by austerity, local council cuts, and sanctions. In this milieu of pluralistic welfare services, the third sector, also referred to as the ‘voluntary,’ ‘civic,’ ‘social’ sector,⁴ has accordingly seen a marked increase in local social welfare responsibility. This has included faith-based organisations (FBOs) taking on the delivery of a large portion of these services. Labour MP Stephen Timms stated in 2016 that, “There is undoubtedly a new movement of faith-based social activism in Britain today.” He also speculated that it would be impossible to meet the needs of people relying on foodbanks without the efforts of faith groups (Wyatt 2016). What follows below is a brief description of the significance of FBOs in the current British context and rationale for further study into this subject area in Scotland.

The new prominence of FBOs and current denationalising trends in public registers are the direct impact of the twenty-first century transition to third sector provision of welfare services. What is left today of the public sector in the UK is being further reduced by extensive government cuts, such as universal credit and the consolidation of former benefits programmes. Under very conservative economic assumptions, the need for public welfare

³ The Scottish Government defines the third sector as: “comprising community groups, voluntary organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and individual volunteers – [it] has an important role in helping the Scottish Government achieve its purpose of creating a more successful country with opportunities for all to flourish, through achieving sustainable economic growth” (Scottish Government 2005).

⁴ These are also sometimes referred to as “voluntary community organisations” or VCOs (S. Osborne 2005).

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh provision should have evaporated by now if strict free market principles could be enforced bureaucratically. This is assumed, in part, because trickle-down economics are understood as a normative process in an idealised scenario of small government held by some macro-economic theorists (Friedman 1962). Yet at the close of the twentieth century this has not materialised in reality (Quiggin 2010). A narrow understanding of macro-economics is writ large in 'rational choice theory' as proposed by some social scientists,⁵ and in particular is understood as accurate within a variant of behavioural economic "prospect theory" proposed by psychologist Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 263). Aside from theoretical economics, government funding for public services in general has been greatly reduced in what has been officially called "the age of austerity" by former Prime Minister David Cameron (Cameron 2010). One result of this has been the creation of a competitive third sector social services economy (Jenkins 2005).

Yet this does not appear to be the end of the story for the third sector in the UK, or for the place of FBOs within the Scottish context. On the contrary, it has also been proposed that holistic models of resistance can be embodied within third sector organising, mitigating what has been termed "mission shift" in both an ecclesial and secular sense.⁶ Whether or not it is normative for third sector organisations to embrace current socio-economic market logic cannot be confirmed, yet it is possible to look towards FBOs for symbolic meanings that diverge from the metanarrative of liberal economics currently guiding many of the developments in the voluntary sector.⁷

Scotland under austerity

In a monograph-length study of the New Labour government's relations with Scotland after devolution, John Stewart draws out numerous examples

⁵ Proponents of rational choice theory tend to define human motivation in terms of the cause and effect derived from 'beneficial' rewards: if an action results in a perceived 'good' then people will naturally (rationally) desire to repeat the action and attain more of the good(s).

⁶ "Mission shift" is said to occur in this context when third sector organisations lose their initial social mission (Darby 2016).

⁷ Two important works which have discussed the ethical issues of citizen engagement in a western context are Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (2010) and Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (2010).

showing the attributes of poverty in Scotland. Tracing the historical situation in which the new Scottish government inherited a twenty-year build-up of national economic inequality since 1979, Stewart analyses empirical evidence in order to claim that the UK – for the first time since the end of WWII – had become “one of the most unequal societies in the western world” (Stewart 2004, 48). Scotland was particularly affected towards the end of the twentieth century, although in terms of GDP per capita Scotland actually ranked higher than Northern Ireland and Wales. Stewart cites a Scotland-wide study of GDP per capita by Peat and Boyle which argues, “in 1977, the ‘gap between the richest and poorest region was 18 per cent. By 1995 it had leapt to 62 percent” (Stewart 2004, 48; Peat and Boyle 1999, 8–12; 56). The only European Union countries at the time which had a greater differential between rich and poor areas were Portugal and Spain. Factors like these show in a broad sense the root of social problems and demonstrate how gaps in the system have opened up which the third sector and FBOs have attempted to fill through voluntary labour.

In the media

Establishment news media outlets have predicted that the future of Scottish third sector funding is not sustainable for the long-term stability of services provided by, for example, homeless shelters. Many reports question whether the government has been proactive in this area at all. On one hand, darker forecasts are proclaimed in recent statements like these:

Next year, further UK government changes to the way temporary accommodation is funded will see it linked to the Local Housing Allowance, leading to a significant reduction in the money local authorities receive to pay for temporary accommodation. The Scottish Government has predicted this could lead to a £25m shortfall (Cardwell 2016).

While on the other hand, the prospect of attaining greater authority over public funds is something possibly on the horizon for the Scottish government:

New welfare powers coming to Scotland represent an important – if limited – opportunity to begin the creation of a more humane welfare system. Charities dealing with people living at the sharp end of benefit cuts and punitive sanctions say the Scottish Parliament must use every opportunity to create a better system than that laid down by Westminster (G. Martin 2016b).

Furthermore,

Once fully devolved, these powers will account for around £2.7 billion, or 15% of the total Scottish benefit bill (G. Martin 2016a).

These public understandings of further devolution of power to Scottish authorities arose after charities themselves tried in 2015 to bring about full welfare devolution, fearing future “draconian reforms” brought on by the UK government at the time (Armour 2015). Prior to the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014, some Scottish third sector sources expressed doubts as to whether the UK government could properly devolve powers in the first place. Many favoured the proposed independent Scotland as a potentially more consistent source of support for the third sector (S. Smith 2014). Whether or not further devolution will continue in Scotland remains to be seen,⁸ as does the prospect of Scottish independence. Devolution may become further complicated if the possibility of Scottish independence continues to be exacerbated by the outcome of the 2016 EU ‘Brexit’ referendum, as economic relations remain in a state of flux between Britain, the Continent, and the world. The current energy evidenced by voluntary involvement in FBOs is thus being relied upon to absorb these fluctuations, which raises issues such as whether FBO voluntarism will be able to resist national level trends, and if it has sustainability into the future. Answers in the current literature are not forthcoming, and the thrust of this thesis aims to address this lacking.

⁸ That is, after a negotiated exit from the EU and potential future sanctions from the EEA/common market.

Sociological data on Scotland

Despite the amount of responsibility that FBOs have taken on across the UK, the current place of religion in Scottish society should not be exaggerated. While some sociologists who are more sympathetic to the place of religion in British culture prefer to argue for an 'ebb and flow' image of secularisation, others do not share this interpretation and instead perceive a more linear and progressive phenomenon. Sociologist Grace Davie has claimed that in the UK:

The overall pattern of religious life is changing. For it appears that more and more people within British society want to believe but do not want to involve themselves in religious practice. In other words, some aspects of working-class religious behaviour (notably the lack of regular church attendance) – traditionally thought of as exceptions to the rule – are increasingly becoming the normative pattern in our society (Davie 2007, 107).

Other sociologists favouring the latter understanding of religion expressed in the above quotation, such as Steve Bruce, have remained sceptical to a 'changing face of religion.' Approaches like his diagnose twenty-first century religion in terms of endemic decline, within mainstream secularization theory in which religious feeling is simply nostalgia.⁹ Bruce writes on Scottish contexts in several works, and critically describes the cultural and historical consciousness left by the Kirk's legacy:

[...] consider the Kirk in Scottish perceptions of Scottishness. That it was one of the few Scottish institutions left after the Union of Scotland and England made it a cornerstone of Scottishness, but it was also held to exemplify particularly Scottish virtues: a little stuffy, but learned and democratic. For those two reasons it has a place in the affections of very many Scots who never feel moved to occupy its pews (Bruce 1995, 45).

⁹ In this view, secularisation is traced from the Protestant Reformation through to the relativism of the twentieth century and is seen as an irreversible result of modernisation (Bruce 2002, 1–44; 2011). Essentially for Bruce and the sociological tradition he defends, modernity itself is an irreversible causal agent in the secularisation of the West, and by extension in rest of the industrialised world. He cites sociologists such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Peter Berger and Brian Wilson in this regard. He also draws up a helpful chart demonstrating a conceptual evolution of secularisation, synthesizing important paradigmatic areas developed by other sociologists (Bruce 2002, 4).

Even as religion remains an aspect of social life after the secularising effects of late modernisation and post-industrialisation it does not retain the legitimacy of its prior institutional form (Habermas 2008b). As Bruce shows, the traditional sectarian characteristics of the Scottish denominations were eventually disturbed by larger historical processes. Following the progressive relationship observed by sociologists within the unilateral processes of secularisation and modernisation, he argues that:

From the early nineteenth century, the decline in the number of believers, the growth of the principle of religious freedom and the success of schisms from the national churches have made the church type of religion impossible and the Kirk and the Church of England (and their counterparts elsewhere) have had to scale down their self-estimates and accept that they are just one among a number of equally legitimate bodies (Bruce 2014a, 128).

Bruce calls attention to the fact that Scotland, notwithstanding its cultural and geographical highland vs. lowland divide, secularised rapidly over the twentieth century.

Historian Callum Brown echoes this same historical decline of religion in Scotland. Referring as far back as the 1707 Act of Union, he claims that the necessary religious pluralism required in the political reality of those turbulent and industrialising times greatly eroded the distinctiveness of Scottish Presbyterianism and the power of the established church. This resulted in a weakening of sectarian differentiation over-against more generic forms of “British Christianity” (C. Brown 1997, 5–6; 187–88). According to Steve Bruce, what was once considered sacrosanct in Scotland – namely the devout Protestantism of strict Calvinist sects – is today perpetually engaged in the irresistible process of secularisation:

The Calvinist Presbyterians of the highlands and islands have long been the butt of lowland jokes but those jokes used to be gentle and contained a hint of admiration for those who reminded us of our grandparents. Not any more [sic.]. (Bruce 2014a, 131)

Among other studies by contemporary social scientists, there remains much room for debate. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead's work represents an alternative interpretation of the secularisation of Britain, arguing that instead of linear secularisation following industrialisation and modernisation, there has instead been a 'revolutionary' turn to spirituality (Heelas and Woodhead 2004).

One interpretive problem within secularisation theory is how these kinds of realities might be nuanced to include developments beyond statistical denominational decline. One example of this kind of scholarly effort is found in Linda Woodhead's 2016 British Academy lecture where she points out that recent YouGov poll results show "[...] the emerging outlines of a new, post-Protestant, moral paradigm" (Woodhead 2016). She found that individuals between 2001-2011 Scotland evidenced higher survey responses indicating "no religion" (44%; +11%) than in England and Wales (32%; +9%). Regarding these kinds of social processes, Talal Asad notes that "even in modern secular societies the place of religion varies" and offers three typological categories for the current social role of religion: (1) the centralised 'French' system (secular government *and* citizens), (2) the established church in the UK (secular citizens *but non-secular government*), and (3) the religious populism of the USA (secular government *but non-secular citizens*) (Asad 2003, 5). My own research suggests that the above categories and theories – while very useful for generic understandings – are (at least) called into question by the complex social nature of contemporary forms of faith-based activism. For the purposes of this thesis, though, the arguments contained are limited to the context found in Edinburgh, Scotland.

From this brief survey of the social study of British religion in the twentieth century, it would be pre-emptive to categorise Scottish society into any of the typological categories given above. In this sense, the Scottish context is distinct and significant, warranting closer analyses of these effects of secularisation. One area where my research suggests that secularisation is not unfolding as assumed is in the realm of faith-based social activism, for which Edinburgh provides a rich context for research.

Anthropological approaches

As the third sector and FBOs have gained prominence in welfare provision, scholarship on the third sector, in general, has increased in volume. While definitions of the third sector have been outlined in many sources, precise classification has been said to amount to a semantic “quagmire.” Perhaps at best, the third sector can be perceived as a “kaleidoscope” of social initiatives converging on institutions that are “[...] variously referred to as civil society or the non-profit, the non-governmental, the voluntary, the independent, the charitable, the people’s, the philanthropic, the associational” (Najam 2013). While generically categorised as third sector, what then does it mean to be a ‘faith-based’ organisation in Britain, and by extension, in Scotland? It is difficult to establish just how central matters of faith really are to FBOs, given the complexities that are present within the diversity of large organisations (Lofland 1996). Although qualitatively different, some American FBOs can be seen as very broadly missional,

[...]in the manner in which they relate to clients (service religiosity), in the manner in which staff are hired and relate to one another (staff religiosity), and in the public face that organizations present (organizational religiosity). (Ebaugh, Saltzman, and Pipes 2006, 2269–70)

That is, FBOs often do not hold to a strict doctrinal position when providing social welfare. The article quoted here suggests that the individual religiosity of members is not qualitatively the same thing as the level of religiosity represented from an organisational perspective, by drawing on a large sample of surveys. Other recent examples in academic literature include both critical and sympathetic perspectives (with a wide spectrum represented in between) on FBOs worldwide. Some researchers take recent developments to suggest a possible decline in “instrumentalist” views of FBOs, especially in areas like international development studies (Jones and Petersen 2013, 44). It has been normative through the latter half of the twentieth century to view religion and its associated forms of social activism in a reductionist manner. This can be seen as an effect of the dominant secularisation and modernisation theories held to by many social scientists (Jones and Petersen

2013, 35). A major question today for policy makers concerns whether it is ultimately permissible for faith groups to be legally entitled to provide public services in a pluralistic third sector (McCabe and et al. 2016; Lyons 2001).¹⁰

Even where welfare provision is failing and the need for provision is high, there are extremist voices within academia which denounce religious aid as merely a subversive form of proselytization. In a study of evangelical faith-based social activists in Tennessee, one observer interpreted that:

when they do engage in social outreach, their sensitivity to the dynamics of social power often diminishes in the face of stronger cultural prejudices and religious aspirations. Their prejudices may be expressed as suspicion toward charity recipients, and their aspirations include the desire to embody "active and sacrificial compassion," a romanticized ideal of Christian charity based on a belief in the possibility of creating profound interpersonal bonds that transcend social boundaries and status hierarchies. (Elisha 2012, 156)

While this may be reflective of the current American milieu of FBOs, the volunteers I worked with cannot be accurately described only as 'conservative evangelicals' (although some are) and they are most certainly not from the southern United States. Yet the findings of the study cited above are worth careful consideration here, especially the concept of "active and sacrificial compassion." For example, one might inquire as to whether this form of paternalistic charity is comparatively present inside Scottish FBOs – and if not, then what sorts of drivers are represented instead? This thesis develops answer to this question and others arising from the meanings, motives and definitions encountered after spending over two years engaged in the same work as a participant observer (i.e. not as an objective 'other').

While FBOs have become almost seamlessly integrated into the third sector landscape in the UK – and Scotland is no exception here – the faith-rooted aspects of these organisations have not necessarily been the most

¹⁰ This status is, again, different in many ways from social enterprises, which appear much closer to the private sector, yet still fall within the third sector (e.g. some forms of cooperative enterprise).

prominent concern among volunteers mobilised. It thus follows that by evaluating to what extent faith is involved in these social initiatives this brings into question the relationships and influences between individuals, the organisations in which they work and serve, and the wider society in which persons and groups are contextualised. An important recent article by an Edinburgh-based researcher states that:

there has as yet been little in the way of empirical examination of the difference that a religious affiliation or heritage makes to what is provided; even less regarding how faith-based programmes are experienced by beneficiaries” (Johnsen 2014, 414)

This thesis in part addresses the above statement as holding potential for major research inquiry, while the latter concern expressed regarding clients is instead placed on the workers in the charities themselves in the case studies described in subsequent chapters.

Altruism

Volunteers in FBOs like those described above are everyday members of a wider society, and as such their social activism can be explained away in sociobiological terms as determined by an instinctive human altruism for others (Wilson 2015). Human co-operation clearly serves an evolutionary purpose which aided more cohesive groups throughout prehistoric times in surviving over less unified rival groups. This is known to biologists as “multi-level selection theory,” a recent development in evolutionary theories of natural selection (Wilson 2011; 1997). David Sloan Wilson is known for stating, along with the eminent socio-biologist Edward O. Wilson, that “Selfishness beats altruism within groups. Altruistic groups beat selfish groups. Everything else is commentary” (Wilson and Wilson 2007, 345). A crowning achievement within human evolution, David Sloan Wilson argues, can be understood from the work of Nobel prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom. Her research demonstrates that, under certain conditions, it is possible for organisations to successfully resist the privatisation of “common pool resources” (e.g., groundwater and aquifers), which can instead be

governed co-operatively. This leads to the benefit of collective groups of people who depend on these resources, not necessarily in the form of shareholder profits, but for sustenance and quality of life for all stakeholders (Ostrom 1990). Perhaps most importantly, Ostrom's work reveals that through commons governance the potential for institutions to collectively act in order to achieve common ends is possible today (Ostrom 2010; Ostrom et al. 2012; Ostrom 2005). Furthermore, Wilson ultimately sees human evolution as not only socio-biologically determined but also as involving a degree of meaning and choice on the part of the individuals involved: in other words, humans still choose how or why co-operation occurs (Wilson, Ostrom, and Cox 2013). In a naturalistic sense, religion ultimately plays a role in this process as well. Sociologically, there is far more for interpretation than only critique and evaluation of current economic woes under the hegemony of modern bureaucracy. Thus the 'common good' can instead occur in tandem between secular altruism and charitable religion in what has come to be known as the "public square."

Social theorist Jürgen Habermas locates the origin of the public square in the mercantile developments of capitalism which swept through European economies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Habermas 1989, 14–15). He thus sees late twentieth century democracy as a missed opportunity on two fronts: modern nation-states failed to uphold the rational secular principles of an enlightened public square (unmediated discourse among equals) while also failed to allow religion a proper (albeit, subordinate) place within it (Habermas 2008a). More recent work by ethicist Jeffrey Stout questions the ability of secular reason to arbitrarily appropriate religious voices within the contemporary milieu of western political practice. He instead sees that religious voices in the twenty-first century must be granted equality of reason alongside modern secularism (Stout 2001). It is therefore worth considering what is meant by religiously associated volunteer-activists when they voice their concerns regarding bureaucratic trends in welfare provision.

Bureaucracy

Anthropologist David Graeber has noticed a stark decline in the actual use of the word “bureaucracy” occurring after 1973 in English language books when compared with available data on publications between 1850-2000. His analysis of the contemporary situation resonates with the basic concerns expressed by the foodbank workers I have encountered (and outline in subsequent chapters) when he states that,

in the late twentieth century [...] the less fortunate spent ever more hours of their day trying to jump through the increasingly elaborate hoops required to gain access to dwindling social services.” (Graeber 2015, 4)

He goes on to argue that the overall acceptance of bureaucracy in post-welfare states can be described as a form of marketization, something present across much of the third sector:

As the language of antibureaucratic individualism has been adopted, with increasing ferocity, by the Right, which insists on “market solutions” to every social problem, the mainstream Left has increasingly reduced itself to fighting a kind of pathetic rearguard action, trying to salvage remnants of the old welfare state (Graeber 2015, 5–6)

Graeber’s criticisms are levelled at both sides of a mostly neoliberal political spectrum. In doing so he identifies one of the paradoxes of liberalism as ‘the iron law’:

government policies intending to reduce government interference in the economy actually end up producing more regulations, more bureaucrats, and more police [...] The Iron Law of Liberalism states that any market reform, and government initiative intended to reduce red tape and promote market forces will have the ultimate effect of increasing the total number of regulations, the total amount of paperwork, and the total number of bureaucrats the government employs. (Graeber 2015, 10)

Graeber links his critique to that of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim, who was an early exponent of the ills that would befall modern humanity within the bureaucratization of modern life (Durkheim 1984, 149–50).

Graeber also finds common ground in the early sociological critiques of bureaucratisation by German theorist Max Weber (Max Weber 2009, 196–97).

Where Durkheim saw government inhabiting the former place of religion in a generic sense, Weber instead had in mind a sociology of bureaucratization that hinged directly upon traits of European Christendom. This also involved the eventual self-dismantling of Church power structures as a result of secularizing processes (Weber 2012). Thus, collective consciousness is slowly broken down as social bonds and relations take on increasingly prosaic and economically rationalised meaning(s). Nonetheless, Bryan S. Turner argues that Weber indeed held a positive view of modern citizenship under three main conditions: “the autonomy of the city, the universality of faith and the stability of rational law” (Turner 1994, 137). Weberian pessimism, alternatively, had to do with the bureaucratizing structures which undergirded the individual citizen’s ability for political representation. Turner refers to this tendency as the “iron law of oligarchy”:

The mass party democracy would eventually undermine the possibility of adequate representation and political accountability. [...] In short, Weber’s pessimistic view emerged firstly from his analysis that the problem of the bureaucratization of politics under mass party conditions [...] Weber’s commitment to the ideals of individualism and liberalism was always circumscribed by his political sociology, and by the master theme of rationalization. (Turner 1994, 137)

Bureaucracy effects life in many ways, but it is acutely felt by some groups more than others. Graeber claims that it is the poor who suffer the gravest ills of bureaucracy by being placed under surveillance and thus monitored and evaluated to a further extent now than ever before (Graeber 2015, 37). Sentiments like this have been expressed by many of the volunteers in Edinburgh Street Pastors (who work in conjunction with CCTV operators). Likewise, constant changes made to public-sector agencies which grant official referrals to the clients of the Edinburgh Food Project of the Trussell Trust are known as a major source of complication. This aspect of the

bureaucratisation of the food bank service is attributed directly to public sector policy by volunteers. This opinion is generally accepted regardless of whether it accurately reflects reality.

Graeber refers to how the poor are ignored by society in his consideration of the famous Scottish economist Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pointing out that:

Human beings, he [Smith] proposed, are normally inclined not only to imaginatively identify with their fellows, but as a result, to spontaneously feel one another's joys and sorrows. The poor, however, are so consistently miserable that otherwise sympathetic observers are simply overwhelmed, and are forced, without realizing it, to blot out their existence entirely. (Graeber 2015, 61–62)

This perspective resonates with FBO volunteers in the many roles they serve. Relevant to the volunteerism organised by more privileged members of society in order to extend help towards the more destitute, Graeber reflects further that:

while those on the bottom of a social ladder spend a great deal of time imagining the perspectives of, and genuinely caring about, those on the top, it almost never happens the other way around. (Graeber 2015, 61)

For example, Street Pastors situate themselves in an urban trinity consisting of themselves, the police, and the local council. This provides a unique role for them, in that police bring the threat of force to a situation, whereas the Street Pastors provide a 'listening ear' that the police are incapable of facilitating. Prior to the more recent work of Graeber, Habermas brought attention to the fact that modern democratic systems emerging from the European enlightenment relied on police to uphold the context of the state's power (in peace and war). The formation of police services was just one important historical aspect in creating the public square in opposition to the private interests of individuals themselves, as these areas were deemed beyond the rationale of policing the public (Habermas 1989, 30). Many city councils in areas where Street Pastors operate see the value in this volunteer

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh group as an auxiliary crime prevention force. It also helps that the Ascension Trust which oversees Street Pastors generates a great deal of fundraising for the initiative on a national scale. Due to their self-sufficient nature, councils and police departments are generally receptive to the idea of SP teams going out on Friday and Saturday nights, as they have noticed the effects of the initiative. This all results in aid for those living on the street and forms a counter narrative to the assertions of anthropologists like Graeber, who largely assume that arms of society like the police and voluntary organisations are incapable of functioning like compassionate individuals towards the urban poor.

Whether or not the long-term decentralising of social services – partially through enabling FBO initiatives – is a sustainable method of providing social services is not a direct concern in this proposed thesis (although it is a topic central to the literature). Most academic sources would not argue that the role of FBOs in social service provision in the UK is anything but significant, both for now and for the future. Of greater interest to this research project are the ways in which FBOs are able to provide effective social services while also maintaining a distanced relationship from the missional work of church proselytization. This phenomenon has been evidenced in developing countries, where the use of carefully constructed discourse to achieve legitimacy in an otherwise secular environment has been an important factor in the efficacy of FBOs (Jones and Juul-Petersen 2013, 34). The diminished emphasis on religious proselytization in public statements by FBOs in the developed world could be seen as a ‘post-secular’ feature of faith-based social activism (Ballard 2011). Bureaucratic tension within FBOs seems to simultaneously both embrace and resist top down secular agendas, allowing organisations to become both enablers and disablers of social-economic policy changes (A. Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012, 1480–81). How this is occurring within a rapidly secularised though formerly religious population like that found in Scotland (C. Brown 1997, 158–74) is particularly engaging given the context of Edinburgh FBOs and the work that they are doing locally.

To illustrate this, it is relevant to include Durkheim's assertion that:

In reality, the religion of the individual is a social institution like all known religions. It is society which assigns us this ideal as the sole common end which is today capable of providing a focus for men's wills. (Durkheim 1986, 81)

In this vein, an exploratory approach also opens a wider discussion on how volunteers and staff fill various roles by providing welfare services in what has been referred to as a post-secular context (Blond 1998; E. L. Graham 2013; Habermas 2010). Faith-based social activism in the twenty-first century western world calls into question what it means for religious people phenomenologically and existentially to embody the 'being-there/being-with' of new sacred spaces while attempting to bring the divide between the 'haves and have-nots' with those who need special personal, material and spiritual help (Wells, 2015).

Scotland in the European context

Aside from speculations about what may or may not be driving third sector competition, elements of an engaged democratic citizenry are visible in Scotland. Instead of mere organisational competition, increased involvement in voluntary sectors has resulted in many gradual but permanent transfers of public services onto the general populous. Historically, Scotland did not directly experience many of the social policy advances made in England during the twentieth century, such as the marked increase in homeownership experienced in England and Wales which had risen to nearly thirty-five percent by 1948 (Reynolds 2015, 217). With a large demographic cohort of pensioners alongside a great many working-age people subsisting on part time employment, it seems to many policy makers a convenient reality to employ such folk as "little platoons" in the vein of Edmund Burke's ideals (Burke 1987, 135). As philosopher Isabelle Stengers points out, it is always the general populous in advanced capitalist societies – left to fend for themselves – who must collectively absorb the excesses and failures of hegemonic powers (both public/centralised and private/corporatized)

(Stengers 2015, 11). In recent work addressing the environmental crisis, she draws the conclusion that

the primordial challenge will be to “relaunch economic growth.” Tomorrow, like yesterday, we will be called on to accept the sacrifices required by the mobilization of everyone for this growth, and to recognize the imperious necessity of reforms “because the world has changed.” The message addressed to all will thus remain unchanged: “We have no choice, we must grit our teeth, accept that times are hard and mobilize for the economic growth outside of which there is no conceivable solution. If ‘we’ do not do so, others will take advantage of our lack of courage and confidence. (Stengers 2015, 11)

There is an important corollary here regarding the shrinking of centralised state power – which may have been understood in the past to possess some characteristics of social benevolence – and the unbridled power of multinational corporations concerned primarily with a totalising form of individualism. This vacuum creates a space for organised resistance at the level of the individual within a local community context. Wendell Berry goes so far as to claim that:

powers not exercised by government return to the people. If the government does not propose to protect the lives, livelihoods, and freedoms of its people, then the people must think about protecting themselves. (Berry 2002, 50)

As Stengers and Berry are suggesting, basic civic responsibilities have been abandoned by the institutions who once facilitated them and have been turned over to citizens’ groups who must now bear the aggregate costs of welfare services through their own time, space, labour, and finances. This phenomenon demonstrates that citizens *can and do* emphasize with disadvantaged people to a greater degree if they too have experienced some of these difficulties (D. Burns et al. 2006, 79–91; Carpenter and Myers 2010, 911–20; Unger 1991, 71–100). Such a notion would be hard to confirm at the micro level of human interaction. Yet a great deal of effort is being expended in the form of unpaid/volunteer labour just to ensure that basic services like food and housing can be supplied to vulnerable citizens in the UK. Regardless of how badly needed many of these services are in the current

economic climate in the UK (and elsewhere), their proliferation draws the question of religion back into the public square. Under current conditions it is not known whether FBOs can continue to function in a secular society without exhausting the human, economic, cultural, and religious resources available to their organisational leadership, management, and volunteers. One could additionally suggest that this is especially important given the unpredictable economic endgame initiated by 'Brexit,' in which little official long-term economic planning has been tabled.

British charitability

Religious charitability in Britain, at present and historically, is recognised publicly as well as in the academy (McCabe and et al. 2016; Beaumont and Cloke 2012, 265–66). The current *zeitgeist* sees public roles for religious citizens expanding alongside the shrinking of direct governmental oversight. This process continually decentralises provision for social issues deemed either to be of local concern or beyond the vision of national level policy, a trend not unique to Britain but present on a global scale (Gidron and Bar 2009). The kind of organisational bureaucratisation that follows the transition of welfare provision into third sector services at a more local level cannot be shown to alleviate the demand for these services. On the contrary, this process may be contributing to creating more need for these services: putting even more paperwork, phone queues, and gatekeepers in place. This has made it increasingly difficult for people to access or be referred to service providers. The vacuum opened has allowed both new FBOs and older charities in the UK to (again) expand their remit. The situation is concisely described by American anthropologist David Graeber:

Nowhere is this divide between public debate and economic reality more dramatic than in Britain, which is perhaps why it appears to be the first country where something is beginning to crack. It was center-left New Labour that presided over the pre-crash bubble [i.e. pre-2008], and voters' throw-the-bastards-out reaction brought a series of Conservative governments that soon discovered that a rhetoric of austerity—the Churchillian evocation of common sacrifice for the public good—played well with the British public, allowing them to win broad popular acceptance for policies designed to pare down what little remained of the British welfare state

and redistribute resources upward, toward the rich. (Graeber 2019)

Within this new competitive race to fill the gaps in the former welfare state through charities and the third sector, FBOs have figured prominently. The Churchillianism that Graeber refers to also translates to a 'little platoon' conservatism *a la* Edmund Burke (or is at least considered comparable) in the eyes of many who would see the third sector establish itself as the pluralistic inheritor to the former state welfare apparatus in Britain. Church congregations – even in their greatly reduced manifestation in today's Scotland – are tacitly expected to pick up this mission and punch above their weight in terms of social responsibility and staying power. While this does not constitute anything like a massive return to church attendance, it does suggest a phenomenon in which the state is now (and again) relying on the resilience of religious sentiment and public service (i.e. ethos) to care for society's poor and marginalised in the twenty first century. In much of the academic literature, this phenomenon is mostly unforeseen from within the theoretical status quo of the sociology of religion across most of the twentieth century.

While this thesis does not presume to establish any knowledge about the resilience of religious institutions over time, it is important to take note that throughout the unhooking of national institutions for social welfare there is clearly a great deal of work being picked up by volunteers belonging to religious institutions like churches. Interpreting more about these developments contributes to knowledge already offered in the literature, specifically concerning how the rise of FBOs – who are not attached to any sect or denomination – is related to the current economic outlook in Britain.

The Scottish third sector

The trend towards greater third sector mobilisation in general has continued to develop in Scotland since the beginning of the new Scottish parliament in 1999, which granted a greater degree of devolved political powers to the devolved Scottish government centred in Edinburgh. Prior to the new

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh authority being handed down to the government headquartered at Holyrood, the last historical Scottish Parliament concluded in 1707 with the unification of the parliaments of Scotland and England.¹¹ Partially because of the historically recent form of devolved democracy the Scottish government has been able to continue funding some TSOs while national cuts have hindered funding of similar organisations in other parts of Britain (S. P. Osborne 2012).

As Scotland receives (potentially) more and more devolved powers, it is also publicly perceived as becoming less and less religious, as a recent BBC report cites the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey findings in which 52% of the 2015 sample answered that they were not religious (BBC News 2016). A linear explanation of why this is the case is not necessarily forthcoming. Instead, varieties of public and folk knowledge support different accounts of the religious legacy of Scotland. Following the 2014 independence referendum, *The Economist* even claimed that:

Christian-tinged radicalism, in which faith itself may or may not survive, lives on in Scotland's anti-poverty campaigns, self-help communities, think-tanks and even theology faculties." (2014)

Considering that opinions found in mass media sources are unreliable at best, this kind of documentary evidence still points out something tangible in Scottish cultural memory. Ultimately, statements like these seem to resonate from somewhere along the continual "chain of memory" between religion and social change in modern societies (Hervieu-Leger 2000).

If religion has typically been considered in sociological and anthropological terms as a symbolic system of meaning mediated between individuals (Geertz 1973) how can such perspectives help to define and nuance the place of FBOs in secular society today? Scholars and social

¹¹ This is an important date both socially and religiously. Calum Brown argues that the Union of 1707 also corresponds with when "[...] the economic development of Scotland fell rapidly in step with that of England, and Scotland encountered the same social consequences of rapid economic change: dramatic population growth, urbanisation, factory production and the social divisions it created, and the problems of poverty, health, housing and sanitation" (C. Brown 1997, 187–88).

critics have already inquired as to whether there is, in principle, anything that distinguishes FBOs from other more overtly secular initiatives in the third sector (Johnsen 2014, 413-430). This thesis is not tasked with clearing the issues raised by the religious fervour and secularist vitriol surrounding the question of 'faith in the public sphere.' Yet despite the constant navigating of complexities, theologians like Miroslav Volf strongly encourage faith to remain a part of the public sphere, as something essential to the common good in liberal democracies (Volf 2011). One approach which may be fruitful in rounding out a multidimensional perspective on FBOs could be found in viewing the symbolic quality of some forms of religion as representing more than the basic collective ethos of a group. Further understanding could be extended towards the autonomous meaning-making of volunteer social activists whose motivations may or may not coalesce with religious pursuits. On this subject Clifford Geertz wrote that:

Never merely metaphysics, religion is never merely ethics either. The source of its moral vitality is conceived to lie in the fidelity with which it expresses the fundamental nature of reality. The powerfully coercive "ought" is felt to grow out of a comprehensive factual "is," and in such a way religion grounds the most specific requirements of human action in the most general contexts of human existence. (Geertz 1973, 90-91)

This broad approach to the symbolic quality of religion is, one could argue, just as useful in interpreting culture in modern societies as it is in interpreting religion in other contexts.

Religion and welfare in Scotland: a complex relationship

As outlined in this chapter, current scholarly literature does not account for how local volunteers and FBO staff are able to give so much of their time and resources into a diverse array of local, front-line, faith-based programmes in Scotland. This thesis relies on original evidence found in the work of the Edinburgh Food Project, Bethany Christian Trust, and Edinburgh Street Pastors in order to paint a fuller picture of faith-based welfare services being

offered in Edinburgh, the following narratives from my fieldwork, interviews, and content analysis across the period in question reveal religious concepts such as 'welcoming the stranger' which characteristics of the sector are not represented in current academic discussions of poverty research in the UK. FBOs and their efforts in social activism provide unique examples of organisational culture and procedural welfare pluralism in a country like Scotland. The trend towards voluntary social services is identifiable across much of the UK over the last two decades c.1997-2017, and in that sense growth in the Scottish context is not unique in Britain (S. P. Osborne 2012). Less attention has been paid to how different kinds of third sector voluntary organisations operate in Scotland to fill gaps in the social services, how they are different from their southern (or UK-wide) counterparts, and what social and environmental factors are different in Scotland for the third sector. Even less academic work has focussed on how FBOs are currently growing in local Scottish situations. In approaches this abject lack of representations, this thesis engages original ethnographic and sociological research in Edinburgh that reveals expressions of meaning, definition, and motivation which align and deviate from the organisational formulations in FBOs. Exploring local faith-rooted activism reveals some of the shortfalls of welfare pluralism in Britain, as well as the religious, ethical and theological characteristics which contribute to upholding the third sector in Scotland.

As sketched out above, in recent times the United Kingdom's social services have experienced great change. Amidst the scaling back of centralised welfare systems, basic problems like poverty, hunger, 'anti-social' behaviour and homelessness have become large-scale issues (Chaney 2014). Social services are now understood very differently by a recent succession of governments than they were under the post Second World War welfare establishing regimes. As more gaps open up due to cuts in social provisions, policy making as it pertains to the future of welfare systems in Britain has become a hotly contested public issue.

The last decade (2010-2019) has seen new challenges arise in providing social services under an austere economic outlook in Britain. Paradigmatic socio-economic upheavals correlated with shifts in governmental policy during and after the global financial crisis and subsequent recession post-2008 (Taylor, Parry, and Alcock 2012). The situation also extended to Scotland, where national and local policy changes daily affect the lives of many relying on the work of TSOs (S. P. Osborne 2012, 245–47). UK citizens in general, including those belonging to faith communities, have since been relied upon for their ability to effectively mobilise to provide community services. In turn, this has invoked the development of new bureaucratic controls within the third sector itself. FBOs have taken up their own secular agendas as well, as is evident in the wide variety of services they provide. Certain organisations demonstrate a greater degree of resistance to these processes than others (A. Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012). Whether this is due to religion, politics or something else is not conclusively known. The suggestion that there is a particularly *religious* response going on to social problems like hunger, street life, poverty, and homelessness is a question worth taking up in Scotland, where there is a diverse array of active TSOs and FBOs. Focussing on the particulars of Scottish society also somewhat obviates the ability to generalise sociologically. When brought into dialogue with wider issues, the localised and micro-level knowledge generated in ethnographic methods and writing can contribute within the theoretical discussions on the place of religion in contemporary society.

The importance of FBOs in Scottish society represents a rich social landscape in which to explore these themes by keeping specific and researchable questions in mind. Interpretivist social scientific research suggests that the ecological connections between all levels of social reality are reflected in human behaviour (Bryman 2012, 399). Thus, awareness of the forces at play on the macro-scale, the micro-scale, and all levels in between is essential to a holistic approach to ethnographic research. In this regard, the sociologist José Casanova has been an important interpreter of

the nature of modern secularisation. His seminal work in *Public Religions and the Modern World* argued that:

What needs to be examined is the different ways in which religions, old and new, traditional and modern, may play public roles, eufunctional and dysfunctional, in the public sphere of civil society. Consequently, the concept of “civil religion” ought to be reformulated from the state or societal community level to the level of civil society. (Casanova 1994, 61)

Casanova’s influential study across five cases spanning different world religions and nations suggests a kind of re-emergence of religion as a public (voluntary) political expression, set against the formerly hegemonic place of pre-modern religious authority (found in institutional structures). This ‘de-privatization’ process is particularly visible in the USA but is also relevant in other societies like the UK. On the other hand, ethicist Jeffrey Stout cautions that privately held notions of religion should not dominate the understanding of faith in the public sphere:

Many Jews and Christians find the civil religion of our day incoherent and alienating—a travesty of true faith. As a student of these traditions, I am inclined to agree. But there is also something self-deceptive, and implicitly threatening, in the appeals to religion as a source of civic unity. (Stout 2004, 1)

Positions like those of Casanova and Stout provide a key part of the theoretical context for this project which concerns the place of contemporary religion in society. In this study I investigate more about their competing claims, and others that concern secularisation theory, through an analysis of the personal meanings, motives and definitions that people ascribe to their own contextual realities. The narratives and lived experiences of people working as volunteers in FBOs (e.g., in a limited context like Scotland) are included as phenomena likely to assist in evaluating the place of religion within public expressions of civil voluntarism. A re-interpretation of the generic voluntarism of FBOs in the third sector thus generates a multi-dimensional picture of the meaning-making implicit in contemporary faith-based social activism.

TSOs and FBOs have not escaped relevant criticism from across the social sciences and humanities, and as such an awareness of a great many prior studies must inform the trajectory of any new research in the field. There is additionally no shortage of publicised material concerning FBOs of a non-academic nature, which informs public consciousness on these matters as well. While TSOs have formed a substantial part of the social support structure of the United Kingdom and have experienced growth in the last two decades, FBOs, in particular, have recently come under even greater public and academic scrutiny (Centre for Social Justice 2013, 31–41; 82–83). Aside from the apparent need for the practical services and aid provided by FBOs, these initiatives are often seen as outlets for proselytization by religious groups, whatever their faith context may be (Beaumont and Cloke 2012, 10–11). This criticism is not without warrant: in a secular state, the mobilisation of FBOs is a development which should thus be explored regarding the moral and ethical issues it raises. The capacities in which FBOs operate are often held at a distance from direct government involvement. The sometimes-nebulous nature of FBOs themselves further complicates this, since some do not require explicit religious commitments from staff and volunteers, whilst others do intentionally look for some form of a confessional statement. Some even request a basic identification of one's religious background as a categorical qualification, complete with references from relevant religious leaders. How volunteers navigate these requirements can thus be situated within a complex web of social meaning-making, alongside the organisational and social contexts which frame the symbolic imagination. Furthermore, theories of secularisation and the public place of religion are still undergoing revision, if not re-invention, in a great many disciplinary contexts. Therefore, the public presence of FBOs in a modern and largely secular context, for example in Scotland, deserves new analysis of the relationships between volunteers, faith groups, and the state.

Conclusion

As discussed throughout this review of the current literature, voluntary activism alongside the mobilisation of faith-based organisations can be

situated around the historically recent growth of third sector services. This phenomenon is sometimes attributed to privately held religious notions like charity, dutiful civic engagement, and paternalistic neighbourliness (C. Baker 2013; Putnam and Campbell 2012, 557-563). Sympathetic social theorists suggest that faith communities nurture specifically religious and spiritual forms of social capital in a general sense (Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2004, 11–12). The generalisation that basic religious charitability is contingent upon social capital stops short of evaluating whether efforts at proposing long-term solutions to existing social problems are on the minds of activists within FBOs. Additionally, basic critiques of paternalistic religious charitability do not account for how, in contemporary times, faith-based activists and organisations are mobilised effectively.¹²

This thesis cannot suggest any general solutions to these macro- and meso-level sociological quandaries. Instead, this study reveals more about the context in which volunteers engage with forms of social activism in faith-based settings in Scotland, revealing the unique meanings, motives, and definitions that emerge from those engaged in the work itself. Economic downturns have taken hold in many developed, democratic western nations since the new millennium. Part of the rationale for this study is that Scottish society varies significantly across internal and regional divisions and presents many characteristics which differ from other parts of the UK, thus warranting the study of these and other associated phenomena presented in this thesis.

¹² A rather broad-brush image of the 'romanticised' and paternalistic character understood as normative for theological/political conservatives is often decried by critics (Elisha 2012, 157).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter explains the rationale for the research design of the study, pertaining directly to the hypothesis and research question. For the interpretive purposes of this study ethnographic methods were used to compare, across multiple cases, how volunteers practice their activism within FBOs. Content analysis of documentary evidence also forms a complementary component of interpretive data where applicable. This overall qualitative approach does not make light of the many broad critiques of this phenomenon that the literature already has on offer, as outlined in chapter two of this thesis. Many interpretive angles on the current situation should be considered in an effort geared towards generating a more holistic interpretation of FBOs.

A reasonable approach to this phenomenon considers that TSOs and FBOs are largely made up both regular and occasional volunteers. In this situation ethnographic methods can help with evaluating how meaning is contextualised within forms of voluntary labour. The individuals themselves who comprise these organisations are approached as experienced interlocutors regarding the practical work in which they are involved. Likewise, the organisations themselves need to be analysed as bodies (or even corporations) which orchestrate forms of voluntary labour. It is not my assumption that ethnography can mediate the meanings of human behaviour in ways that are completely objective, as this would not account for the subjective value of qualitative interpretation (Denzin 1997, xii). Alternatively, the many methods available to the ethnographer are complementary to generating understanding of human meaning-making and thus substantiate how this study approaches the subject matter.

Theoretical rationale for the research questions given below employ an grounded approach within an interpretive process. This approach allows data not only to be generated with theoretical questions in mind, but also attends to interpretation of potentially novel findings.

Formulation of the specific research question

Initially, speculative questions rose to the surface of this study, especially during the pilot study stages during late 2015 and early 2016.¹³ Some of these included:

- 1) What forms of *meaning* do volunteers in FBOs ascribe to their actions?
- 2) How do they *define* their activism?
- 3) What personally *motivates* them?
- 4) What are the drivers behind the large-scale mobilisation and social activism of faith-based organizations in Britain, and how are these factors lived-out in Scotland?

While these preliminary questions addressed in the pilot stage of the study cannot be fully answers by this thesis, they did provide an iterative starting point to the interpretive nature of the inquiry. Beginning with these research questions, the ethnographic inquiry of the multiple case study was designed to discover more about what role(s) faith-based social activists have in Scottish society today. In doing so this research tests out a basic theoretical concept stated here in a preliminary working hypothesis. This approach is not deductive because the qualitative data to be generated are not falsifiable in a positivistic sense. Because this study lacks a hypothesis constructed through the relationship of variables and controls designed to demonstrate causality and replicability, emphasis is instead placed on the interpretive quality of the data generated through each case study. To this end, a guiding hypothetical statement was formulated as follows: *In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) provide examples of relationship between theology and welfare in Scotland?* In other words, what people believe underwrites their volunteer activity and capabilities. Generalisation of such a concept cannot be proven and thus prescriptive or causal relationships are impossible to assume given the research design of this study (Thomas 2016, 3–4; 17–21).

¹³ This pilot study was approved by the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh during my methodological training there in 2016 ("Faith Based Social Activism in Edinburgh" [ID: 212642]).

Even in a qualitative sense, to demonstrate the particularities of the Edinburgh context within three case studies cannot easily be established.

Therefore, the hypothesis given above serves as a principle by which to interpret meanings. Based on these hypothetical considerations, an additional and analytical question added to those already given above was:

5. How do meanings, definitions, and motivations for activism compare across different FBOs?

After the conclusion of several pilot studies in late 2015 and early 2016, and after consideration of the New College thesis review board's recommendations, I proceeded into the official fieldwork of the study under the formulation of the specific research question answered by this thesis: *In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) and their efforts in social activism provide examples of the complex relationship between theology and welfare pluralism in Scotland?*

After conducting the extensive literature review represented in the second chapter of this thesis – which enquires into that which is lacking in the current academic literature regarding faith-based activism in Scotland – the research project proceeded beyond pilot stages and into the main period of fieldwork which transpired between June 2016 until June 2018.¹⁴

Objective of the research

A qualitative research strategy relying upon ethnographic methods was subsequently employed as a means of best approaching the nature of the overall comparative inquiry. Primarily, this research involved enquiring after what intrinsically motivates this kind of activism for those involved, how activists feel that their efforts fit into the bigger picture of society, and what awareness volunteers in FBOs have concerning their own motivations for being mobilised.

¹⁴ During this period, I also facilitated seventeen in-depth and face-to-face interviews, which were subsequently transcribed by myself.

While this approach does not measure the *effectiveness* of such services on the lives of the clients or community,¹⁵ the focus placed on the meanings expressed by volunteers allows for an alternative interpretation of the conditions experienced by volunteers to emerge. The experiences of those who are served (i.e. 'clients') by the provisions of FBOs are relevant and are considered as they form a large part of the context in which volunteers serve. Yet many of these themes are ultimately too broad in scope to be fully investigated in the analysis of this study. Limits were placed upon what constitutes the subject matter under investigation (i.e. *volunteers'* as opposed to *clients'* behaviours and experiences) as well as parameters set for which specific situations in Edinburgh should be examined (three comparable FBOs as opposed to a wider variety of TSOs). As examples of particularly Scottish social situations, this can reveal more about how the efforts of national FBOs interact with localised issues and challenges *on the ground* and *in context*. Additionally, this research explores what meanings potentially motivate this kind of activism, investigating what feelings exist in the repertoire of faith-based activists.

As part of the ethnographic fieldwork, this study included in-depth interviews of seventeen individuals in total. In order that the sample from each organisation is relatively comparable, at least five and at most seven individuals were associated with each case study. Each organisation represented a distinct site for fieldwork for participatory observation and documentary/content analysis (e.g. examining reports, photographs, press clippings, training materials, equipment used, etc.), and frames the context of each of the three case studies.

The term 'activist' is used in reference to volunteers involved in FBOs and is employed here only in a specific sense. It is used in this context to describe those who "engage in action to bring about social change".¹⁶ This

¹⁵ Although reference will be made to forms of content analysis of promotional and statistical documents which both support and critique the work of FBOs.

¹⁶ This most basic definition serves the purposes of this exploratory research more than other loaded terms pertaining to modern political activism(s) (Oxford Dictionary 2016).

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh definition takes stock of the reality that volunteers in TSOs and FBOs, as well as some of the paid staff who also volunteer during their non-working hours, are under no extrinsic compulsion to provide their labour to these social services. The volunteers who comprise most of the working contingent of the FBOs could obviously make different use of their time if desired. Various factors have roused their efforts to consistently volunteer, providing an ultimately unknown but undeniably large sum of unpaid work hours within the third sector.

Some of the volunteers I encountered in Edinburgh worked on many occasions and with multiple organisations on a monthly basis, providing a collective amount of labour that no individual member would be responsible to dedicate to any single initiative. The smaller cohort of paid staff who are also involved in the local context of service provision could, if desired, use their organisational and managerial skills in lucrative capacities elsewhere. Many volunteers and paid staff work odd hours, with limited resources, and are often employed on contractual and part-time schemes in other (paid) work as well. The approach taken to this project does not automatically assume an overtly political activism on the part of the volunteers, due to both the intricacies of the organisations and the individuals involved. Thus, the use of the term 'faith-based social activism' is not intended to imply any specific political stance(s).

Primary data sources: multiple-case study of Edinburgh FBOs

The data gathering portion of the fieldwork for this thesis involved over two years of ethnographic participant observation within three organisations. The rationale behind this is that the analysis of data gathered and generated from within each organisation forms a unique case study. Each case will be compared in an interpretive process analysing basic themes – first within each case and then across all three cases.

Three organisations were selected after initial discussions with leaders from each one, in which the research interests of my project were openly explained. All three can generically be referred to as FBOs: 1) the Edinburgh North West Foodbank (henceforth ENWF), administered as part of the UK-wide Trussell Trust; 2) Edinburgh Street Pastors (henceforth ESP), which are one chapter mobilised within the UK-wide Ascension Trust; and 3) the Edinburgh area work of Bethany Christian Trust (BCT), a Scotland-wide organisation focussed on relieving homelessness. The logic of comparing meaning-making among the volunteers that comprise these FBOs will be used to explore the researchable questions outlined above. This interpretive process is designed to compare how volunteers engage in activism within each context, evaluating not only meanings that are represented, but also what is expressed in the act of providing social services through voluntary labour. Focussing on the particulars of each organisation while in dialogical relationship with volunteers reveals more about how all three organisations are contextualised locally. All three are located within national (UK-wide; or Scotland-wide) trusts which are sanctioned as charities, providing context for comparison. This necessarily limits the inquiry of the multiple-case study, allowing for focus on micro-level, local habits and practices of volunteers. These three FBOs were selected because they represent different contexts within the umbrella of faith-based social organising in Scotland. Other than the fact that each one focusses on a specific social problem (i.e. food crises, community safety, and homelessness) they also differ in how they provide aid. To what extent the volunteers interact with these issues and how they navigate them whilst serving are points of particular interest.

As already mentioned in the literature review, FBOs have variable commitments to what might be referred to as a 'faith element.' For some groups, a spiritual component (i.e. prayers, rituals, recitations, vocal/musical worship, etc.) may be strongly encouraged, or even required. In others, faith or spirituality may be featured among many other traits, undeserving of any special attention alongside the realities of providing material aid to people. As it currently stands in the literature, as demonstrated in chapter two of this

thesis, there is no clear definition of what faith means to FBOs generally. The idea of defining faith in the context of social activism is something to be explored in this study among the volunteers themselves (particularly in chapter five of this thesis).

In the following subsections, I detail some of what is publicly known about each organisation. Where applicable, I also provide some of my observations from the early days (2016) of the fieldwork. My position in each organization was as an overt participant observer in an open context. Sociologist Alan Bryman refers to this as 'Type 1' ethnographic research, i.e., the most transparent form of participant observation which has no hidden or closed elements (Bryman 2012, 434). The organisations listed below were made aware of my intentions as a researcher prior to the fieldwork and did not express reservations about my involvement at any point. The leaders with whom I conversed and interviewed were genuinely curious about the study and encouraged my continued involvement, noting that their organisations also benefitted from the volunteer labour I provided over two years as a trained member. All three FBOs showed a willingness to assist me in gaining access to any persons, situations, documents, materials, or other opportunities which enhanced the research project in a symbiotic relationship with all parties involved. My stance as a critical observer was also acknowledged and understood, and analysis free from any organisational hindrances. Becoming a full member of these organisations for the time it took to conduct field work – over two years' worth in some cases – required me to withdrawal at the end of the prescribed observational period to reflect and analyse data in a manner that was consistent with standard ethnographic practice. The end of the fieldwork also corresponded with my physical departure from Scotland in June 2018, as I moved back to the province of Ontario, Canada, where I finished the composition of this thesis.

The Edinburgh Northwest Food Bank

The Edinburgh Northwest Foodbank (henceforth ENF; part of the Edinburgh Food Project, overseen by the Trussell Trust) is physically located at seven

sites housed in community centres and church buildings of various denominations in Edinburgh and surrounding area. Non-perishable food and other household items are donated mostly through supermarket collections, where volunteers encourage shoppers to buy an extra item which is on the foodbank shopping list. Donations are also provided directly by schools, religious institutions, businesses, and individuals. The food is then sorted by volunteers into boxes for pick up.¹⁷ The local function of the foodbank operates upon referrals “from frontline care agencies and charities only.” Persons or families can receive “three days [sic.] supply of emergency food” by presenting a voucher issued by valid care professionals, “such as doctors, health visitors, social workers, Citizens Advice Bureau staff, welfare officers, the police and probation officers.” When ‘clients’ arrive to get their food box(es) they can sit and chat, have hot drinks and snacks, and sometimes even stay for a full meal. At this stage meaningful interaction can take place between the ‘client’ and volunteer, as this exchange can be seen as a chance “to signpost people to agencies to solve the longer-term problem” (NW Edinburgh Foodbank 2016). Additionally, walk-ins during regular distribution centre (DC) openings can get help from volunteers to obtain a voucher, usually within one hour’s time using mobile phones provided by the Trussell Trust (henceforth TT).

The TT, which administers the ENF, oversees a total of 424 distribution centres (referred to as “DCs”) across the UK (Trussell Trust 2016). Due to their status as a prominent third-sector provider for those in need of food, their work has generated laudation as well as criticism. Simply put, the TT has been well represented by ecclesial, governmental, and journalistic sources. Statistics put out by the TT have sometimes been questioned as to the accuracy of the data used, but this has largely resulted in support rather than disdain from the public (Kotecha 2014; Trussell Trust 2014). The TT has been inter-denominational from its inception. Religious

¹⁷ These include specific packs for single persons, couples, families, and those with no access to cooking facilities. Other than dry and non-perishable food, many different toiletries, infant products, and pet foods are also available on a needs basis.

adherence is not necessary for involvement in voluntary or paid work, although the trust takes its theological mission from Matthew 25:25-26, holding a vision: “To end hunger and poverty in the UK” (Trusell Trust 2016).

The short excursus given just above on the characteristics of the national TT (based in Salisbury, Wiltshire) and the ENF raises more than a few questions. For example, what sort of consciousness of national level hunger-related issues is present with the volunteers? How does knowledge of broader social issues motivate their efforts? How do individuals navigate between politics and theology, and do the views of the volunteers differ from that of the administration? These themes and more are addressed in reference to the specific research question outlined above while engaging original content from the fieldwork data. This analysis develops across the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Edinburgh Street Pastors

The local efforts by Edinburgh Street Pastors (henceforth ESP), overseen at the national level by the Ascension Trust (henceforth AT), focus on organising Friday and Saturday patrols of the ‘night-time community.’ These typically begin at around 23:00 and can sometimes last until 4:00 or 5:00 the following morning. More work goes into the overall project than only the patrols, which already involve substantial concerted effort on each occasion. When including the extensive training, administration, fund raising, and spiritual components like prayer (to which a sub-group of SPs contribute as “Prayer pastors”), the total hours committed to the organisation are diffuse and would be hard to calculate. SPs in general aim to be “part of the practical solution to urban problems” including but not limited to substance addiction/abuse, loneliness, suicide, and homelessness. While on patrol they are prepared to administer first aid, provide a ‘listening ear’ to people in distress, provide some street/night life amenities,¹⁸ and safeguard vulnerable people away from potentially hazardous or violent situations. They also pick up thousands of discarded bottles, perceived as potential dangers to the

¹⁸ These include water, flip flop sandals, thermal blankets, gloves, coffee/tea, and biscuits.

public (e.g. as weapons). In these practical ways the organisation aims to be a catalyst for directing people towards other agencies which could bring about further transformation in individual lives (e.g. finding housing, food provision, job searching, 'getting clean').

Street pastors in general claim not to overtly proselytize while on patrol and in uniform, yet the organisation states that all street pastors must be confessional Christians who "believe in the sanctity of life" (Edinburgh Street Pastors 2016). A monograph published by the AT states that:

A street pastor's main job is to care. Caring means being present in a physical capacity in someone else's context, in their circumstances. [...] As we read the parable of the good Samaritan, we can see that helping means binding up the wound, putting someone in our own transport, seeking out the care and attention that they need and, if need be, paying the bill (Luke 10:25-37). (Isaac and Davies 2009, 28–29)

This practical interpretation of the parable speaks of a certain kind of *accompaniment* that is theologically found in certain passages of Judeo-Christian scripture. Part of this interpretation involves reflexivity on the part of all trained street pastors and concerns the political implications of the Samaritan identity juxtaposed with the other passers-by in the parable:

Jesus was answering a politically motivated question, 'Who is my neighbour?' His answer, that the Samaritan was his neighbour, and in fact that the Samaritan could show more love than the Jew, was a fundamentally politicized answer. [...] If you are a street pastor you need to do more than just accept what appears on the surface. (Isaac and Davies 2009, 42–43)

In this way, the training of Street Pastors involves understanding one's community in ways both "political" and "sociological." Both of the aforementioned areas of knowledge are referenced as theoretical sources of best practices found in the formational programme for new street pastors (Isaac and Davies 2009, 41; 45). Official SP training questions the motives of SPs who would want to provide "conditioned responses" (i.e. Christian theological statements) to people on the street and instead train new recruits

to become “bridge-builders not preachers” by focussing on real-world problems (Isaac and Davies 2009, 44; 46).

My ongoing involvement with ESPs was contingent upon joining the organisation for a timescale that would align with the aims of my fieldwork (i.e. at least 12 months total, but I willingly remained for two years until moving back to Canada). Ongoing observer status is not something typically allowed on ESP patrols in general since their insurance does not cover repeat observers who are not technically part of the organisation.¹⁹ Joining involved attending a series of local training exercises stretching over twelve weeks which also allowed my analysis to be better informed on the formation of the ESP ethos. The public image that the Ascension Trust has garnered and cultivated with local councils and police requires street pastors to be designated by consistent clothing and reflective official logos for legal reasons. To what extent this publicly visible presence – other than being central to the insurance policy – assists in the work of the SPs was also important to consider. These themes and others are evaluated in subsequent chapters of this thesis as a case study of Edinburgh Street Pastors in particular, within their umbrella organisation under the Ascension Trust based in London, England.

Bethany Christian Trust: Care Van and Night Shelter

Bethany Christian Trust operates in Scotland, which gives it some slightly different characteristics than the other two UK-wide trusts referenced in the prior descriptions. The work of the BCT is focussed primarily on homelessness, but this concern also extends to the factors that lead to this phenomenon and to the conditions that prolong it:

Our services focus on preventing homelessness as well as alleviating the suffering of people who are homeless. We provide tailored visiting support and community development. We also support individuals and families to help them address long-standing issues including: social

¹⁹ For example, I was required to fill out a waiver form that would deny the SP organisation or Ascension Trust any responsibility should I have been injured in any way on this one night as an observer.

isolation, unemployment, and drug addiction. (Bethany Christian Trust 2016a)

Some emphasis is placed on current problems while other concerns are directed at the future:

All our services focus on relieving the immediate suffering and meeting the long-term needs of homeless and vulnerable people in Scotland. We don't just work with homeless people. We stop people becoming homeless in the first place. (Bethany Christian Trust 2016b)

The language used in the public statements by the BCT does not shroud elements of faith. Former CEO Iain Gordon stated during his tenure that BCT exists “[...] to put love into action and faith into practice to empower people to live independently in society” (Bethany Christian Trust 2016a). The trust provides visiting support, emergency resettlement, community development, and supports partner projects in a number of contexts.

I was involved as a volunteer in “Emergency and Resettlement projects,” which are aimed at working “[...] with people on the streets and in temporary accommodation. [...] Projects in this area also support people working towards alcohol and drug free life in the community” (Bethany Christian Trust 2016b). More specifically, my role was as a member of a “Care Van” crew, delivering hot food around Edinburgh. This service occurs on designated days at lunch and during the evening to known sites along a predetermined route. The Care Van operates every evening and Monday through Thursday at lunchtimes providing food and hot drinks to people in Edinburgh (a care van also operates in Glasgow). I helped to staff the care van at least once per month for two years, alongside also staffing night shelters placed in churches over the six coldest months of the year. Arrangements were made with staff from the BCT to ensure that my research interests were acceptable and well-placed in these capacities.

Rationale for Ethnographic Methodology and Qualitative Research Strategy

This section details the theoretical rationale which grounds the use of the practical methods available to the ethnographer. Below I outline why an approach informed by the theoretical underpinnings of symbolic interactionist theory is important to the overall research strategy of the project.

Outline of approach

Theory can indeed result from an inductive approach to data analysis. This is different from the process of deduction in which research is largely aimed at validating or falsifying theoretical postulations. Qualitative methods often invoke this approach by gathering data prior to theoretically generalising from it. Given that qualitative research may require validation of theory after interpretation, an iterative process can involve further data collection after the initial stage. This would be done to establish greater reliability during the interpretive process and does in some sense resemble deductive reasoning (Bryman 2012, 25–26). This process, e.g. as in the ethnographic cycle, is something this study conforms to in the outline below. Firstly, fieldwork as a participant observer gathering data through direct observation, participating in volunteer work, and gathering documents, web materials, press clippings and photos allows themes to emerge through ethnographic reflection related to each organisation. Secondly, semi-structured interviews within each organisation will allow for data to establish any inter-relation between the researcher's subjective observation and the expressions of interlocutors in interviews. This iterative process will allow ongoing analysis contributing towards the uniqueness of each case study. Finally, inferences can be drawn out of a final comparative analysis across all three case studies and interpreted sociologically.

The rationale behind this study substantiates and suggests answers to the research question above, as it would not likely be answered by

establishing broad theoretical generalisations (Bryman 2012, 406).²⁰ This thesis instead contributes to a theoretical framework as themes emerged from the data through interpretation. This process can reveal more about the meaning of the actions and expressions of the interlocutors from each case study. The interpretivist lens generally privileges the idea of understanding²¹ human behaviour over explaining it (Bryman 2012, 28–29). Therefore, the research questions are to be explored through the interpretation of data, and the analysis of findings and observations, as the project unfolds. ‘Proving’ a hypothesis in a positivistic manner cannot be accomplished here, even though a basic hypothesis is presented above for research questions to explore. The aim is instead to explore how social activism within faith-based contexts is sustained, and to reveal more about what motivates people to continue being involved in the work (e.g. at a foodbank).

Interpreting human action within naturalistic states of social life is a process complementary to ethnography. This involves examining social relations under conditions which are non-manipulated (i.e., they have no experimental elements) and are also participated-in by the researcher. The frontline quality of the social environments under investigation contributes to the overall “ecological validity” of the findings (Bryman 2012, 49–50). This is also emulated in partially facilitated situations which are facilitated and involve intentional aims as in semi-structured interviews which are non-controlled, non-coercive exercises (Magnusson and Marecek 2015, 48). Abductive reasoning also can become concurrent, as for Bryman where “Abduction is broadly inductive in approach but is worth distinguishing by virtue of its reliance on explanation and understanding on participants’ worldviews” (Bryman 2012, 401).

This idea of abductive reasoning has a threefold structure as delineated by one of the founding theorists in the tradition of American

²⁰ Epistemologically, the prospect that social science is capable of any sort of predictive quality has been called into question (McIntyre 1981, 103-104).

²¹ This version of understanding in the social sciences takes its root from the principles of *Verstehen* in Max Weber’s social theory (Max Weber 1947, 88).

pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce. It consists of a systematic account of semiotics which holds that meaning includes elements of the sign, the signified, and the object. In short, all three elements of meaning require a subjective “interpretant” for meaning to be justified (Atkin 2013). Therefore, a deductive view of what constitutes a working hypothesis forms only one part of a Peircean epistemological position. He additionally offered an outline of *abductive* reasoning as differentiated even from “qualitative induction” (Reichertz 2009, 10). Abduction can thus be defined in Peircean terms as:

The third type of data processing (apparently similar, but in fact totally different [from induction and deduction]) consists of assembling or discovering, on the basis of an interpretation of collected data, such combinations of features for which there is no appropriate explanation or rule in the store of knowledge that already exists. (Reichertz 2009, 35)

There are basic human and reflexive elements of the interpretive process that are spontaneous and do not always follow a strict logical procedure. To this end, theologian F. LeRon Shults refers to Peirce's abductive process in these terms:

I observe a surprising fact (c). But then I reflect – or intuit – that if (a) were true, (c) would be a matter of course. This gives the hypothesis (a) an initial plausibility. In everyday life, we usually go with this “best guess” unless and until we encounter some challenge to it. In scholarly life, however, we are encouraged to overcome our confirmation bias, to reflect critically on our own idiosyncratic interpretations, and to invite others to challenge our hypotheses. (Shults 2016, 351)

Shults explains further stating that abductive inference differs from inductive interpretation in that the former cannot be validated. Abductive inferences also differ from deductive facts because abductive knowledge cannot be proven. Thus, in Shults' interpretation abductive *inferences* “are rendered more or less theoretically plausible within a particular context in which they are evaluated as more or less pragmatically feasible” (Shults 2016, 351).

How this approach lends itself to new research is through a general preparedness for the unexpected results of research. It can then be possible to notice different characteristics in the data, for example, while coding:

[...] one can find (in addition to the coding and the development of theories of a middle or long range) two intellectual operations: the finding of similarity (coding in known codes) and the development of the new (creating new codes). This kind of scientific work has its parallel in the distinction between qualitative induction and abduction as made by Peirce. The operation, the intellectual jump which "states" things in common between acquaintance and data and codes in already known concepts is the first step: the qualitative induction (as executed above). This thinking act adds something to the data too. The second step is the intellectual jump which adds something very new to the data, something that they do not contain and that does not already exist as a concept or theory either. This is abduction (Reichertz 2009, 35).

This stance also does not expect the unexpected to occur. In the process of 'doing' ethnography, having a readiness for 'lightning to strike' (Reichertz 2009, 16–20) follows a Peircean abductive approach without 'jumping' towards unjustified interpretation.

Symbolic Interactionism

Regarding to the hypothesis formulated above, a general sociological theory which helps to frame the inquiry of this study is the tradition of symbolic interactionism (henceforth SI). American sociologist Herbert Blumer, building on the pragmatist philosophy of George Herbert Mead, had a prominent role in the early development of this approach (Blumer 1937, 144–98). The influence of SI grew over the latter half of the twentieth century particularly within US scholarship, where various competing centres of thought have evolved (primarily into the Chicago and Iowa schools). Early in the development of this approach Blumer provided three basic tenets: (1) That we act towards things based on the meanings they have for us, (2) that these meanings are created through interaction, and (3) that they [meanings] change through interaction. (Fine and Sandstrom 2003b, 1042; 1053; Blumer 1986, 2). Blumer's theoretical developments can be attributed to Mead's

“discussion of the way in which our notion of the self emerges through an appreciation of how others see us” (Bryman 2012, 31). SI has thus been seen as intrinsically able to bring about dialogue with other sociological approaches (Fine and Sandstrom 2003b, 1052). Sandstrom and Fine go so far as to state that SI in the twentieth century can be thought of as potentially

formulating a pragmatic approach to social life – a view of the power of symbol creation and interaction that is at the heart of sociological imagination. (Fine and Sandstrom 2003b, 1053)

Common ground across the variants of SI carries the notion that:

[...] interaction takes place in such a way that the individual is continually interpreting the symbolic meaning of his or her environment (which includes the actions of others) and acts on the basis of this imputed meaning. (Bryman 2012, 31)

This position was not only influenced by Mead²² but also reflects the philosophy of American pragmatism in general: “The one philosophical school exerting the greatest influence on symbolic interactionism” (Fine and Sandstrom 2003a, 1053).

Part of this broad intellectual reach of pragmatism, in addition to the work of William James and C.S. Pierce, can be attributed to the work of John Dewey. The existentialist philosopher William Barret, when describing declining role of philosophy in society during the latter half of the twentieth century, lauded Dewey’s lasting presence in public life outside of the academy (Barrett 1962, 11). To what extent certain revivals of pragmatist philosophy (e.g. in the neo-pragmatist work of Jeffrey Stout) are relevant in interpreting the results of this research study was also considered moving forward.

Interpretivist Theoretical Perspective

Interactionist theorists typically find sharp distinctions between micro, meso, and macro level analysis in sociology to be exaggerated (Fine and

²² Via his association with the ‘Chicago school’ of social research.

Sandstrom 2003a, 1044). This allows for 'big picture' thinking to be present even when examining minute elements of meaning.

In epistemological terms, interpretivism is focused “[...] on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (Bryman 2012, 380). Related to Max Weber’s concept of *Verstehen* through the philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, interpretivism harmonizes well with the theoretical paradigm laid out in symbolic interactionism (Thomas 2016, 60). Certain attributes of this approach emphasize how humans interpret their world subjectively while simultaneously interpreting meaning intersubjectively (between humans; or other natural actors). Some interpretivists consider it impossible for objects to project meaning into the mind of the subject. This approach to interpretivism was developed principally by Chicago school researchers working through the thought of G.H. Mead. How it came to be associated with the branch of sociology begun in Blumer’s symbolic interactionism was also found in this intellectual context (Thomas 2016, 52).

Another consideration within the theoretical framework for this study involves asking: what then is ‘true’ in this interpretive milieu of meaning? Following the internal theoretical logic of interpretivism, the ontological posture of constructivism holds that:

Truth and meaning do not exist in some external world but are created by the subject’s interactions with the world. Meaning is constructed not discovered, so subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Hence, multiple, contradictory but equally valid accounts of the world can exist (Gray 2014, 20).

Framing an interpretivist approach within the constructivist paradigm allows for multiple interpretive positions to focus on similar phenomena (e.g. faith-based social activism). A multi-faceted approach is more suitable for generating shared understanding within the humanities and social sciences. An open-ended approach allows the human meaning-making capacity to be reflected through different understandings of similar phenomena.

Research Design and Strategy: A Comparative Multiple-Case Study

The three FBOs listed above were compared by analysing interview and documentary data alongside composition of ethnographic accounts from each case study. The rationale behind this approach is to better understand the uniqueness of each case by having two other comparable cases by which to gauge differences among themes in the data. This feature of the research design directly demonstrates the reliability and consistency of analysis. A focus on particulars (e.g., in case studies) is known as *idiographic* research, which is differentiated from *nomothetic* research typically aimed at establishing what is applicable in any situation as a general principle (Bryman 2012, 69). The aim of this comparative case study is to account as fully as possible for the different meanings that faith-based social activists ascribe to their behaviour. There are no elements of concealment, deception or secrecy built into the study as these would not be conducive to the inquiry of this research. In fact, any withholding of information would be against the research ethics framework which this study adheres to.²³ In chronological terms, the specific timescale for this study is cross sectional, meaning that the year of fieldwork and the following period of interpretation provides the temporal context of the study. Other than providing necessary historical and sociological contexts in which to situate analysis, the aims of the study are focussed on the timeframe of the current research project.

Methods both Qualitative and Ethnographic

The interchangeability and overlapping nature of terms like participant observation (PO) and ethnography can sometimes become problematic. The approach taken in the research design for this study will employ PO as one

²³ A note on research ethics: No risks were posed to the human subjects involved which would differ from normative circumstances in each context. All leaders and fellow volunteers involved have been made aware of my research interests. Individuals involved were assured that any reference to specific persons or their whereabouts will be anonymised, while descriptions of the organisations themselves are to be accurate. This process is outlined in the letter of information and informed consent form which are received and signed by each participant in SSI. I have already obtained self-assessed level-1 research approval to begin piloting interviews with potential participants (see appendix).

element of ethnographic research. In generating the case studies PO, semi-structured interviews (SSI), and content/documentary analysis are used as well-established methodological tools for answering the specific research question via ethnography.

Given the different nature of each context in which I will conduct fieldwork, it should be stated that while later SSI will use the same basic instrument (i.e. an interview guide/schedule based on the same questions) the process of ethnographic research will be by necessity more variegated. This means that methods will need to be fluid and flexible enough to encourage a fruitful and holistic picture to emerge from each case. Therefore, in preparation for generating a well-rounded ethnographic account, I will detail here how particular aspects of PO can vary across different situations. How comparable data arising in different settings are collected, recorded, and finally interpreted should thus depend on each situation. This primarily involves the taking of detailed field notes and other observations (such as relevant documentary evidence, reports, web pages, and original photographs), which are not quite as rigidly definable as the techniques used in qualitative interviewing methodology.

Firstly, PO within these three organisations was unobtrusive. What this means is that while participating in, for example, crisis food distribution or community safeguarding patrols, I was not consciously behaving any differently than the other volunteers. In the view of the ethnographic researcher, this does not impede one's ability to maintain a heightened awareness in which to critically observe the events unfolding. In most cases I was able to produce field notes during a shift, or as soon as possible following a shift. This allowed construction of initial reflections to occur in an intentional way that contributed to further analysis. The main reason for avoiding taking fieldnotes in the presence of clients was to allow situations to remain as candid as possible. Timing and spatial constraints while working make taking immediate notes both inefficient for the volunteer group and unnerving for the clients themselves. Many fellow volunteers and clients do

not want to be subjected to someone constantly taking notes, especially if they are concerned about their privacy and any connections that researchers may have to authorities. Additionally, the ESP organisation warns against taking notes while on patrol, because they do not want to give the appearance of being police informants.

There are specific ways of recording observations in ethnographic practice which assist in subsequent analysis. James P. Spradley discusses the common types of field notes in his widely circulated text on ethnographic methods. The first of these is referred to as “condensed notes,” taking place during or immediately after observation of events. To give a few examples from the context of my project, this may occur immediately after a midday shift at a crisis foodbank, as early as possible after a night spent patrolling with a community safeguarding team, or in between stops with a mobile hot meal service for homeless people. The second type of notation is the “expanded account” in which “the ethnographer should fill in details and recall things that were not recorded on the spot [i.e. in the condensed account]. The key words and phrases jotted down can serve as useful reminders” (Spradley 1980, 69–71). These two practices are well established techniques which can be traced back to pioneering anthropologists.²⁴ The third of Spradley’s prescriptive steps details (auto-ethnographic) practices of journaling which provides a chronological and personal record of the study. This is done at intermittent points in the timeline of the project to allow the ethnographer to later on, during analysis and writing up of the formal results, look back and reflect upon important waypoints that may become forgotten. This effort brings about further introspection alongside condensed field note taking (Spradley 1980, 70–72). The fourth and final form of field note is

²⁴ Although this study does not directly invoke the functionalist approach to religion in the structuring of society, many of the observation-based developments in ethnography are owed to the techniques and subsequent conclusions made in the important contributions by Bronislaw Malinowski in the early twentieth century (Malinowski 1979; 1989). The extent to which (auto-)ethnography starts to become a self-actualizing project for the researcher, beyond the reflexive subjectivism inherent to the discipline, is another epistemological concern far outside the scope of this thesis but is certainly one which warrants further critique and analysis.

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh referred to as 'analytical and interpretive.' This stage links together field notes and analysis in order "[...] to record generalisations, analyses of cultural meanings, interpretations, and insights into the culture studied" (Spradley 1980, 72) The overall ethnographic cycle of note taking, reflection, retrospection and critical analysis enables the researcher to arrive at *descriptive, focussed* and *selective* observations. This process naturally varies in character according to the subjects and objects in question.

Spradley additionally suggests that ethnographers interpret their data within a theoretical matrix consisting of questions formulated by overlapping categories of space; object; act; activity; event; time; actor; goal; and feeling. Asking these diverse questions about the data initiates an analytic search for patterns that can be interpreted by perceptive observers (Spradley 1980, 82–83). One could argue that the appropriate use of these methods alone would be sufficient for a qualitative analysis of meanings, motives and definitions contributing to an ethnographic account of each case study. I augment my own analyses by also using SSI and documentary/content analysis to nuance findings from PO. The purpose for this would be to triangulate analysis between (1) what is already represented in the academic literature about this phenomenon, (2) data reflective of my own experience as a participant observer, (3) the experiences and feelings related by others involved in the same organisations through SSI, and (4) the content of documents and materials that relate to the organisations.

The interviewing style that the research design required for this study was open-ended, free flowing and conversational. See the Appendix at the end of this thesis for the precise research instrument which was composed as an interview schedule. I thereby invited individuals to provide their own descriptions of volunteer work in FBOs as well as into the social context of the organisations they serve. Magnusson and Marecek argue that:

Interpretative researchers' interest in personal meaning-making lends their interviews a distinctive character. The interviews differ in a number of ways from interviews used in surveys, screening interviews, and other interviews focused

on obtaining factual information. [...] In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer usually phrases his or her requests in a form that is open-ended. He or she invites the participant to tell stories about experiences, relate memories, and offer reflections and opinions (Magnusson and Marecek 2015, 47).

Questions for interviewees were formulated in accordance with the precise research question in mind, though questions for interviewees do not mirror the analytical questions which form the rationale behind the study.

Interviewees are intended to be in control of their own responses, as the interviewer need only to guide the interviewee in an unobtrusive dialogical process. The intention behind SSI with a schedule of questions in place is to provide a simple frame for the conversation. Although responses may be directly elicited at times by the interviewer, the process is designed to put the interviewee in a comfortable state, able to feel free to take any direction in the dialogue.

Coding

Ethnographic analysis is based on focussed but *humanistic* interpretation of patterns, themes, and trends across phenomena such as observed behaviour, interview dialogue, and other related events and artefacts. This mostly involves the critical yet 'hand-spun' nature of ethnographic writing coupled with the many hours required for self-transcription of interviews and initial coding of dialogue. I also employ computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) for further interpretation especially of interview data and assemble a systematic overview of other contents and documents that are relevant in following chapters. The software known as NVivo provides a great many metric, visual, and analytical features that bring to light details not always noticed in manual coding. I outline in sections below how I used these methods to obtain data analysis for this thesis.

The logic of the case-study approach

The case study approach does not involve samples from which one can generalise but instead encapsulates a deep collection of evidence about the uniqueness of each case (Thomas 2016, 4). This allows a detailed picture of

each case which can be seen from multiple perspectives, i.e. through observation, participation, interviewing, dialoguing, and by reviewing documents and publications associated with the organisations. The main sample groups for interviews is formed by individuals from each of the three organisations in which prior fieldwork had already been conducted. The range for each case was from five to seven participants, seventeen in total. This reality comes in conjunction with the research design outlined above which has as its goal the thick description of the elements of symbolic meaning in the actions and expressions of faith-based social activists at a micro level resulting in thematic analysis (Ritchie et al. 2014, 200–208). The purpose of this is mainly to be descriptive and detailed about the analytical process using one paradigmatic approach (e.g. thematic analysis) alongside use of helpful analytical tools (e.g. Nvivo software). For example, evaluating the BCT annual report documents from a contemporaneous period of eight years, provide some insight as I continually asked the data: What forms of meaning, definition, and motivation do volunteers and workers in FBOs ascribe to their actions? I used this pre-formulated question to develop and evaluate the relevance of the working hypothesis regarding the associated phenomena, which stated clearly reads: In the context of FBOs working in localised settings (e.g., Edinburgh), diverse forms of personal and symbolic meaning-making underwrite faith-based social activism within organisational cultures.

Content analysis for generating original codes

While I was involved as an overt participant observer volunteering as a member of “Care Van” and “Night Shelter” crews – the former delivering hot food twice daily around Edinburgh at regular locations and the latter consisting of forty-five portable beds for rough sleepers (plus a hot meal) hosted at different church buildings around Edinburgh – I had already determined along with staff from the BCT that my overt research interests are acceptable and well-placed within this capacity. When I began documentary analysis of the BCT I had already been staffing both the care van and night shelters at least once per month over the winter season as a participant

observer (2016-2017), which is the time of greatest need and demand for volunteers. From the outset this analysis of BCT documents was aided by using CAQDAS²⁵ as part of the research design due to the utility of the technology for generating fresh and unforeseen findings (Kelle 2004, 473–490). This analysis is of course still coloured by the fact that I was concurrently conducting overt participant observation and ethnographic field work (Delamont 2004, 217–229).

From my own perspective and identity²⁶ as it is with perhaps any interpretivist qualitative researcher, I subjectively looked to gain a richer and deeper understanding of organisational phenomena while leaving the final analysis open to external criticism for its trustworthiness and verifiability (Yanow and Ybema 2009, 39–60). The broad understanding of the BCT work that I had obtained over the first autumn and winter seasons (I volunteered with them for nearly two and half years) gave me the time and space to reflect on the best possible documentary sources to compare with the first-hand experiences of volunteering within BCT. The aim of gathering this data is to allow the ongoing interpretation and analysis to be triangulated between different sources in the thesis (i.e. alongside interviews and participant observation). This allows themes that are not obvious from fieldwork to emerge from documents themselves.

Selection criteria for documentary analysis: annual reports from the BCT 2010-2016²⁷

This period between 2010-2016 has been selected because the ‘annual report’ documents are easily available in searchable format²⁸ from the BCT upon request since they are technically a form of press release (the most

²⁵ Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software, which for this paper is limited to the use of QSR NVivo.

²⁶ I was a foreign student in Scotland at the time; I am Canadian, male, sympathetic to Christian faith, etc.

²⁷ Charts, depictions, figures and visual images of analyses included in this chapter for the purposes of establishing methodological rationale are also referenced and re-presented, either in whole or in part, in chapter five of this thesis and employed in a more interpretive frame there.

²⁸ In this case, all are PDFs which were enabled for optical character recognition (OCR).

recent reports being available to download from the BCT homepage). These reports come out in the month of January following the year being accounted for (e.g., the BCT report for 2016 was released in early 2017). This research is not so much concerned with the intended audience of the reports as it is with what the reports are trying to communicate to the intended audience (although, some consideration should be given to the readership which is a generally supportive and sympathetic to the organisation) as well as to the general public who may stumble upon the information as well. The recent historical timeframe selected is closest in proximity to my own residency in Edinburgh (where the BCT headquarters is located) and is thus most relatable to my own experience and short tenure within the organisation. The reports obviously fall historically after the financial crisis which gripped most of the western world during 2008 and from which the effects are still lingering, with the corresponding reality of the enforcement of UK-wide austerity measures. Using this time frame and these specific reports as *foci* for evaluating my research questions around the *motives*, *meanings*, and *definitions* of faith-based social activists is of course an analytical decision towards creating an accurate ‘portrayal’ of the material (Ritchie et al. 2014, 304) – a choice that both deepens the richness of analytical interpretation and sufficiently limits it.

Coding style for the identification of themes across the reports

While beginning to look at these seven official reports I decided to compile some basic textual information about each one before coding. Coding of repetition, for example, is a common practice in the initial establishment of themes (G. Ryan and Bernard 2003, 89). Some of the queries I ran while scanning through the documents prior to coding are included in the following table:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Title of the Report</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Words</i>	<i>Images</i>
2010	“One Good Turn”	45	4849	11
2011	“What Makes You Feel Safe & Sound”?	96	3617	(No photos)

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2012	“Scotland At A Crossroads”	46	5800	11
2013	“30 Years On – Read All About it!”	44	6918	40
2014	“Life from A Different Angle”	31	8594	17
2015	Untitled (Theme of Transformation)	34	7846	14
2016	“Make Your Mark”	29	3545	12

For the word counts run through Nvivo I omitted the long lists of private donors’ names given at the end of each document. These lists fall outside the context being analysed but could likely form an interesting content analysis deserving of its own focus entirely. By excluding some of the more appendix related materials attached to the end of the documents I could later generate greater accuracy as to the spread of certain words across the whole text of each report.

After viewing initial word counts and weighted percentage queries and reports in Nvivo, I began to use three ‘parent’ codes which are related to my research question. This process allowed for the creation of nuanced child codes which work within the three (and eventually four) main parent codes. This process helped the reading of the data to become ‘closer’ and enabled basic themes to be nuanced into finer categories (Richards 2009). In standard qualitative practice such coding *must not necessarily* conform to prescribed ‘parent’ ideas about the data. Even though the working hypothesis which limits the qualitative inquiry of my study into what can be found out about *a priori* concepts such as *meaning*, *definition*, and *motivation* in faith-based social activism, interpretation was open to new codes arising unforeseen from the themes lying amongst the data. All codes, whether preselected or made *in vivo* (i.e., from the words of the data itself), are thus relevant to the specific research question. For themes to be generated in conjunction with other codes they are perceived by the analyst while processing all the text through Nvivo (a time-consuming process; i.e. manual coding). Basic codes for topics for were included, and subsequently were nuanced by some of the top words which occurred across the totality of the reports. When these codes seemed insufficient analytically, the data aided in

the development of new descriptive codes as well as *in vivo* codes taken from within the text itself.²⁹ Methodologically, this process lends itself in equal measure to both a) the “data-driven” or “empirical” approach and b) the “concept-driven” or “a priori” approaches prevalent across much qualitative research (G. Gibbs 2007; G. R. Gibbs, Friese, and Mangabeira 2002).

One way of doing this practically was to consider that some of the words which occurred in more than 1% of the total text of each document might be used as *in vivo* codes (in this case meaning they have arisen from the language of the documents themselves). One caveat to this decision was the exclusion of the two words “Bethany” and “Trust” which were present across the top spread of words used in every report (except 2013 which did not include “Trust” in the top 1%). Words which occurred with a frequency of greater than 1% are given in the table below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Potential ‘in vivo’ codes based on weighted percentage per report (excluding the words “Bethany” and “Trust”)</i>
2010	People; Christian
2011	Safe; sound; feel; makes; people
2012	Scotland; people; crossroads; support
2013	People; support
2014	People
2015	People
2016	People

Taking these numbers into account, and after considering initial research aims for analysing these eight reports in full, the rudimentary codes assigned to the text appear in the following chart. More codes were added along the way during the many hours of coding required across the seven reports analysed, and as such this list is not exhaustive by any means. Likewise, this process demanded combing over the same documents many times, repetitively, and on separate occasions. Included in the table below are codes that were organically generated closest to the start of the analysis:

²⁹ The phrase *in vivo* meaning “from the body,” from which the software Nvivo also takes its name (given the technical functionality of using words within documents as codes).

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<i>Parent Codes</i>	<i>Child Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Coded Instances (words, sentences)</i>
1. <i>Definition(s)</i>	a) Faith	"[...] our core ethos remains the same. We are still here to put love into action and faith into practice to empower people to live independently in society."	24
	b) Values	"We value fairness, meeting anyone at their point of need regardless of background or belief."	5
2. <i>Meaning(s)</i>	a) Legacy	"What legacy are we weaving into the lives of others? It is a question that we often ask ourselves at Bethany."	5
	b) Symbols	"The rainbow. A symbol of hope and of transformation between storms and fair weather."	4
	c) Work	"At the centre we work together, staff and residents alongside each other, to build a community that works like a big family."	10
3. <i>Motivation(s)</i>	a) Organisational Needs	"The past year has been yet another year of change for Bethany as we have worked to keep pace with increasing requests for support."	21
	b) Societal Needs	"We are challenged by the increasing demand for our services and by the difficulty of finding the resources to do all we believe could be done. Evidence of an increased need for support is clear in the higher numbers of people accessing our services."	41
	c) Public Spending Cuts	"Like others in the sector, Bethany is subject to ongoing budget cuts. Many of our services are under pressure to deliver more and more in a funding environment which demands ever greater efficiencies."	6
4. <i>People</i>	a) Community	"I thought that making friends with people and helping a good cause like Bethany would be a good combination. While doing my little bit to help I've shared time with neighbours, friends and complete strangers."	10

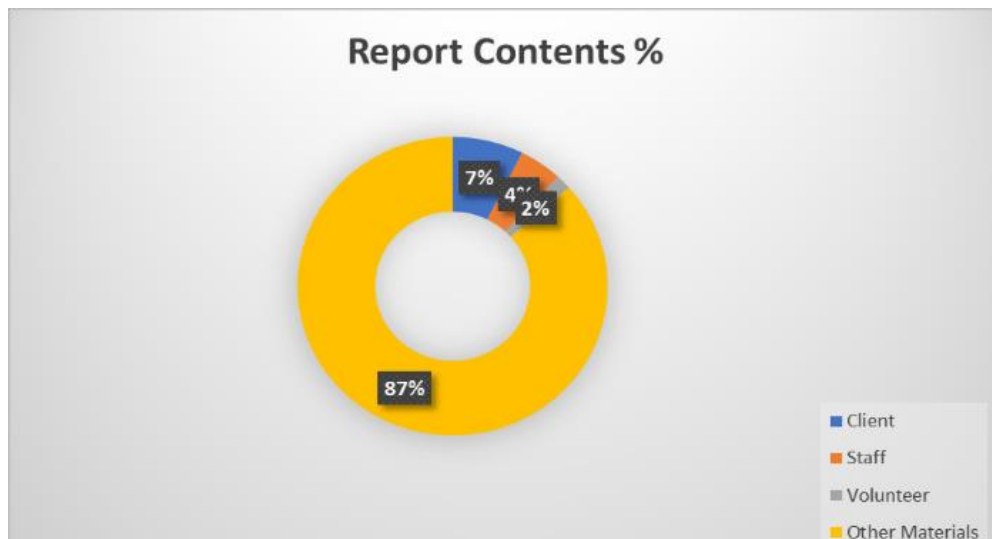
b) Suicide	“Without him and the drop-in I would have probably killed myself.”	5
c) Intrinsic Value	“A strong belief in valuing every person was at the heart of Bethany when we were established 33 years ago.”	5

In the manner of coding demonstrated above, the options available within NVivo were helpful in categorisation. This was especially useful when employed in conjunction with some of the secondary literature on the subject (Bazeley 2013, 68–150).³⁰

In addition to the parent and child codes outline above, the software also allows the analyst to assign large segments of the text to one or more cases, which in the three case studies consisted of text originating from 1) staff, 2) volunteers, and 3) clients. The weighted percentage of staff, volunteer, client related contents of the reports *vis a vis* other various materials in the reports is given in the table and chart directly below:

<i>Case</i>	Average Weighted Percentage of Content Across all Reports (2008-2016)
<i>Client</i>	7.4%
<i>Staff</i>	4.5%
<i>Volunteer</i>	1.6%
<i>Other narratives/information</i>	86.5%

³⁰ As an interdisciplinary scholar in the humanities working with ethnographic and sociological methodologies, I still had a few intellectual objections to the digital coding process which I will remark upon in the section immediately following this one.

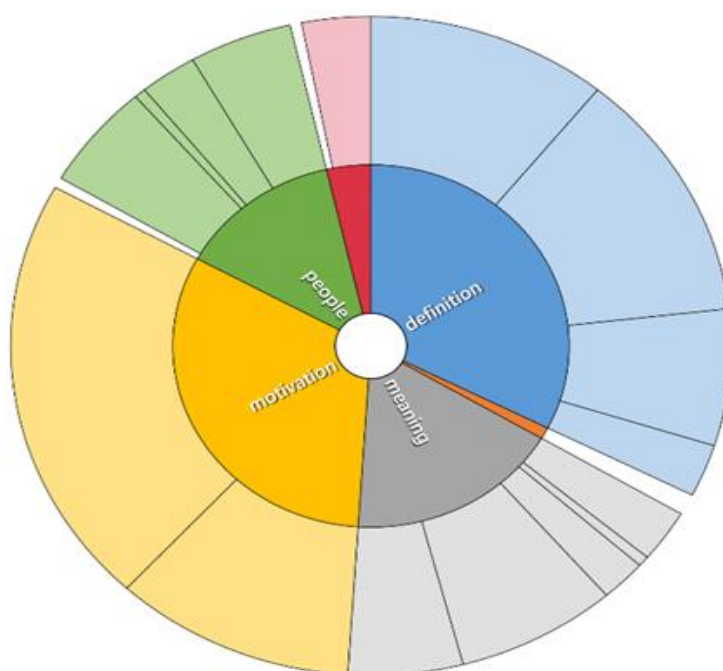


NVivo for thematic analysis of official documents

Reflecting on the usage of CAQDAS, and by using NVivo exclusively for this analysis, I undertook research using this technology in a way which generally fit the methods already defined for exploring the topic. This was useful for the analysis stage later on. Firstly, NVivo assists in removing some of the biases qualitative researchers might have when beginning a new project on a somewhat familiar subject (Bazeley 2013, 2–4). I understood before beginning the project that the annual reports would focus on the reasons why the work of the BCT was legitimate and needed. Yet, perhaps I had hoped that the documents would present more scathing critiques of urban social problems or at least point to some of the statistics as to why homelessness is becoming more problematic in Scotland. Instead, what the reports tended to focus on when providing statistics was how much work the BCT was doing, what they were doing, and how they were doing (it): usually in relation to finances. This kind of financial transparency is of course important for any official charity to provide. Yet the reports themselves left something to be desired beyond the basic descriptions provided, while also revealing that these kinds of materials have over time contributed to an overly simplified view of the BCT and what it stands for. Secondly, CAQDAS like QSR Nvivo greatly assists in the process of coding as understood generally around grounded theory, and the ability to generate new theoretical knowledge through an open approach to the data which does not categorise anything

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh unnecessarily or presumptuously (Strauss and (Strauss, Corbin, and Corbin 1998). Using the software also brings about a basic quantitative dimension through the generation of various queries and chartable data within NVivo (most of them being irrelevant to the research question) which may or may not work well within the methodological framework taken (Richards 2009, 85–88). For example, the figure below demonstrates the spread of parent codes across all the reports:

Figure 1: Parent Codes Across All Reports



The above diagram, in and of itself, reveals very little meaning about the data in question. Thankfully, there is more to the story, and I ultimately found the process of generating Nvivo codes – perhaps more in line with a grounded theory approach – to be much more revelatory than simply and continuously combing over documents related to what had already become familiar subject after composing the literature review in chapter two.

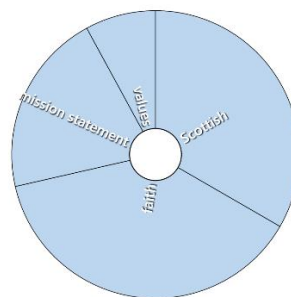
Initial Results which developed into themes

During early stages in the software analysis of the data, it was neither relevant or justifiable to discuss *general* relationships which may be traced

across cases, nodes, and categories within NVivo. Instead, what the analysis software helped accomplish was the realisation of new *praxes*: namely, ways of generating themes from the data which are not purely “a priori.” While this thesis does not depend upon a strict grounded theory paradigm, a great deal can be learned from a dataset by approaching it with an open view of the data and by using *some* limited technological tools to reveal more about the data as it already stands – before applying any general or grand scale sociological theory or perspective.

Analysis benefited greatly from the breakdown and differentiation of child codes from the parent codes. This is significant to the analysis because most of the parent codes were assigned *a priori*, apart from the fourth parent code “people.” These codes appeared in the end in almost equal measure (see Figure 1 above). Alternatively, the child codes arose from within the texts themselves and display much greater variation of both content and representation, revealing more about the meaning behind the publications and press released put out by FBOs like the BCT:

Figure 2: Breakdown of Child Codes – Definitions



The pie chart breakdown given just above is for only one of the parent codes; in this case for *definitions* as they are outlined in the reports. In this interpretation, it suggests a variety of moral and ethical terminology and

conceptual framing within which the BCT organisation defines itself across the seven-year timeframe. In this sense, CAQDAS technologies are useful for generating *in vivo* codes from the text, which greatly enhance the interpretive quality of the original enquiry into categories such as intrinsic *meaning, definition, and motivation* for faith-based social activism like that promoted in FBOs like the BCT.

Analysing these documents in NVivo only scratches the surface of what other advanced software can reveal about the data and does not in any way exhaust the interpretive and iterative process of ethnographic research and reflection. Yet the iterative process described across this chapter dovetails well with the phenomenon of symbolic meaning-making observed among three different FBOs in Edinburgh for nearly two and a half years of fieldwork of this project's fieldwork. CAQDAS significantly helped the study approach answers towards my broader research question. As a result of beginning a practical form of *habitus* (Pierre Bourdieu 1984) by using software for qualitative analysis, which required undivided attention for many hours in order to code documents efficiently and effectively. In the end, it is still the task of the researcher to decide if software does indeed aid the analyst or, alternatively, when it is only adding to the noise (Lewins 2014, 59) and the oversaturation of data that comes from generating "thick description" (Geertz 1973).

Interview methodology

This study aims to explore the phenomenon of faith-based voluntarism as an intrinsically meaningful form of social activism. Interviews are employed as a methodological tool because they allow deeper analysis of the ethnographic experiences I had with each organization. In this case, I do rely partially on some of the literature as well (in the form of documentary analysis) as well as my own experiences with the organization evidenced through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. This interpretive process is designed to compare how volunteers engage in activism within each context. Evaluating the extent to which the volunteers interact with pressing social issues provides grounds for

exploring the theme of symbolic meaning-making within this form of voluntary labour. Struck by the rich nature of the answers provided, I thoroughly attribute my ability to collect this wealth of data to the methodological guidance afforded in important scholarly works which were carefully considered in the formation of the interview schedule (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Mason 2002; Silverman 2001), my multi-disciplinary colleagues in sociology and anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, the official methodological training at received as a doctoral candidate, and the magisterial supervision I received at New College. I am thus convinced that interviews are the best available approach for qualitatively evaluating themes as they emerged from this study alongside using ongoing participant observation as well as documentary analysis.

Success of the instrument

In selecting interview participants from case studies that I already knew (roughly fifty people in total who were part of ESP; approximately thirty-five in the Edinburgh Food project; and around one hundred people in BCT) I took into consideration that they are both leaders and volunteers and can likely express what it means to inhabit some of the middle-ground in-between basic volunteer activity and organizational bureaucracy.

The interview schedule for these interviews was carefully crafted to reflect both my foreknowledge of the SP organization as well as to attempt to practically employ some of the theoretical constructs of symbolic interactionist perspectives. The form of the interview and its questions resides broadly within a qualitative approach to this phenomenon, approaching the overall research question as something exploratory and not necessarily related to causality in a non-naturalistic scenario (Thomas 2016, 3–4; 17–21). See the interview schedule in full within the appendix (pp. 211–212).

The interviews themselves progressed naturally through the stages outlined in the schedule. Question stages included 1) an Introduction, 2) a

non-linear discussion of meaning, 3) a non-suggestive inquiry into motives for activism, 4) a period of probing for personal definitions of the work involved, and 5) a time for concluding remarks, debriefing, and interviewee feedback.

In practical terms, interviewing helped in developing skills and practices towards employing an analytical model for my formal research project. The crux of the matter is how this methodology has approached my overall research question related to my doctoral study. The anthropologist David Graeber essentially argued that bureaucracy only begets more of the same (Graeber 2015). While bureaucracy is ever-present, what I found within faith-based activism was much deeper in meaning and is detailed across the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Conclusion

Understanding the full extent to which volunteers (myself included) represent their work in terms of story, narrative, meaning, and symbol is of course an extensive question, and one I cannot fully address in this thesis. What has occurred through this study is an exploration of how volunteers express their own form of evangelistic ‘Good Samaritanism’ (as with Street Pastors), treat people as being made in the image of God (as with the Bethany Christian Trust), or work towards ending hunger and ‘welcoming the stranger’ (as with the Trussell Trust). Alongside the qualitative research methods which have yielded important findings, the most important conclusion which I can draw out is that I uncovered more about how faith-based social activist construct meaning in their work and activism. The main thrust of this thesis is an explication of these themes, stories, narratives, symbols and experiences. The chapters which follow are the fruits of employing the ethnographic method of engaging in case studies. This process yielded the following account, which comprises the bulk of this thesis and is composed of the detailed representations of meanings, motives, and definitions expressed through faith-based social activism as discovered during fieldwork among Edinburgh FBO

Chapter 4 – Contextual narratives: place and the sacred

This chapter describes the context of three faith-based organisations (FBOs) in Edinburgh, all of which I joined as a researcher and volunteer in the summer of 2016. As outlined above, the question this thesis approaches can be formulated by asking: what definitions, meanings and motives are represented in the activism of people who volunteer and work for faith-based organisations? Firstly, this chapter shows how foodbanks in the Edinburgh Food Project developed since 2012. Secondly, I explore the unique way Bethany Christian Trust has attempted to approach homeless people, a problem which has a long and varied history in Edinburgh. Lastly, I describe the work of Edinburgh Street Pastors, and my initial experiences and interviews during my first year of research. This period involved extensive amounts of both Edinburgh-specific and generalised training. This analysis reveals some of the history behind these groups, and what these narratives mean to people in the context of a place like Edinburgh. I also trace out my first experiences as a newcomer to faith-based organisations in Scotland and the UK, suggesting how I first encountered the spatial and political elements of the work for which I had little prior training or awareness.³¹

Prologue

Some of my very first reflections after joining as a permanent rotational volunteer, as recorded on the spot and soon afterwards, illustrate in some ways my own reflexivity to being an outsider in a new place (Massey 1994). What follows are some of my more 'raw' field notes:

That first day in brilliant sunlight, riding the bus to the foodbank I had recently joined as a volunteer, I was acutely aware as the route meandered down from the area around Bruntsfield and Marchmont where I was staying

³¹ Doreen Massey's work on space is essential in terms of centring a phenomenological approach to this ethnography (Massey, Featherstone, and Painter 2013).

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh at the time towards one of the more deprived areas of the city known as West Pilton. This could be described as a descent of both altitude as well as a declining economic reality regarding the financial status of many individuals and families living in the EH9 versus those in many EH5 post code areas. Along the way, boutique fashion shops, dental offices, and electronics shops give way to housing estates, fryer take-aways, and various dilapidated business fronts (no small number with metal gates and shutters locked). I departed the bus next to a graffiti decorated transit shelter, steps away from a derelict shopping mall complete with windswept rubbish, piles of wet leaves left over from last autumn, various cans and bottles strewn about, and overgrown garden boxes peppered with yellowed cigarettes. So far, these sights included nothing particularly out of order in many urban contexts. Yet as I circumnavigated the mall, through an open construction site next to an empty gravel parking lot, I encountered the easily identifiable Trussell Trust and Edinburgh Food Project logo on a sign swaying in the wind next to a 'portakabin' which serves as a local community centre. This site is one of only two EFP distribution centres ('DCs') which operated outside of church owned buildings used by almost all the other DCs.

Inside I met Trish³² who happily showed me the ropes for my initial service at the foodbank. Trish was pleased to announce, upon learning of my studies at New College, that she was a co-parishioner and good friend of one of the established professors and his family. "I've known their family for ages, and the church itself have always supported what we do through the foodbank," she stated matter-of-factly.

Clients are only allowed 3 crisis care packs per 6-month interval (not sure of the nutrition but there is a calorie count to each pack). These packs only include non-perishables, but occasionally there is also fresh food like fruit and bread available on a first come, first served basis.

³² All names have been anonymized.

The first man to arrive was early, showing up just before we had put out the weighted sign with the foodbank and TT logo on it. He did not have a referral slip, and there was no reference in the computer system to his need. This man was instead directed by my colleague to an appropriate agency close by which could provide one, but only after speaking with a social worker.

As we set up the DC, I learned how to connect the laptop provided to a portable wifi hub so as to access email, where all new referrals would arrive from various social workers, and official agencies (e.g. SWF and local medical practices and NOT Jobcentre+). In the past, referrals would come in the form of pink paper vouchers. Now that has been replaced by emails, which, according to Trish, reflects the changes made in the welfare provisions agencies serving the local population.

Throughout the building, which has a central hallway, lined with bathroom, kitchen, meeting room, and storage area for the food (pantry) there are signs with recipe instructions spread around the building (even though it is a multi-use facility).

One woman came in and asked for personal council from Trish. This young lady was describing some private issues while conversing with Trish (as I got food packs for other clients). Eventually her mother appeared as well, and they complained about the impossibility of getting permanent employment from "jobcentre" (a British agency for unemployed workers hoping to find work, through the Department of Work and Pensions).

Trish is skilled at asking qualifying questions to the clients without coming across as being patronizing in any way. At this point, about 14.30, a local baker showed up with some large fresh loaves for handout.

All in all, 2 men and 3 females as individuals were given crisis food packs, this not being inclusive of families who were not fully present. For example, one client can pick up a family size package intended for 4 people

over 3 days. The sizes of the crisis food packs are RS (regular single), RC (Regular couple), family (Large or Small/Family), and kettle packs (which can be used by people who only have access to a kettle). Pet food, cleaning products and toiletries are also available upon request.

One of the issues that Trish helped someone sort out involved a lost purse. What had occurred was that a young woman claimed to have had a food bank voucher that had been lost because of her purse being lost. After a phone call, Trish was able to obtain an instant email voucher from the Scottish Welfare Fund.

We concluded the two-hour window for the foodbank service by packing up the computer, Wi-Fi connector, (self-)help literature, and extra food (swap box) which had not been taken. We were both busy and occupied for the full time, and Trish made sure to have me lift all of the crates containing the food packs from the storage room (which is locked at the end of the day).

As I rode the bus back from the Pilton DC, I consumed some of the extra artisanal bread which had been left unclaimed, donated by a local co-operative culinary arts facility. I recall the faces of those I met at the foodbank, and how well Trish (who has been active in the foodbank for a number of years) was able to engage in simple conversation with them. I also noticed that some of the clients consistently avoided eye contact with me. Over the whole course of the two opening hours for this DC, coffee (instant) and tea were provided free of charge, with biscuits and milk as well.

As is clear from the anecdotes above, even in my initial observations, my own focus teetered towards a sympathetic view particularly regarding the destitution and location of the Pilton site. Perhaps tellingly, clients often explained to volunteers (myself included) that they arrive at the foodbank at Tollcross (a rather more upscale locale than Pilton) after travelling from many locations across the city. Because public transit is relatively well planned in Edinburgh, persons not wanting to be recognized at their local foodbank will

sometimes travel to one not local to their residence. Their embarrassment will push them away from more deprived areas, some of which already have foodbanks, and pull them into the church-run centres in more affluent areas. This has an impact on the consciousness of volunteers: it is rare that the church locales run short of volunteers, while the public-based locations almost weekly request extra staff.

Places faith-based activism is found

As related in the prologue above, forms of faith-based social activism have become an important part of social service provision in Scotland. Chapter two of this thesis described how within the academic literature there is a lack of clarity regarding the conditions that sustain these initiatives. Currently faith-based organisations (FBOs) are growing within the third sector, notwithstanding what certain commentators see as an irreversible form of public secularity in Scottish society (Bruce 2011; 2014b). In exploring these phenomena further, this chapter evaluates the extent to which intrinsic meaning for action is created within faith-based voluntarism on a micro scale. As an ethnographic study, my inquiry seeks to explore one question: What are some of the factors involved in keeping volunteers engaged in religiously themed social activism? A conclusive answer does not exist in the current literature on the subject and neither can one be provided. Instead, and as a matter of brevity, this chapter focusses on interviews with current volunteers which culminate in a descriptive understanding of faith-based social activism alongside some well-developed sociological approaches.

While plenty of academic studies have focused on faith-based activism in both the UK and North America, there is a great divide between the secular and theological debates on the matter. This is further complicated by the existing divisions between church and state in North American culture, and the special status of the established church in the UK, one example being the prominent role of the Church of Scotland's "CrossReach" program which is still one of the largest providers of third sector welfare provision in Scotland (CrossReach 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to

clear some room for developing a qualitative alternative to the often quantitative one currently aimed at evaluating the work provided for and by faith-based groups like SPs.

Faith in action across Scotland and the UK

Across the UK many community services are now being provided by third sector organisations, most of which are not under the direct control of the modern nation state (Chaney 2014) and where large-scale volunteer mobilisation has coincided with the transitional context of post-devolutionary British policy (Chaney and Wincott 2014). Accordingly, the third sector (also known as the 'voluntary,' 'civic,' or 'social' sector) has seen a marked increase in local service and welfare responsibility. This process accelerated during the last decades before the new millennium (Osborne 2005). Shifting political power has implicated faith-based organisations in taking on the delivery of a large portion of these services in providing, for example, food banks and homeless shelters. In some cases, these efforts are attributed to privately held religious notions like charity, dutiful civil engagement, and paternalistic neighborliness (Baker 2013). These ideas have already been conceptually established in what sociologists refer to as theories of 'social capital' (Putnam and Campbell 2012; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2004). After interpreting over two years of fieldwork in Edinburgh FBOs for this study, there appears to be much more at work in the third sector which alludes to a deeper meaning for social activism among people of faith which transcends reductionist understandings of the phenomenon of voluntary action.

The interdisciplinary literature on the third sector and faith-based organisations has not arrived at its current state without some heated debate – both past and present. One of these issues involves the generalisation that sees religious charitability as contingent upon social capital (addressed further in chapter 5). This approach often stops short of evaluating whether long-term solutions to existing social problems are integrated into the vision of faith-based activists and organisations. Additionally, a basic critique of

religious charitability does not account for how, in contemporary times, faith-based activists and organisations are being mobilized effectively (Elisha 2008). The significance of these trends is too great to be fully expressed here, yet it is worth considering that while the third sector has been greatly affected by recent economic upheavals and policy shifts in the UK, Scotland has seen some ongoing developments that rally against recent national setbacks (S. P. Osborne 2012). The Scottish context thus seems like a rich scenario in which to gather more information on this phenomenon.

To what extent faith-based organisations differ from other service providers in this new area of needs-based provision (O'Shea, Darcy, and Leonard 2007; Milbourne and Cushman 2012; Milbourne and Cushman 2012) is a topic currently being evaluated from many disciplinary approaches. Some sociologists see religiously affiliated civil organisations as reflective of ongoing secularisation processes (Casanova 1994) while other scholars find it pre-mature to equate religious feeling with the milieu of civil society in the twenty-first century (Stout 2004). An anomaly in the UK is that faith-based organisations are growing within the voluntary sector even though Britain is seen by some sociologists and historians as becoming more and more secular on a national level (Brown 1997).

The context of the research problem to-date has led to the essential question of this thesis: In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) and their efforts in social activism provide examples of the complex relationship between theology and welfare pluralism in Scotland? This chapter shows how narratives connected to the places of welfare pluralism show unique motivation in the minds and actions of faith-based activists in Edinburgh.

Expansion of foodbanks in Edinburgh

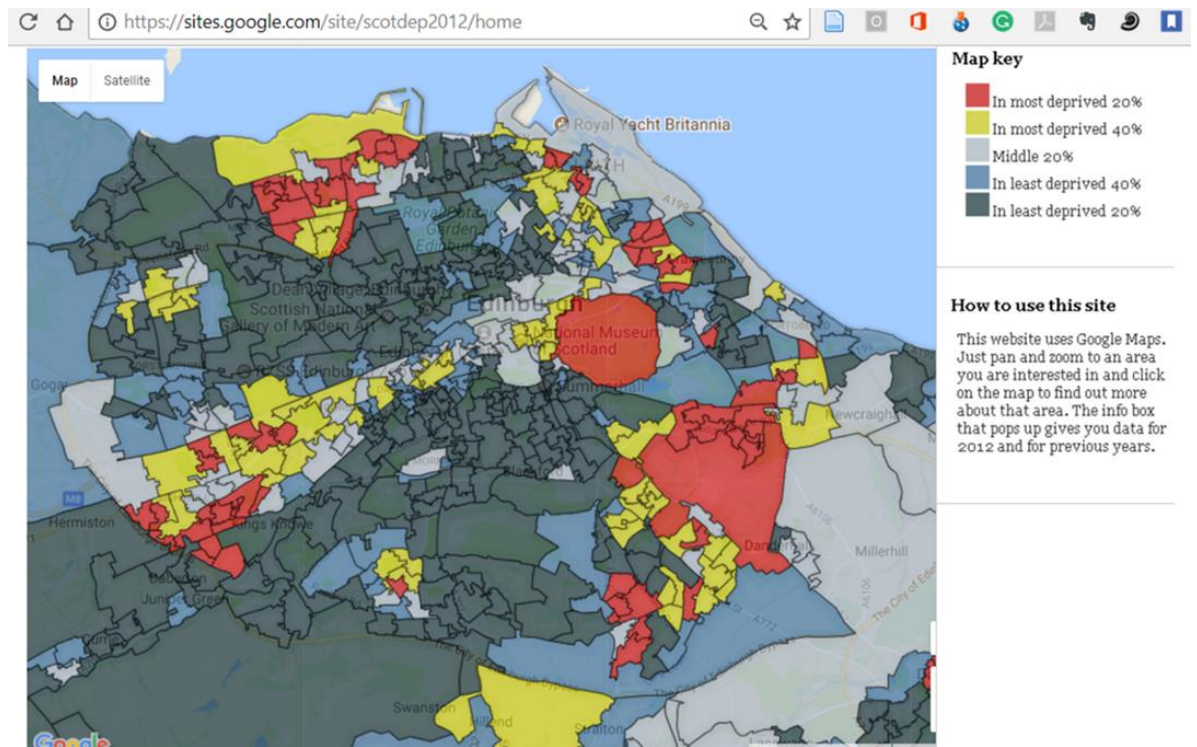
The Trussell Trust's (TT) network across the UK has in recent years become a household name representing UK foodbank services in general, while the numbers, statistics, values and effectiveness of such third sector initiatives have remained the subject of sustained public and academic dialogue as

described in chapter two. Due to the research design of this thesis and the TT's cornerstone position in the third sector, over the period of fieldwork I was able to compile many operational reports and press releases from the central administration of the TT and the local work of the EFP. These factors reveal more about the faith-laden nature of food banking, and the politics surrounding them, in Scotland, the UK and beyond.

Church buildings have historically comprised seven within a total of nine local EFP foodbanks, while some other foodbank systems in Edinburgh are made up entirely of church buildings (e.g. Edinburgh City Mission, founded 1832). Below I provide the Multiple Deprivation Index (MDI) data from 2012 which was a watershed year in foodbank expansion in Edinburgh. The position of churches as historical buildings already established in deprived areas of the city has allowed for their easy acquiescence to the bureaucratic foodbank paradigm set up by the TT, even as Scotland has experienced rapid secularisation since the end of the second world war (Harvie 1993; Bruce 2014) with church membership being on average noticeably lower than in England (A. Brown and Woodhead 2016). This reality has not stopped churches, congregations, and governments at various levels from embracing the TT as the most legitimate form of abatement towards current levels of food poverty in the UK.

The map just below shows the poorest areas of Edinburgh in red: a significant poverty indicator based on years of government analysis of post code evaluations of poverty. The stark lines in Edinburgh are somewhat unique in Scotland, as Edinburgh society is at both times highly affluent and heavily impoverished, as the map below demonstrates.

2012 multiple deprivation index

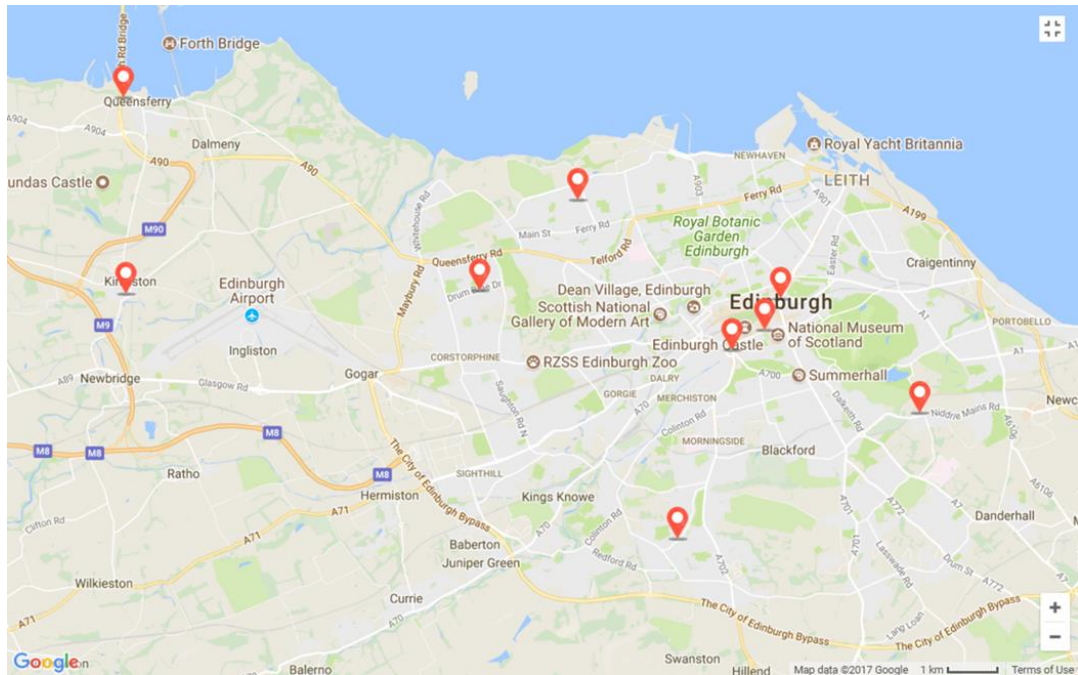


(SpatialData.gov.scot 2018)

Regardless of whether the multiple deprivation index paints an accurate picture of society or not, many local organizations take these statistics seriously and focus on statistics like those provided by the Scottish government including the MDI. Not surprisingly, the growth of TT administered foodbanks in Edinburgh began in areas that aligned significantly with the deprivation index data. This simple correlation itself is not robust enough to qualify a particular context in which the food banks arose in the Edinburgh Food Project. Closer analysis instead suggests possible cultural factors which contribute to the religious characteristics to many of Edinburgh's foodbanks as detailed in this chapter.

The map just below shows the locations of all Edinburgh Food project locations in 2016 (two have since closed):

Trussell Trust locations provided by the Edinburgh Food Project 2016-2017:



(Edinburgh North West Foodbank 2017)

The sites, almost all of which I visited during my tenure as an EFP volunteer, are spread across the city in areas including Grassmarket (Greyfriars Kirk; Church of Scotland); Tollcross (Central; Baptist); Broughton (St. Mary's; Church of Scotland); Rannoch (Community centre; public building); Pilton (Community Centre; 'portakabin'); Craigmillar (Bristo Memorial; Church of Scotland); Oxgangs (All Nations Christian Fellowship; Independent denomination); South Queensferry (The Priory Church; Scottish Episcopal); Kirkliston Parish Centre (Church of Scotland; foodbank ceased operation in 2017). From an objective point of view, it would be presumptuous to claim that the EFP locations were entirely based on such geographical data as that provided year after year by the MDI. Yet this historically contemporaneous development related to the beginnings of the food bank expansion in Edinburgh is clearly seen. Noticeable is the role of churches and congregations in providing the space and people needed, regardless of creed or denomination, within what is a network of historical places and willing persons available to be activated.

While the roles of volunteers and staff in FBOs stand amid the organisational culture of third sector bureaucracy as shown above, they are still free, in a sense, from the constraints of the third sector cycle of poverty and the welfare state apparatus. To what extent this reality conditions the responses volunteers have to the behaviour of clients who depend upon charity for basic provisions is outlined further below.

Development of the Edinburgh Food Project

The Edinburgh Food Project began officially in November 2012 with the purpose of providing free emergency food packs in five selected post code areas of Edinburgh. In December 2013, just over one year later, a central warehouse was opened in the Sighthill area of West Edinburgh. As a result, five more post code areas were added to the project, which comprised the Central area of the Edinburgh. During the first year of operation the EFP claimed receiving more than 22 000kg in donations, and in doing so provided for 1000 individuals in the North West region, accounting for what was judged to be 10,000 meals as each pack is supposed to contain three full meals for three days. In 2014 two drop off locations for donations were set up: one at the Tesco in South Queensferry and one of the Tesco in Corstorphine (NW Edinburgh Foodbank 2016). More recently, a software app was developed for smartphones to allow patrons of the EFP to track what items need to be donated on an ongoing or short-term basis, although the effectiveness of the app has been questioned by the volunteers themselves who often see a shortfall in toiletries, long life (UHT) milk, and other high demand items.

Recent developments at the Trussell Trust vs. local realities in for the Edinburgh Food Project

In 2016, the central administration of the Trussell Trust commissioned large-scale survey work as part of an ESRC funded project undertaken by researchers from Oxford University and King's College London. Once published in 2017, this revealed some UK-wide correlations between factors such as (lack of) work, gender, mental health, and physical/intellectual disability in connection with client foodbank usage in the UK (Loopstra and

Lalor 2017). What this report did not offer was speculation as to why people are becoming more willing to use the physical space of foodbanks, to sit and talk with volunteers or as to why so many volunteers give up their time to allow for what often amounts to the increased development of third-sector/FBO bureaucracy. Admittedly, gaining such knowledge was beyond the scope outlined for that research, which neglects any inquiry into the social resources which get someone into a foodbank, and which make them likely to return. One missing aspect in this network analysis is the volunteers themselves and what it is they feel they are working for. The survey was the first of its kind for the TT, and while it did reveal many unforeseen correlations that shocked many outside observers, many of the findings came as no surprise to long-time foodbank volunteers and staffers.

At the Tollcross and Pilton foodbanks, when volunteers hear and acknowledge the narratives of clients through putting themselves into the position of an actively listening benevolent partner, something rather different than the ESRC prescribed survey responses is encountered. Clients are instead given space to explain their reasons for coming and are invited to speak at length, often describing the pains of destitution. Clients are often tired of being restricted into residing in various areas of town,³³ being 'means tested,' being denied work, and having benefit agencies shift with unpredictable changes in policy which displace any sense of normative life. The effect that these narratives have on volunteers is varied: some reflect on these stories with contempt and judgement, while others in sympathy, still many more in various positions in between.

These oft-disturbing interactions have an internalising effect on the active listener. Listening to clients at foodbanks who are given space to speak at length demands that the volunteer assume a position of either cooperation with the client's narrative, or at least a posture that shows

³³ Or have become the necessary and so-called 'losers' in the euphemistical 'post code lottery' of the plight of renters in the UK, especially given the precarious nature of the housing crisis all across Britain (BBC News 2019; Wilkinson and Ortega-AlcÁzar 2017; BBC News 2019; Butler 2019)

themselves as trusting in the value of what the client chooses to say while maintaining a critical distance. This is not to say that a healthy amount of reflexivity can help one to avoid common short comings of third sector work in practice. Yet reflecting on this unavoidable task after experiencing this phenomenon in person for over two years makes clear that it becomes extremely difficult to maintain an impartial posture towards clients for very long.

The Kirk and *diakonia*

In the time elapsed since I had begun volunteering with EFT, the Pilton foodbank distribution site was demolished. A temporary Pilton site was moved to Drylaw Parish, Church of Scotland. Prior to this, the Kirkliston DC at the CoS was closed permanently. Other than these, all locations of the EFP DCs have remained in the same seven churches since 2014, except for one DC (Craigmillar) which is not housed in a church-owned building. Thus, in Edinburgh, it is hard to imagine how such an important and essential service like the one provided by EFP could even operate without using the (sacred) spaces of churches and the resources – both material and immaterial – of the congregants, parishioners, and other local concerned citizen-activists who perform the thousands of hours of manual and administrative labour to provide what would otherwise be considered a military-scale food-aid operation for the local community. Some commentators have suggested that the very top-down, neoliberal structure of the TT has enabled it to be a facilitator of this national scheme which serves the will of a detached growth-laden agenda (Cloke, May, and Williams 2017; A. Williams, Goodwin, and Cloke 2014; A. Williams et al. 2016). This comes through the acquiescence of many official government agencies (e.g. the Scottish Welfare Fund, Citizens' Advice Bureau, and Jobcentre+ administered by the Department for Work and Pensions) as well as other national not-for-profit groups.

The interpretation of the development of the Edinburgh Food Project contained in this chapter does not diminish the contribution made by non-

faith-oriented volunteers and staffers – yet most of them acknowledge, at the very least, the importance of the (sacred) spaces of the ecclesiastical locations and the new role appropriated for churches and denominations involved. Whether or not this is a beneficial arrangement for the future of the situation of food poverty in Britain, alongside the statistical decline of churches in Scotland, seems generally absent from conversation at distribution centres. Perhaps this denotes the true nature of food bank networks as they have evolved alongside churches, the prevalence of neoliberal thinking established in UK politics, and the plight of those on benefits, lacking work, and with mental/physical health conditions which directly contribute to the ongoing narratives and policy decisions regarding welfare conditionality/in-work-conditionality. The EFP, as part of the TT, still demonstrates the characteristics of local people in Edinburgh, as the city has historically encountered urban problems which can be traced far into the past and which will likely proceed into the future with or without the influence of the TT (J. Stark 1834; Premier 2015; North Edinburgh News 2018). In fact, the EFP began its aid to the people of Edinburgh before the TT stepped onto the scene.

The Edinburgh Food Project actually started prior to its formal TT affiliations in a privately-owned garage, but quickly became attached to the local parish church for want of space to house donations (they now manage a warehouse in a commercial district near the city bypass). Once there it was only a matter of time before the EFP beginning to inhabit churches in areas local to the various forms of poverty afflicting Edinburgh citizens, and was brought alongside the Trussell Trust. There is a back story here, in that the foodbanks did not just explode on the scene in the noughties. A network was already in place for activation, trailing into the recent past and involving many nameless though effective social activists who for better or worse have contributed for decades to the third sector in Scotland, especially since the process of devolution began in the late nineties.

Seven levels of care for Scotland: a visionary ‘Leither’

The Bethany Christian Trust (BCT) also has a long history prior to its more recent prominence. Formed in 1983 as a culmination of the efforts of Reverend Alan Berry (MBE), a Baptist minister serving in Leith, it has grown from a twelve-bed hostel into a national third sector service currently aiding over seven thousand clients. The BCT operates only in Scotland, and is focussed primarily on homelessness, but this concern also extends to the factors that lead to this phenomenon and to the conditions that entrench it. In practical terms, the trust provides house-calls and visitation support, emergency resettlement, community development, and supports numerous other partner projects. I was involved as a participant observer volunteering as a member of “Care Van” and “Night Shelter” crews, the former delivering hot food twice daily around Edinburgh at regular locations and the latter consisting of forty-five portable beds for rough sleepers (plus a hot meal) hosted at different church buildings around Edinburgh. The broad understanding of BCT work that I have obtained over the 2016-2017 autumn and winter seasons also has given me the time and space to reflect on the best possible documentary sources to compare with the first-hand experiences of volunteering within BCT.

In all, I only had to attend one meeting with approximately forty other new volunteers in the manner of an induction training event. It took place in November 2016, in the Leith Baptist Church Sanctuary where Rev. Berry used to serve as minister.

The Care Van (CV), which is at level one of ‘seven levels of care’ (Berry 2009), provides mobile food and hot drink distribution every evening of the year in Edinburgh, as well as at lunch time Mondays-Thursdays. The usage of the Care Van by local people has a yearly average of around forty clients per evening and the same at lunch. The number of service users regularly decreases in the winter months, when many of the clients (regular or otherwise) will have found some kind of short-term lodging for that night (including the Night shelter). Lower numbers of evening Care Van users is

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh correlated to winter and the opening months (November-April) of the BCT administered Night Shelter, which helps reduce the number of people sleeping rough.

More in depth and thick description of my work with the BCT follows in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Edinburgh Street Pastors: Accompaniment and ‘Being-with’ on the streets

Street Pastors (SP) are a UK-wide organisation (overseen by the Ascension Trust) which evolved out of the context of the increasingly precarious and dangerous nature of many urban street scenarios in England in the early years of the new millennium, and first centered on the Brixton area of London (Isaac and Davies 2009). Practical forms of aid include handing out coffee/tea, biscuits, blankets, and water to the homeless and beggar population, and flip-flops to women leaving clubs who may find it difficult to walk in high heels. They also aim to signpost vulnerable individuals towards local welfare services where possible and focus especially on picking up discarded bottles which are perceived as a menace to public safety and are an easily quantifiable statistic to keep track of (Isaac and Davies 2009, 31–33).

Take, for example, Stephen³⁴ who has been a SP for over five years and served as an interlocutor in this study. He first heard of the organization while living in London and reading one of the books put out by the founder of the SP organisation, the Reverend Les Isaac. Stephen also shares an affinity with the Rev. Isaac, in that they are both first generation immigrants to the UK. He has also met Rev. Isaac in person at Stephen’s formal SP commissioning service, held at a church in Edinburgh. Stephen even met his spouse within the SP organisation. He has invested a great deal of personal

³⁴ All names have been anonymised.

effort and feeling into the work itself. While his initial endeavour aimed at gaining employment did not transpire, he found other inspiration for the work:

What it was, was that I read Les Isaac's book, not all of it, I read a portion of it, and I heard him speak ... and I was just quite inspired by what he said. I was inspired by the book, by you know the whole ethos and how it came about it. That is why I joined, that's the reason.

Isabelle, another long serving ESP, first took interest after reading about SPs in an article featured in the Guardian (Barnett and Wander 2006), although this piece inaccurately states that the SPs organisation arose in a US context, when instead it was conceived in 2002 by formerly Jamaican church leaders working in London. At the time when she read the article, Isabelle was living in southern England, and even though no SP chapter yet existed there, she claims that she "knew" she would be involved in the SPs work at some point after that.

So, seven years later I got the opportunity to do it, and as soon as I heard about it I contacted the organisation and said I wanted to train, because from the moment I read about it, it had such a huge impact on me and I remember showing the article to lots of family and friends that were not Christians just to encourage them to see that this was a real thing that made a difference.

She made a move back to Scotland (where she was born) and settled in Edinburgh whilst the fledgling ESP organisation was just beginning to form up. After joining a local church congregation, she responded when the minister requested that members consider signing up for the first ever training program for new SPs to be held in Edinburgh. Because of the ongoing planning and preparation in the course (she is also now a team leader and staff member), she enjoys helping people in the night-time economy of Edinburgh:

We were out less than a month ago, on the last sat[urday] of the month, and we did street patrol from normal time 10 to about 4. Had some good conversations with people and the main thing I remember was several women who were really drunk, had got separated from their friends and needed a bit

of help making sure they got to the taxi safely. One of them had not been out for a long time and because she was young, she got way drunker than she would normally. We met other women who were also drunk and confused, one was telling us that a certain man was not her boyfriend, but all her family and friends were with her and said that she knows that is her boyfriend; she was just really drunk and confused. She was aggressive towards us, but she did calm down. The main intervention that night was to help women who made themselves vulnerable by being drunk.

Where Isabelle found public vulnerability in the night-time economy as deserving of attention, Stephen found he could relate closely to the experience of a family on the streets:

Just thinking back, I remember once when we met a family sleeping out, with little children, it was really bad. Some of the homeless guys -- those who are homeless are not out -- "street homeless" are not out, usually by the time we are out a lot of them have gone into the shelter. But this family, I knew they were generally street homeless, you know I was really touched, and she had three kids, all just covered up in the front of John Lewis, in the shopfront at the door, huddled up to sleep.

Stephen, himself a father, was physically pained in the relating of this story. His compassion showing in the tone of voice recorded and the expressions written on his face and body during the interview.

As can be read from the brief excerpts and rudimentary interpretation which followed in the sections above, Stephen and Isabelle assigned unique meanings in their related experiences with ESPs that somewhat paralleled the Good Samaritan motif from the Christian New Testament, something which is central to the groups's ethos (a theme to which I return later on in this thesis). Both interlocutors interacted with the ideal of the (human) good Samaritan as opposed to the (divine) person of Jesus who is the narrator of the parable itself. Stephen and Isabelle both seem to have embraced, in their own ways, what it means to practically embody something like a form of Christian perfectionism and holiness: one which ultimately does not solve the problems of the world but does speak back to them. The ultimate solution, for these two participants, comes through salvation of the person's soul and not

primarily in the alleviation of poverty, bodily ills, social stratification, or egalitarianism (though these are worthwhile practical goals). For some theologians, this practical reading of the parable would be a mistake as well as an over-simplification of the ancient meaning assigned by the scribal community who created it (Wells 2016; Wells 2015). The ESP interpretation of the parable and its meaning demonstrates an innate ability within volunteers to create new meaning which combines elements of the past with current situations in a believable scenario for new recruits and old members alike to latch on to.

My own initial experience was indicative of my initial outsider status in the group even though I self-identified as being broadly in line with the Christian ethos as defined in the primary literature produced by the Ascension Trust. This can be understood from my initial reactions which I recorded in my field journal. The entry just below details the events during 2016. I was fortunate to take down notes on my phone as I began this lengthy training process, which would not conclude until May 2017 when I became a full-fledged member:

On the evening of Oct 20, I finally met Anne, one of the leaders from the local SP organisation at a small group bible study. She holds a role in the administration of the local SP initiative and also patrols at least once per month. This meeting, which is an ongoing weekly event, took place in the home of two other street pastors I had met from my congregation a few months prior. Their flat was not far from where I was living, so I cycled there, arriving slightly wet because of the light rain which was just beginning to fall. I arrived and greeted the various individuals in attendance, some of whom I had met at one prior gathering of this particular study group. The group is not directly associated with SPs but includes some who volunteer with the organisation. In the humidity of the flat, which was accentuated by the massive amount of hot food being prepared in the kitchen, I learned some of the finer points of the SPs organisation from Anne's description of their efforts. This included where in Edinburgh the street pastors were operating and what they provide to people, e.g., coffee/tea, biscuits, blankets, water, and flip-flops to women leaving clubs who may find it difficult to walk in high heels. She mentioned the importance of the "Urban Trinity" concept, which is an Ascension trust idea combining the efforts of

local government, police, and SPs into their vision for the renewal of society.

This was important to my early understanding of the organisation, since prior to actually getting to know any of the local street SPs I was only familiar with their work from an objective distance. Any information I did have had been gathered through publicized material put out by the Ascension Trust, from scholarly articles, or by word of mouth from people I had met in my congregation. After this first meeting with Anne, I was now more intrigued and interested to see the efforts of the organisation in practice. I gave Anne my contact information and said that I would be interested in observing the group. She thought this would be possible in August, but probably not until the latter half of the month. We planned for the week beginning August 28, and closer to that time we would be in touch to decide which group I could observe. I was anticipating this experience with a few questions rolling around in my mind: What were these people really doing, other than what their publicized materials stated about the successes of the initiative? What aspects of faith intersected with the practical work? What was motivating people to spend an entire night out helping people in their various struggles and lifestyles? As a person of faith, and as an ethnographer, I was equally interested and curious. I certainly could not approach the answers to all the above questions on my first night out, but I have kept all of them in mind since then.

First supervised patrol outing, Oct 22, 2016:

On Friday afternoon I received a call on my mobile from an unknown number. It turned out to be Anne, who invited me to join up with the local SPs group that evening and observe their actions. Glad to get the ball rolling, I got directions to the meeting point and said I would be there by 22:15.

[*begin text] On the night of Oct 22, I left late and cycled from my flat at 22:15 to an old church which serves as a base for Edinburgh Street Pastors. I arrived about twenty minutes later than I was instructed to, and preparations for the night were in full swing. One of the men in the group

was walking outside under the light of a streetlamp as I locked my bicycle to the wrought iron fence. I descended the stairs towards the door where I made known my identity and purposes, and I was swiftly welcomed inside the church basement. After hanging up my helmet in the foyer, I was invited into the kitchen, and given a cup of coffee whilst I met the rest of the group. After some brief introductions – this included Anne from the Wednesday night group – in the kitchen, as thermoses were being filled with coffee and tea, and placed in backpacks along with biscuits, lollipops, and water bottles, the whole group sat down around a table in the room adjacent to the foyer. Under dim fluorescent lighting I filled out a legal waiver form as an observer, which included, among other things, the organization's immunity were I to incur bodily harm, and the instruction that I was not intended to pursue direct interaction with members of the public while observing the patrol. It was also agreed that I would only spend the first half of the night observing, and then go home after the half-way meeting. Other than these formalities the tone of the meeting was light-hearted, and focused on the task at hand for the evening. Jokes and stories were exchanged before the business of the meeting began. Most, if not all, of the SPs seemed to be reasonably chatty and talkative with one another.

After each person introduced themselves, reports were read from the logbooks which had been recorded from the prior weekend. I gave my own explanation of my presence to the group, and then all seven of us (four female and two male street pastors, in addition to myself) engaged in approximately five to ten minutes of prayer. These were spoken out loud, and everyone contributed to this exercise. Some references to the Bible were made in the prayers. After this was finished, it was decided that two groups of three SPs each would take separate routes through the night. I was later informed that three is the ideal number for forming a street pastor patrol – two being too few for safety protocols, and four being a waste of a body who could with two others form a group or have a furlough until they were better needed. Both groups were to meet up again after the first patrol back at the church, which was to mark the end of my observation for that

night, at approximately 2:00. I would accompany the group proceeding broadly towards the new town area of Edinburgh.

By the time we exited the church a transition from twilight to near darkness had occurred, as it was almost 23:00. Police sirens could be heard in the distance, as well as idling sports cars at the curb. I cannot help thinking that to be observing the SPs on such a warm and temperate night is fortunate – Edinburgh weather can often suddenly become windy and rainy or remain grey and chilly for days at a time even in the summer. Whatever street knowledge passing a few seasons here in Scotland has given me, the city I live in is still rather inaccessible to my senses. As a newcomer to Edinburgh, it can be difficult to comprehend the social significance of the night-time economy and culture of the place, although I imagine this varies a bit from season to season. During the experience of an urban summer day, with the throngs of tourists and street performers, students and businesspeople, families and children, buses and bicycles, it is impossible to picture how exactly the rhythm of the city switches into its nocturnal mode. Once transitioned into night, though, there are some emergent cultural signals in the life of the city which will be pointed to in the words that follow. My initial experience with SPs being at night, I feel that I might make an initial association between their work and the nocturnal environment with which it is associated. This brings with it some theological significance as well, perhaps as a practical example of a modern day reading of 1 Thessalonians 5:5 “for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.” I may perhaps explore, at a later interval, to what extent this theme resonates with SPs.

We had left the church and proceeded three hundred feet, which had given me time to engage me in-ear amplifier to better hear the conversations taking place in the group. By now the SPs had all donned their jackets, bearing the STREET PASTOR logo, making them readily identifiable to members of the public, police, and, as I found out later, also to CCTV operators. The first few stops on the patrol were made at various “pitches” of

begging people, who were already known by the street pastors. I was struck by two features of this. First, that the geographical locale of a person who regularly begs can be called a “pitch,” and is the exclusive territory of that person (or of multiple people), one of the SPs informs me. It could be that I am not familiar enough with the vernacular, but ‘pitch’ carries with it a sales-oriented connotation – yet the context in which it is used in this case seems to be associated with place, i.e. the context of a football pitch; a place with a designated purpose. Now this reference was made, I did not ask for clarification, but I will need to follow up on this use of language with SP informants later. The second aspect which was striking was that the SPs knew the names of all the regular people at their pitches, a fact which makes it particularly interesting for the SPs when they meet a new person whom they haven’t seen before. These pitches, I am told, help to situate who are “needier” ones – actually “sleeping rough” – as opposed to the persons who spend time begging during the day and return to their homes at night. To what extent this latter claim is a reality for these people, I of course do not know at this point. In addition to being informed on these aspects of street culture, I was asked to refrain from standing in front of pitches while SPs provided tea/coffee and biscuits to not take away from the traffic passing by the pan for collecting change, as this would clearly disrupt the purpose of the pitch. I was asked to avoid taking notes as much as possible during interactions with street homeless people. Regarding my field notes, I would have to record them later, and not while on patrol – for the most part anyway. Not taking notes keeps the SPs from being associated directly with police work, as the presence of two-way radios is also somewhat concealed during the patrols because of the perceived authority and legitimacy connected with such devices. As I later discovered, the leader of the SP team takes notes after interactions have taken place. The purpose of this is to be able to fill in details of interactions in the logbook soon after the patrol and occurs at the halfway break and again at the end of the night.

Along the way, and in-between pitches, the SPs greeted and made small talk with some of the bouncers in the doorways of the clubs and bars

that we pass by. We were by that point on a main thoroughfare through Edinburgh and although it was nearly mid-night, the traffic approached daytime levels, engines revved, brakes squealed, trams passed, and the city was very much alive with action. There are even some buggies visible, being pushed around by men and women, presumably with sleeping infants inside.

Eventually we encountered a very intoxicated man on the steps of a large historic church, whose accompanying friend informed us – many times over – the obvious reality that he was very drunk (both men had been drinking for some time). The man referred to was lying on the ground, and was breathing, but was nearly incoherent and unable to speak. Four police officers were questioning and taking notes from others nearby, but whether this was related to the situation of the man on the ground is impossible to say. This was all transpiring barely twenty feet away from a night-time services caravan aiding the homeless. The staff from this caravan were alerted to the state of this man on the sidewalk by the SP and staff from this group proceeded to help him, to determine whether an ambulance would be needed to get him to hospital. [end text*]

This event kicked off my initial inculturation into the ESP group, but the process was far from over. I would not gain full ESP status for almost a year, and only after taking on all prescribed training sessions and vocational tasks.

Final Supervised Patrol, Oct 31, 2016:

The night began much as the other before it had. After a few more stops at different pitches, at which the SPs consistently supplied tea/coffee/biscuits when desired, I then noticed one of the SPs using a walkie-talkie (Motorola style radio). I had thus far assumed that it was to be used for communication between other SPs, but they are for communication with local CCTV. This ability, I am told, allows SPs to avoid calling the police directly in a variety of situations, unless this becomes necessary. CCTV operators can also ask SPs to move into certain areas, or avoid others, depending on the situation. For example, workers at one of the street music festivals who were closing

for the night mentioned to the SPs that a young woman wearing a wig had spent the whole evening at the bar, drinking water, saying she had someone to meet there. They found her presence slightly unnerving, given that she appeared very young and said she was not from Edinburgh. In any case, her behaviour was considered strange enough by the bar staff that they felt the need to have SPs investigate the whereabouts/welfare of this woman. She had left the vicinity about an hour prior to the SPs arrival. Unfortunately for the SPs, this time CCTV was not able to confirm the whereabouts of this person, and despite asking for tips from bouncers as we headed along in the direction she had taken, it was not possible to figure out whether she had made it home safely or not.

The next person we encountered, who was known already to the SPs, was a man sitting at his pitch with a sleeping dog on his lap. Upon greeting the man, who seemed half asleep, his face showed signs of pain and discomfort as he winced while returning the greeting. He explained that he had had a toothache for some time but had not sought any solution to this ailment. When one of the SPs offered prayer for the man, he at first grudgingly went along with it, but at the concluding “Amen” appeared more enthusiastic and appreciative. In much the same way, many of the men and women at their pitches that night accepted offers of prayer, while various others did not. The most interesting part of the SPs efforts at prayer which I observed involved how they approached a group of young men lingering at a park bench. One of the SPs nonchalantly asked them how they were doing, and what the night had been like for them. One of the men replied that they were about to leave Edinburgh on a flight to the European continent to celebrate a bachelor party. As they were drinking at the time, they were quite jovial, and asked, “what are street pastors?” After a short explanation, which provided details about the group’s efforts at serving the night-time culture and promoting safety in Edinburgh and across the UK, one of the SPs asked if the man getting married would like to be prayed for. He said that he would, and when the street pastors placed their hands on his shoulders and prayed out loud for him, this elicited an interested but not negative response for the

rest of his friends. The young man thanked the street pastors and wished them a good night, saying “God bless you all.”

On the way back to the church which serves as the base for the SPs, we passed one of the same pitches from earlier in the evening, only this time the man was accompanied by a youth. The young man asked me if I would trade my trousers for his track suit bottoms because, due to a dress code, “I need jeans to get into that club,” as he gestures to an establishment further down the street. Unfortunately, I informed him that “I am not actually wearing jeans.” At this point he realizes his mistake at which he laughs and bids me a conciliatory good night.

The patrol had now completed a circle and arrived back at the roundabout near the church we began at. Back at the church a mid-patrol meeting was held, where SPs talk about how the events of the night transpired, and tea and coffee were again served up in ample amounts to help the SPs make it through the second part of the patrol. Some of the group have brought their own food or picked up something to eat at one of the take-away stands which busily serve customers throughout most of the night. At this point it was approximately 2:15, and after filling in the necessary logbooks another prayer time occurred. Before getting on my bike to go home, as the sun was already lighting the horizon for an early dawn, I was told that the first half of the patrol generally focused on the homeless and vulnerable, while the second half mostly would be occupied on preventing trouble as people exited the many bars and clubs *en masse* between 03:00 and 04:00. As I cycled home to be in bed before 03:00am, I marvelled at the volunteer’s energy to continue for the rest of the night while I – the youngest of the group – was on the verge of collapse. [end text*]

I include the above longer examples of (edited) field notes in the chapter above to shed more light on the situation in Edinburgh and how faith-based social activism there is made meaningful and symbolically valid for those involved.

Conclusion

The examples and analysis given in this chapter describe spatial elements and sacred local contexts of Edinburgh through examining historical sources, narratives from interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork which fell between summer 2016 and autumn 2017, at three established organisations known publicly as Bethany Christian Trust (BCT), Edinburgh Food Project (EFP) and Edinburgh Street Pastors (ESP). The unique nature of faith-based social activism in Edinburgh is introduced, which also frames the inquiry presented in the following chapters of this thesis. Interviews often focussed on the local qualities of organisations, and not the national or macro level literature and media from which I also compiled data for the same fieldwork period. Therefore, this chapter's analysis mostly focussed on documentary and ethnographic data sets as denoted above and only included interview responses where relevant.

While the third sector has undoubtedly influenced the nature of faith-based activism in Edinburgh, the vibrant history of these three organisations in particular stands in stark contrast to the high degree of scrutiny these initiatives have recently come under.

Chapter 5 – Organisational definitions and practices

This chapter represents how local faith-based organisations in the UK and Scotland define their work in general and compares these official definitions to how individual staff and volunteers describe their work in Edinburgh. By drawing attention to how volunteers and staff feel about the work and comparing it with organisational representations of those efforts, a fuller picture emerges which highlights some of the differences between the various strata of each case study. This also shows how definitions drawn out of traditional religious frameworks take on new meanings in unique local contexts. The ways in which social activism is represented in literature and media (e.g. in press releases) versus how it is felt in a lived-experience context (e.g. volunteering with a foodbank) is shown to be differentiated, though both phenomena reflect and resemble each other in the ongoing meaning-making process.

Welcoming the ‘Stranger’ into Edinburgh Foodbanks

Foodbanks in the Edinburgh Food Project (EFP) are often located in church buildings as shown in chapter four, and these initiatives easily draw volunteers from a wide cross section of individuals (e.g. across differences of age, gender, class, race, religion). Many workers are congregants of local churches, but this is not a requirement to serve and there are no restrictions on the identity of volunteers or staff. The Trussell Trust (TT) which oversees the EFP, while somewhat known to publicly hold a faith-based vision, does not explicitly provide any further theological rationale for its key role in the third sector aside from one section of quoted scripture in English, which I address below. One EFP staff member whom I interviewed admitted not knowing that the TT had a faith-based mission statement before joining. These rather loose theological conditions allow volunteers and staff the liberty to create meanings and impart them to others. This can occur in situations at the foodbanks or in meetings such as Bible studies which encourage foodbank participation.

The website for the TT has a section entitled 'mission and values' which states: "The Trussell Trust is a charity founded on Christian principles. We work with people of all faiths and none, yet are inspired to do what we do by the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: 35 – 36" (Trusell Trust 2016). The TT follows in a sense the literal text in English from the gospel of Matthew:

'[...] for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'³⁵

This biblical 'mission' statement is not presented at TT centres. Indeed, neither supporters nor detractors of the organisation touch upon theological themes. In fact, one must do a little digging around TT website to encounter them. This marginalisation of specific religious language does allow prospective and current volunteers to rely on their own ideas of theological legitimacy and symbolism if desired. These conditions also allow for churches to support the TT organisation without providing explicit theological moorings.

Two of the participants whom I interviewed helped to establish the Tollcross distribution centre where I served for over a year. They initially gathered interest from potential volunteers through a cell group³⁶ where members felt that they had to act to counter, or at least abate, the problem of food and income insecurity. They had observed increased poverty in Tollcross for years, motivating their prayers, activism, and networking inside and outside their congregation, as Mark relates:³⁷

I help at the foodbank run by the Trussell Trust, it's in a shop that belongs to the church and runs twice a week. On Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings. I was involved

³⁵ I refer to the NRSV because of its academic reputation and clarity in modern English, thus all biblical references in this thesis manuscript are taken from this translation unless otherwise stated (*New Revised Standard Version Bible* 2006). The TT does not use this translation, and do not provide their rationale for choosing the version of Matthew 25 which they publicise.

³⁶ Referred to as a "mission community" which was initiated by the local congregation.

³⁷ All names have been anonymized.

in the early formation of it probably 4-5 years ago. The church runs missional communities which was our community which focuses on this area of Tollcross. Quite a lot of stuff leading up to it seemed that the need for foodbanks building in this country. And one of our group had a connection with a chap called Robert who was involved with the Trussell Trust and he was starting up several foodbanks in Edinburgh called the Edinburgh Food Project. Our friend knew this chap Robert and that's how we got involved with the Trussell Trust, which is the main provider of foodbanks in Britain.

Many of the volunteers' narratives express a preference towards this kind of action based on faith – something I return to in the following chapters as a recurrent theme. Bible study groups, in particular, had a strong hand in establishing the Tollcross DC, as one of the volunteers in the EFP relates:

Instead of having house groups where we went and did a Bible study, and possibly a bit of recruiting, we were directed that we should just stop the house groups, that we should communicate, and the people got together in groups with similar interests.

And my particular thing is social justice. That's probably why I wasn't trying to get into politics which I never really felt I was getting into. I think perhaps I could do it better. If I can't change the world through delivering leaflets and going to political rallies, maybe I can change a few people's lives by giving them food and making the area a nicer place to live, and making sure people have got friends and activities, that sort of thing.

Some of the things we did -- We then moved to Tollcross as a church. We bought that building and moved to Tollcross to set up shop. We used the shop -- there were quite a lot of us. We had a meeting group in that shop once a month. It was the first Friday of the month, we got together there and encouraged people to come in and knit. It was just a couple of sofas.

There was one lady who came in, she said it changed her life. She was walking past, and she saw us knitting. It was an elderly lady and she just came and knocked on the door and said, "What are you doing?" We said, "Come in and we'll tell you about it." She sat down and she had a cup of tea and she said, "I knit all the time, but I do it on my own." She was quite lonely, lived on the top flats.

She started coming every month and made friends and started going -- I believe she started going to a luncheon club somewhere where she was able to -- They cut her out and she said she had been so low and so depressed and suddenly she realized there were people out there that she could join in with.

As evidenced above, these excerpted quotations go far more in depth than the quoted scripture appearing on sub-sections of the TT webpages. The TT's more accessible mission statement on the homepage of its website states "The Trussell Trust partners with local communities to help stop UK hunger" (Trussell Trust 2018). Yet apart from the wide-ranging and vague mission statements which are often publicised by third sector organisations, the practice of active listening as performed by local volunteers (as referred to in chapter four) allows the reality of clients' problems to emerge and impact the volunteer, which forms a significant counterpoint to the prevailing oversaturation of public commentary available on the contemporary food poverty crisis in the UK. In one sense, an ethnographic approach allowed this reality to distill itself in my own experience, as well as through interviews. Throughout the two years I spent observing food poverty in Edinburgh, this ability for regular workers to engage in various tasks seems to diverge sharply from both affirmative TT materials and negative free press commentary on the matter (Kotecha 2014; Trussell Trust 2016). While EFP efforts cannot be fully vindicated from the economic quagmire of contemporary welfare bureaucracy and the paternalistic posture sometimes taken by FBOs, what one observes in person is markedly different than what can be found in some of the current academic literature which derides religious activism (Elisha 2008). Media spectacles on food poverty and its growing statistical legitimacy, government-appropriated or otherwise, also are seen in an unfavourable light (Borch and Kjærnes 2016; Dowler 2003; 2001).

The way the TT structures its national statistics as a contributory force to the third sector rests on the backs of the somewhat unsung volunteers who support the work. The actual labour performed by volunteers sometimes stands in contrast with how an organisation like the EFP 'postures' its role in

the local – and competitive – third sector economy of social activism in Edinburgh. Local volunteers suggest a different understanding of the problem of food poverty in this part of the UK, pointing to the traits which make their responses localised. Foodbanks like those I observed and volunteered with as a worker in the Edinburgh Food Project offer a diverse environment for religious meaning-making, as most of them are in church buildings (see chapter four) and are at least partially – if not wholly – staffed by congregation members and their friends. Front-line services such as the distribution centres of the EFP embody distinctive characteristics depending on the location and are reflexive to social needs. This phenomenon occurs even if the mission to ‘welcome the stranger’ of Matthew 25 means something different at the organisational level (i.e. macro and bureaucratic) than at the micro level to an individual volunteer.³⁸

Active listening, as I have related on the part of volunteers, is not merely a gesture employed by the foodbank workers to gather information and divert clients into other directions. Instead, one in such a position is expected by the other volunteers to listen and offer advice appropriately, yet their motivation to act on these things depends on circumstances and is not formulaic. Through listening, volunteers have found that clients in Edinburgh are fully conscious of paternalistic attitudes within the new welfare pluralism matrix in the UK. Narratives which describe the so-called ‘deserving and undeserving poor’ do occur among volunteers during the work, suggesting that soft resources (e.g. active listening) are limited, and that this kind of *diakonia* cannot go on indefinitely. The Edinburgh Food Project has theological associations through the urban spaces it uses and the persons who have become involved (e.g. Bible study groups), but this does not mean that these resources are inexhaustible. They perhaps have not been tested to the limits yet.

³⁸ Head office (macro) > regional warehouses (meso) > local distribution centres (micro) all have a different position on what it means to welcome the ‘Stranger,’ but the theological dimensions of this are hidden or not represented to clients.

Volunteers are often aware of the shortcomings of the third sector and very aware of the shortcomings of the state. One of the team leaders from the foodbank where I most often volunteered said this:

I find all of it depressing, actually. I like talking to people. I like the fact that so many of them really do need what we're doing and that they feel better for what we're doing. I think some of them take it for granted et cetera but there are a lot of them who wouldn't be able to survive without people doing these sorts of things that we're doing. Which is a sad reflection on society...

Perhaps the sentiment felt by many faith-based social activists is communicable as a desire to sometimes fail admirably at doing 'good works' rather than to certainly succeed at doing nothing at all in the face of societal crises and catastrophe. This may also shed some light on the important contributions of prior studies into associated phenomena in the UK and Europe (Beaumont, Cloke, and Williams 2013), in which various typologies ranging across liberal and open schemes of assisting those in poverty somewhat clash with more evangelistic and transformation-focussed ministries.

Bethany Christian Trust: encountering the Image of God

Self-published promotional materials are a stalwart of the third sector in the UK, and faith-based organisations in the Scotland are proficient in producing press releases as well. This obviously helps to drive donations up, but I argue here that it also creates space for theological and religious meaning in extra-ecclesial ways. These publications are not restricted by dogmatic or doctrinal conventions and reach a large and sympathetic religious readership. Such works address themes like the injustices of Universal Credit from an alternative perspective, a process described in Paul Tillich's conception of the meaningless daily struggle against the technocracy of modern life (1995). The volunteers' ability to create their own theological visions to a certain extent also reflects H. Richard Niebuhr's idea of Christ and culture being two distinct publics (Niebuhr 1956). For example, the

language used in the public statements by the BCT does not shroud elements of faith, yet they are often not encompassing of an easily identifiable branch of Christianity either. One element of BCT narratives I explore below is the concept of treating all people as being made in the image of God, a concept central to the BCT and its literature.³⁹

The analysis of the data demonstrated the process of how a close interpretation of organisational culture can reveal some of the ethical and moral diversity present in Scottish social activism. In what is typically seen by social critics as an evangelistic (Elisha 2012), or even paternalistic (Baker 2013), form of social care there may instead be great diversity to be found in how organisations break from hegemonic social norms associated with institutional affiliation (Cloke and Beaumont 2013). While it would be inaccurate to assume any of these factors as normative, the design of this study was open to an iterative interpretation of the phenomena in question. A qualitative methodological approach should be reflexive enough to not prescribe what the data will communicate, where analysis is contingent upon the practical realities facing faith-based social activists within the forms welfare pluralism brought in and largely encouraged by both the public (government, policy) and private (corporate; religious) sectors. This research thus far has as its object of study the process of how *meaning* is constructed⁴⁰ among (mostly) voluntary social-activist faith groups, and what factors are present across the bureaucratic and organisational structures which help to mobilise and activate these feelings into tangible effort (e.g., in the form of voluntary labour).

Background of the BCT and significance in Scotland

Faith-based social activism is today a large force within the burgeoning structures of third sector welfare pluralism. As indicated in prior chapters, the

³⁹ Cf. Gen 1:26–28; Gen 5:1–3; Gen 9:6; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:13-15; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4-7.

⁴⁰ Here I am broadly referring to the symbolic interactionist paradigm in sociological and anthropological theory, and in particular the Chicago school associated with Herbert Blumer and George Herbert Mead (Blumer 1986, 2).

trend towards voluntary social services is identifiable across much of the UK over the last two decades c.1997-2017 (Chaney 2014), and in this sense growth in the Scottish context is not unique in Britain (Osborne 2012). Yet little attention has been paid to how different kinds of third sector voluntary organisations operate in Scotland to fill gaps in the social services, how they are different from their southern (or UK-wide) counterparts, and what social and environmental factors are different in Scotland for the third sector. Even less academic work has focussed on how FBOs are currently growing in local Scottish situations. Alongside the increase in mostly voluntary welfare provision (e.g. foodbanks, homeless shelters, street safeguarding patrols) the promotion of austerity measures by way of economic policy administered in successive UK governments since at least the new millennium has coincided with FBOs taking on a larger portion of social services.

What now appears as a massive body composed of different agencies and bureaucracies which can be collectively thought of as part of ‘civil society’ also includes within it bolstering faith groups which tend to ‘punch above their weight’ in terms of overall representation. This might well be attributed to what social theorists have tended to refer to as ‘social capital’ (Putnam and Campbell 2012; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2004), yet this general concept does not account for the complexity of motivations, desires, and meanings which can be traced out across FBO work in Scotland. Likewise, the entrenched sociological concept of linear secularisation (Bruce 2011, 2014) becomes somewhat overextended when understood as contributory to the amount of effort exerted in recent years by numerous FBOs across Britain, in what instead appears to be a burgeoning environment of welfare pluralism. Certainly, the reality that social capital contributes real legitimacy to the status of FBOs within the third secular milieu is an important phenomenon. However, and more specifically, evaluating the extent to which FBOs can adequately supply “needs-based” welfare provision which have otherwise been cut by the state is a topic that has begun to attract some scholarly attention in Britain (Milbourne and Cushman 2012; O’Shea, Darcy, and Leonard 2007). Another potential

independence referendum for Scotland will again raise the possibility of greater devolution of powers from Westminster to Holyrood regarding welfare provision. This process will need to address how more recent policy has moved toward devolution coupled with historical Westminster cuts have continued to promote an economy of voluntary labour over-against the formerly centralised welfare state (Chaney and Wincott 2014).

After analysing seven years of content from BCT annual reports according to the methodology outlined in chapter three, the following tables outline my findings (which were earlier described from a methodological perspective in chapter three of this thesis).

Table 1: Annual Reports by the numbers:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Title of the Report</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Words</i>	<i>Images</i>
2010	“One Good Turn”	45	4849	11
2011	“What Makes You Feel Safe & Sound”?	96	3617	(No photos)
2012	“Scotland At A Crossroads”	46	5800	11
2013	“30 Years On – Read All About it!”	44	6918	40
2014	“Life From A Different Angle”	31	8594	17
2015	Untitled (Theme of Transformation)	34	7846	14
2016	“Make Your Mark”	29	3545	12

Table 2: Highest overall word frequency:

Year Potential 'in vivo' codes based on weighted percentage per report (excluding the words "Bethany" and "Trust")

2010	People; Christian
2011	Safe; sound; feel; makes; people
2012	Scotland; people; crossroads; support
2013	People; support
2014	People
2015	People
2016	People

The above charts show how the reports were qualitatively analysed by the software prior to the process of interpretively coding each instance of child codes manually, and over many hours of reflection as outlined in chapter three.

Below I include verbatim examples of codes from the BCT reports, as they evidenced themes from this particular subset of data, within the wider inquiry of the qualitative study of faith-based social activism, which implicated these findings across all of the case studies as depicted by the following table:

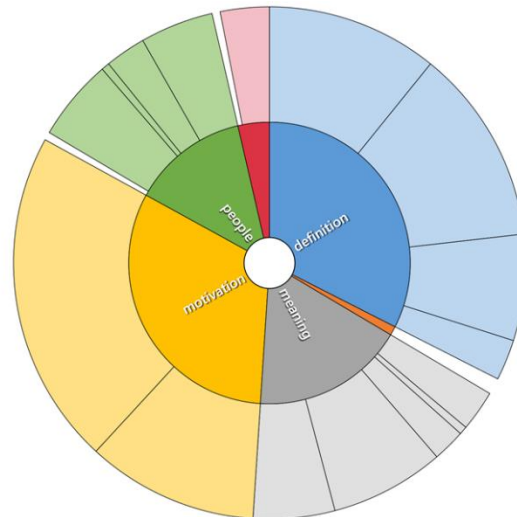
<i>Parent Codes</i>	<i>Child Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Coded Instances (words, sentences)</i>
5. <i>Definition(s)</i>	c) Faith	"[...] our core ethos remains the same. We are still here to put love into action and faith into practice to empower people to live independently in society."	24
	d) Values	"We value fairness, meeting anyone at their point of need regardless of background or belief."	5
6. <i>Meaning(s)</i>	d) Legacy	"What legacy are we weaving into the lives of others? It is a question that we often ask ourselves at Bethany."	5
	e) Symbols	"The rainbow. A symbol of hope and of transformation between storms and fair weather."	4

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh

7. <i>Motivation(s)</i>	f) Work	“At the centre we work together, staff and residents alongside each other, to build a community that works like a big family.”	10
	d) Organisational Needs	“The past year has been yet another year of change for Bethany as we have worked to keep pace with increasing requests for support.”	21
	e) Societal Needs	“We are challenged by the increasing demand for our services and by the difficulty of finding the resources to do all we believe could be done. Evidence of an increased need for support is clear in the higher numbers of people accessing our services.”	41
8. <i>People</i>	f) Public Spending Cuts	“Like others in the sector, Bethany is subject to ongoing budget cuts. Many of our services are under pressure to deliver more and more in a funding environment which demands ever greater efficiencies.”	6
	d) Community	“I thought that making friends with people and helping a good cause like Bethany would be a good combination. While doing my little bit to help I’ve shared time with neighbours, friends and complete strangers.”	10
	e) Suicide	“Without him and the drop-in I would have probably killed myself.”	5
	f) Intrinsic Value	“A strong belief in valuing every person was at the heart of Bethany when we were established 33 years ago.”	5

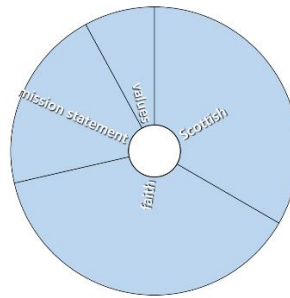
Included in this chapter are the above samples of codes from the computer assisted documentary analysis stage of the project to provide a transparent indicator of the interpretive process outlined in chapter three of this thesis. Below, the graphics depict more quantitatively (by percentage), what the qualitative values of the reports represent overall.

Figure 1: Overall parent codes



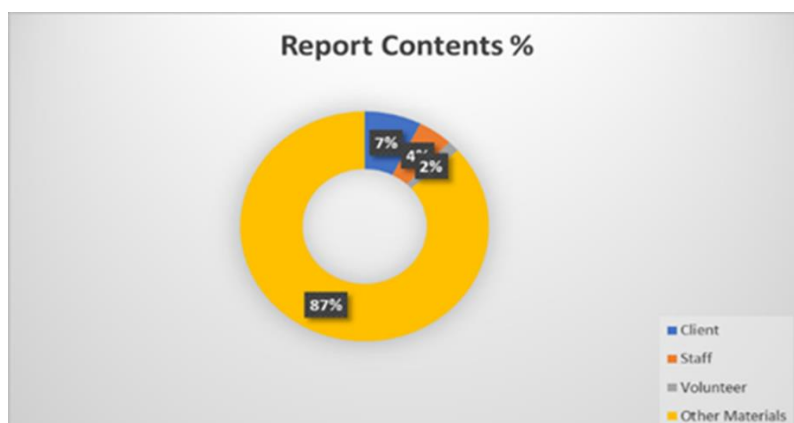
As related earlier in this thesis, themes arising from within this sample of reports conformed around meanings expressed, motivations encountered, and definitions created for the work. The only outlier theme was simply “people,” which, as shown in figure 2 above, was time and again the most commonly recurring work across almost all of the reports’ main text contents (excluding appendix related materials like contact information and long donor lists usually included at the end of the reports).

Figure 2: Breakdown of Child Codes – *Definitions*



The pie chart breakdown given just above is for only one of the parent codes from figure 3; in this case for *definitions* as they are outlined in the reports. In my analysis, it suggests a variety of moral and ethical terminology and conceptual framing within which the BCT organisation defines itself across the seven-year timeframe. In addition to the parent and child codes outline above, I also assigned large segments of the text to one or more cases, consisting of text originating from 1) staff, 2) volunteers, and 3) clients. The weighted percentage of staff, volunteer, client related contents of the reports *and* other various materials in the reports is given below.

Figure 3: Weighted percentage of sources in reports



As is made clear in the above chart, almost all language in the reports is published anonymously (i.e. not attributed to any particular source, while also appearing authoritative), in a manner which legitimates many of the claims made within the text.⁴¹

Analysis of these publications clearly demonstrates the distinct religious language as well as the many symbols required to communicate effectively, even towards a generally sympathetic audience. More focussed releases of data from the BCT are also common, and amount to a different form of legitimation in practice. Where deviations do exist between organisational mission and staff/volunteers they are related to the labour, and thus not theological. This include narratives arising at different levels within the organisation:

<p><u>Organisational level</u> (e.g. Press releases): “Christian Love in Action” “A strong belief in valuing every person was at the heart of Bethany when we were established 33 years ago.”</p>	<p><u>Staff level</u> (e.g. Interview w/ Volunteer Business Strategist): “I guess Edinburgh has always been the hub, so the staff used to be like, "oh it's so Edinburgh centric, Bethany is so Edinburgh centric." [over-against Glasgow operations] And we need to watch out for that and know we're growing and make sure that various other organisations are still involved”</p>
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Cloke, Beaumont and Williams (2013, 17) state three reasons why deviations between organisations and volunteers exist, firstly drawing attention to changes in perceived divisions of ‘the secular’ vs. ‘the religious’ (e.g. BCT

⁴¹ Which is, in some sense, not unlike how much ethical and religious language is used throughout culture, and not merely among FBOs *per se* (Hendley 2000; Stout 2001).

maintains a soft theological approach to urban poverty, remaining both therapeutic and critical to the problem). They also argue that organisations like FBOs open real possibilities that work (e.g. FBO bureaucracy is 'efficient') while also developing potential new geographical conceptions of urban life (e.g. different FBOs experience overlap services in a geographical sense in Edinburgh). This begs the question of whether volunteers align themselves with organisational theologies and (quasi-)religious symbols. It is not clear given the current academic focus to what extent these deviations exist. Most voluntary work in the general academic literature (and in the press) is often understood as done by benign do-gooders, the 'little platoons' of Edmund Burke, or indeed more critically as paternalistic enablers of encroaching austerity economics writ large in Britain. Even as FBOs' form an emerging and influential form of third sector bureaucracy, it has not been fully explored as to why this has boomed in Scotland and what the unique characteristics may be.

Street Pastors: defined as Samaritans

Street Pastors' official publications resist drawing close comparisons to Jesus Christ as their exemplar, and often draw attention to the 'Good Samaritan' from the New Testament as an exemplar of SP instead (Luke 10:25-37). Interestingly, two of the interlocutors whom I recruited as interviewees from ESPs referred to this parable separately in their respective interviews – something that was not directly solicited as part of the interview schedule (see Appendix).

In one sense, the SP ethos can be described as one which embraces a self-promoting ideal of *accompaniment* of the urban 'otherness' found in street living. They maintain this vision through their partnership with the local government council and the police forces as an "urban trinity" (Isaac and Davies 2009, 116–118), which amounts to almost auxiliary status within police and CCTV partnerships. This is a contentious issue for the organisation but is something mostly reflected as positive and meaningful in the work for volunteers. Street pastors do not aim to inhabit the same social

space as disenfranchised citizens, and do not necessarily challenge the perpetual cycles of debt, poverty, homelessness, and despair. Instead, they do try to embody an interpretation of the archetypal ancient near-eastern trope of the 'Good Samaritan' as well as to maintain and project a more amorphous image of the Christ in the background of their literature and discourse (Isaac and Davies 2014, xi–xiii).

Ethicist Samuel Wells considers interpreting the parable along similar lines: in terms of Christian presence. Yet he also remains critical and reflexive of how *some* Christians theologically envision themselves when aiding others:

The parable of the Good Samaritan is not a moralistic tale that affirms readers as energetic and resourceful benefactors of the neglected needy in their neighbourhoods and communities. Instead it shows Christians that they *themselves* are desperately needy for relationship, for healing, for forgiveness, for reconciliation, for eternal life. And Jesus comes to meet them in that need. [...] This is the moment of Christian conversion – not just to see one's need of Jesus, but to be willing to embrace him in the form in which he comes to us. (Wells 2015b, 95)

It is possible that the actions of ESPs symbolically express negative sentiments of paternalism mixed with empathy. But it is also possible that through their work and expressions they demonstrate some reflexivity that goes beyond a paternalistic ethos. As I have already observed, many ESPs can personally relate to many of the social problems they encounter in their own life experiences. How they internally make sense of these interactions is something that needs to be analysed further.

At this point is that a vast, new, faith-based bureaucracy seems to be emerging as a theme in the literature, the labour, and the narratives of FBOs and their volunteer participants as something that theologically resists outside forces impinging upon, for example, the ESPs ability to propagate a legitimate form of bureaucracy. ESPs thus aim to embody the Christian theological objective of perfectionism and holiness as a purified form of ministry (A. Williams 2016; D. Martin 2002). This serves the poor and

transforms the volunteer but is also relevant to secular institutions who can see real 'cash' value: a form of meaning for all stakeholders (Stout 2010). SPs have so far stopped short of evaluating the many social factors which confine the poor and working classes, factors which ultimately have a hand in perpetuating the problems the AT wants to solve through Good Samaritan theology, as noted earlier in this thesis, "if need be, [by] paying the bill (Luke 10: 25-37)" (Isaac and Davies 2009, 29).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how organisational definitions form and are made malleable through service in FBOs in the context of Edinburgh, Scotland. What this research ultimately suggests is that a loose typology can be applied to how FBOs demonstrate their mission vs. how this is acted out by volunteers in practice.

For example, where the ESP organisation and the AT together take very seriously the call to be good Samaritans in both the evangelical sense of the biblical trope, the message of welcoming the stranger by the Trussell Trust is hardly, if at all, considered a theological mandate by volunteers. Welcoming the stranger is instead seen in the ethical category of a 'golden rule,' a deontological and simple principle that anyone can apply to service inside any organisation, regardless of creed or faith.

While ESPs can be understood to hold to a more strict and moralising theological mission, and the EFP as a TT initiative can be seen as an effective though morally acquiescent church-based arm of welfare pluralism, the BCT, as singularly Scottish organisation appear to be the missiologically sound of the three cases. Where theological definitions become blurred, as in the case treating people as being made in the Image of God,⁴² alongside very effective promotion of faith-based but not inward-looking progressive solutions to homelessness in Scotland, the Bethany Christian Trust has not avoided public laudation (Forbes 2017) for attempting to alleviate this urgent

⁴² This is a very open-ended concept, even by theological interpretation.

problem in Edinburgh and across the rest of Scotland as well. While the BCT is not without a reasonable level of deviation in terms of organisational mission vs. volunteers' definitions of the work. The contours of the theologies of volunteering employed have not only contributed to greater responsibility for caring for welfare pluralism in Scotland but have also attracted the attention of government and church donors who show no indication of withdrawing their support any time soon.

Chapter 6 – Motives and perceptions: contested meaning-making

Prologue: “Volunteering just isn’t sexy enough”

The scene inside a busy Edinburgh food bank on a Monday morning is a familiar one to many providing welfare services across the UK today. Pensioners serving as volunteers – most, but not all, are female church members – dutifully make sure that the facility is ready for the arrival of clientele, although there are some men and people of other faiths (and none) present. Students from the local universities are occasionally on hand as well. Church staff may wander in and out, searching for musical instruments or literature left out from Sunday morning services and Bible study groups which share the street-level shop space. There are ever-present commuters and mothers with children passing by the large windows which look out onto one of the busiest crossroads in the city. All the while random donations from the public appear as unsolicited shoppers deliver parcels of goods. Regardless of how familiar this situation may have become twenty first century Britain the prevalence of foodbanks raises questions like, *how did this formerly vacant storefront in a Baptist church become part of front-line welfare services in the UK?* and, *are Faith-based organisations central to the new welfare pluralism in Britain?* or even, *how long can volunteers remain active in current roles?*

In order to begin to address these questions this chapter details fieldwork in three FBOs in order to contextualize the socio-economic and religious character of this work. When I first began volunteering with the Edinburgh Food Project in the summer of 2016 it immediately became clear to me that the phenomenon of food banking was simply too large an issue not to be integrated into the designated parameters of my study. At the pilot state, however, I did not yet know about the significance of the TT across the UK, nor did I immediately recognize any unique traits among FBOs in Edinburgh. Earlier pilots for my research in Edinburgh had involved groups ranging from a local anarchist society to the Ahlul Bayt Islamic society (and

many others besides). Finally choosing to look at what was already happening at my own church⁴³ my observations among the preliminary pilot projects had already distilled the thesis question towards focussing on the meaning-making process underwriting faith-based social activism. Across two years of fieldwork, a paradigmatic shift in my thinking occurred about the religious dimensions of activism, and my own preconceived understandings of the phenomena were ruptured. Analysis moved from looking at the religious dimensions of social activism towards looking at the activism of religious people within FBOs who may or may not concern themselves with elements of faith. At times this involved observing motives for activism to be rich in religious symbolism, while in other situations with different people the meaning of the work did not require overt religious symbolism.

Questioning FBOs and welfare pluralism

Given the above description of the church foodbank considered alongside the main lines of inquiry thus far presented in this thesis, a central question that surfaces is: *How do FBO staff and volunteers fulfill their roles?* Some academic responses to these phenomena suggest generalized simplifications of the social reality of welfare pluralism in Britain (Borch and Kjærnes 2016). Through an analysis of the sacred spaces and symbolic meanings used by faith-based actors in providing welfare services, a more detailed picture can emerge. Denationalisation of social security and devolution of services towards civil society by way of voluntary group labour already has generated some speculation as to whether FBOs may indeed be solving and problematizing welfare provision at the same time (Cloke, Williams, and Thomas 2009).

This chapter recounts ethnographic reflections from fieldwork while volunteering in three FBOs using interview data and documents collected. Such an analytical process does not validate the planning of FBO expansion which has become the natural posture for FBOs in the third sector. Nor does this analysis seek to merely critique religious responses to welfare pluralism.

⁴³ Central Church (Baptist) at Tollcross in Edinburgh where I worshipped from 2015-2018.

What follows is an interpretive approach to the motivations encountered across all three cases. Each organisation from the fieldwork contributes to the phenomenon of FBOs in Scotland becoming normative welfare service providers. Whether or not becoming integral to the state welfare apparatus is intentional within organisational ethos is not always clear. This reality does not detract from the important contributions FBOs have made to the diversification of welfare pluralism within the current climate of reduced state oversight across the UK.

Churches as voluntary labour organisers

By working for local FBOs, volunteers become positioned at the nexus of the public role of religion and the reduced UK welfare state. One local leader memorably introduced the idea of how meaningful motivation for volunteers plays such an important part in FBO work on a Sunday morning at my church. During summer 2016, ministers presented a service focussed on developing more active 'missional communities' through a volunteer fair. At this point I made first contact with the Care Van team associated with my congregation. Earlier that year I had been referred to my church leadership after initial orientation with the BCT head office in Edinburgh. Once I had been recruited by the BCT care van team for my church the group leader informed me that it was in fact difficult to maintain a consistent volunteer rotation (drawing mostly from church members). This was the same congregation that also hosted the bustling foodbanks on Mondays and Thursdays. As he explained the difference between the 'sexiness' (i.e. general appeal) of work among competitive social justice and social enterprise ventures in Edinburgh juxtaposed with the more mundane efforts associated with the BCT care van team, I began to grasp the distinction. For example, some of the other missional communities advertised that day included groups focussed on prison ministry, chaplaincy within the British Army, and sports related ministries. I found this experience telling and a fitting introduction to my early front-line work in Edinburgh. Within the evolving context of the Universal Credit roll-out in the UK, FBOs have so far been required to do anything that falls within their remit in order to generate

the meaningfulness required to mobilise endless hours of unpaid work. This labour provides the current stop-gap solutions to austerity policy and its effects on the population of Edinburgh, but can it continue indefinitely?

Universal Credit and welfare deliberation

On the sixth of August 2018 the TT appealed for signatures in support of a petition to be presented to the parliament at Westminster regarding the dangerous social effects of the UC roll out:

Universal Credit is the biggest change to the welfare system in a generation and here at The Trussell Trust, we've been working hard with foodbanks in our network to monitor it. Our research has found that the system is leaving people behind – disabled people, families, and other vulnerable groups – and can push people into debt. Analysing data from foodbanks in our network, we've found that foodbanks in full Universal Credit rollout for 12 months or more have seen a 52% increase in need, compared to 13% elsewhere.

The Trussell Trust has been working with End Hunger UK, since its inception in 2016, to tackle the root causes of hunger and lobby for policy and structural changes from government. End Hunger UK is built on a vision of a society where everyone has access to good food, and no one must go to bed hungry.(Edinburgh Food Project 2018a)

Reading this call for signatories after over a year of fieldwork with the EFP raised this question: what legitimacy does the faith-rooted work of the TT have while the organisation knowingly aids the development of austerity driven policy through the bureaucratisation of the third sector of the UK? The complex position of the TT, between public service and charitable status, is not easily disentangled from either church or state. As argued by other scholars, the TT is a prime example of neoliberal welfare pluralism and the new third sector bureaucracy it supports (A. Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012). The TT organisation through front line and social media efforts achieves legitimacy while holding conflicting mission goals (i.e. ending UK hunger vs. establishing permanent third-sector bureaucracy). The TT is not alone in generating this kind of work. This trend has also been analysed by researchers in the American not-for-profit sector, which is based on British

legal precedents from the nineteenth century concerning what legally constitutes charitable work (Stern 2013). Mission statements such as those held by the TT express a mission to 'end UK hunger' while concurrently absorbing greater welfare responsibility from the state. UC policies cut benefits for low-income, working age, and disabled people, as well as single parents and those permanently unable to work. As such the state creates the conditions for third sector bureaucracy to grow. In Scotland this ongoing process has been aided, as in other parts of the UK, by the overrepresentation of religious groups in providing voluntary and administrative labour. In the case of the EFP, the ability to continue to provide food handouts (plus services like debt counselling) is continually expanding and is not expected to diminish. Nowhere in TT publications is any reduction in services suggested for present or future operations.

Meaningfulness in FBO work

Symbolic interactionists theorize that meanings are created as they gain utility between active subjects (Blumer 1986). These meanings, once created, acquire legitimacy as they become used and codified beyond their original context between multiple groups and societies (Fine and Sandstrom 2003b). Meaning making thus independently achieves salience in unique contexts which express the same symbolic quality across various phenomena. From an interpretivist perspective the organisations, churches, staff, volunteers and clients weave meaningful narratives that provide associations to theological legitimacy within organisational culture and ethos. The ethos develops into local theologies that serve the needs of the group. These co-created meanings suggest that faith-based activism which addresses urban poverty forms a grassroots and responsive alternative perspective from which to view marginalised citizens. Yet such an outlook does not offer much beyond the short termism endemic to the UK welfare system under neoliberal policy reforms such as Universal Credit. Whether or not bureaucratic organisational management of volunteer labour can resist top-down state appropriations of the third sector remains to be seen. What follows here does not describe resistance to the expansion of welfare

pluralism on the part of FBOs, but it does detail how FBOs respond in unique ways to the current crises of welfare provision in Edinburgh.

The extent to which faith-based organizations have taken on social services is reflected in the wide variety of welfare provided. The twenty-first century in the UK has seen a marked increase in the usage of foodbanks, homelessness prevention, and street level aid for the urban poor. Many of the victims of this austerity-driven process have first been encountered by churches and FBOs who now serve as normative front-line aid providers (Chaplin 2015, 91). While some scholars and commentators lament the loss of Victorian age ‘Britishness’ and the death of God in public consciousness (Blond 2010), historical and sociological studies find that established churches went willingly out of step with British opinion in the years after the second world war (A. Brown and Woodhead 2016).⁴⁴ Soon after the second world war the seeds sown by the Liberal Party’s ‘national efficiency’ welfare program of the thirties had developed into the massive state apparatus under Clement Atlee’s Labour administration by the late nineteen-forties (Renwick 2017, 249–67).

Some scholars interested in the renewal of religious concern in the ‘common good’ of society now observe secularization in a different light (Gutenson 2011; Hollenbach 2002; Kidwell, Doherty, and Carnegie 2015). One example of this phenomenon is that declining twentieth century social institutions seem to demand greater resilience from religious groups (A. Brown and Woodhead 2016). In the mid twentieth century the Social Gospel movement eventually delegated the public role of the church into the realm of the State. This evolutionary altruism is demonstrated by anthropological and socio-biological case studies of prehistoric and agrarian cultures (Pfaff 2014), and is still relevant today. In a religious sense, this suggests a desire for *diakonia* (serving anyone in need) in which believers attempt to respond to a crumbling and neglected welfare state, initiating new roles for faith-based

⁴⁴ Also see David Martin’s revision of his general secularisation theory in *On Secularisation* (D. Martin 2005b).

activists. Thus, a pluralistic third sector resembles the old system of paternalistic aid of the Social Gospel reformers of the Victorian Age in sentiment. These pluralistic welfare state models are not restrained by public money or fact-finding public commissions like those of twentieth century social reformers William Beveridge, Rowntree, and R.H. Tawney whose work inspired the early reform and bureaucratization of a uniquely British welfare state (Timmins 2017). Welfare pluralism and austerity policy in the UK contrasts with measures already in place in many parts of the European continent, e.g. in Germany and Sweden (Renwick 2017). With a distinctly British genealogy of the welfare state,⁴⁵ former values of paternalistic aid were reorganized into the state's approach to welfare. The long shadow of this phenomenon continues to steer discourse concerning the so-called 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor on the part of FBOs and the policy decisions they choose to embody (A. Williams 2012).

Edinburgh Street Pastors: remolding organizational ethos

Some of the paternalistic and bureaucratic characteristics outlined above can be at least partially mitigated at the local level. One example of this is how ESP operate in ways which diverge from the AT model for the organization of local chapters.

Becoming the Archetypal Samaritan

Parables often tell stories through illustrating practical lessons which centre upon ethical human behaviour, and humans as social actors seem to perpetuate their own stories in tandem with timeless ones. The Street Pastors (henceforth SPs) organization is essentially built upon a parable – one which I will elaborate upon below. Edinburgh SPs (henceforth ESPs) also have their own stories to tell about how they live out the roles found in parables and stories of the past. This represents a portion of what some scholarly voices which have referred to as the cultural grounding and network

⁴⁵ For which a thorough analysis would reach beyond the parameters of this thesis, see instead the new edition of Timmins' well-cited *The Five Giants* (2017).

that religious belief provides (Hervieu-Leger 2000). Having been the subject of some recent sociological study (Middleton and Yarwood 2015) and registering interest among local forms of the media (O'Hara 2012), SPs practical impact has been anything but hidden. To what extent is the public image of the SPs organisation reflective of the experiences of volunteers within this outward-facing faith-based organisation?

This is a broad question requiring analysis to focus on more condensed aspects of the phenomena in question. I argue that the localised efforts of faith-based activists, based on interviews I have conducted, represent a valid form of meaning making. This approach makes broad reference to classical symbolic interactionist theory in which human actions are based on personal meanings that constantly change over time as well as through interaction with other human beings (Blumer 1986, 2). As such, the narratives of both participants demonstrate an awareness of the tension between the outward facing nature of this community work, and the inward-looking need for meaning experienced in the act of the work itself.

Street Pastors are a UK-wide organisation (overseen by the Ascension Trust) which evolved out of the context of the increasingly precarious and dangerous nature of many urban street scenarios in England in the early years of the new millennium, and first centered on the Brixton area of London (Isaac and Davies 2009). Practical forms of aid include handing out coffee/tea, biscuits, blankets, water to the homeless and beggar population, and flip-flops to women leaving clubs who may find it difficult to walk in high heels. They also aim to signpost vulnerable individuals towards local welfare services where possible and focus especially on picking up discarded bottles which are a menace to public safety and are an easily quantifiable statistic to keep track of (Isaac and Davies 2009, 31–33). Street Pastors' official publications resist drawing close comparisons to Jesus Christ as their exemplar, and instead constantly make reference to the Good Samaritan theme from the New Testament (Luke 10:25-37). Interestingly,

both of my interlocutors referred to this parable separately in their interviews.

The parable itself reads:

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.' The gospel according to Luke chapter 10:25-37(New Revised Standard Version Bible 2006)

In some sense, the SP ethos can be described as one which *accompanies* the urban 'other' found in people experiencing homelessness. SPs maintain this vision through their partnership with the local government council and the police forces as an "urban trinity" (Isaac and Davies 2009, 116–118). Street pastors do not aim to inhabit the same social space as disenfranchised citizens, and do not necessarily plan to overthrow the social structures that contain masses of socially excluded British citizens (and migrants) in austere cycles of debt, poverty, homelessness, and despair. Instead, they try to embody an interpretation of the archetypal ancient near-eastern literary figure of the 'Good Samaritan' as well as to project Christian mission for the poor in

the background of their literature and discourse (Isaac and Davies 2014, xi–xiii).

Helping as *diakonia*

Street Pastors (SPs) generally aim to help people in the ‘nighttime economy’ in practical ways, which further embed their work into what founder Les Isaac refers to as the ‘urban trinity’ (i.e. police, council, and church). Even in this institutional milieu, Edinburgh Street Pastors (ESPs) find subtle ways to resist a top-down or state-sanctioned approach to the work. This theme has been described by scholars engaged in studies of FBOs in the EU and UK (Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012). Anthropologist David Graeber has argued that bureaucracy only begets more bureaucracy due to civic responsibility being devolved into corporate bodies which do not represent real human interests (Graeber 2015). Bureaucracy in this Weberian sociological sense emerges as a theme in the literature, the labour, and the narratives of my interlocutors and participants.⁴⁶ It also resists outside influences that might limit the local ESPs ability to propagate a legitimate form of Christian social care. As one of the local ESP team leaders stated:

I'll do whatever I can to help others. To feel how loved I am, by God. By fellow human beings. Just that love that shines out of people. And hopefully shines out of me when they speak to me. Getting to know the homeless people. Meeting them, week after week. You know what I mean. Meeting them week after week. Being welcomed by them. And sit down [sic.] and chat with them. Being privileged to share in their stories. How blessed is that?

Edinburgh Street Pastors aim to embody a theological position which some scholars and outside observers of the SP movement have referred to as a re-appropriated form of *diakonia*,⁴⁷ which is the classical definition of practical

⁴⁶ An idea developed by sociologist Max Weber as the ‘iron cage’ (German: ‘shell as hard as steel’) of modernity and its pervasive rationalism, implying a loss of fullness and meaning in everyday symbolic interactions which inevitably leads to greater bureaucratisation in capitalist societies (Weber 2012).

⁴⁷ The “rapprochement” of post-secular welfare spaces by FBOs has been analysed in recent scholarly works on new European (including British) forms of social engagement (A. Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012; A. Williams 2015; Cloke and Beaumont 2013).

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh care for the poor required of the local ecclesia. This way of serving the poor transforms the volunteer. Yet FBOs and their willingness to become involved in formerly state administered services is also relevant to policy makers who can see real 'cash' value in the application of voluntary labour. This kind of work provides both symbolic meanings for all stakeholders involved (Stout 2010). For some FBOs it can become difficult to resist (theologically or otherwise) the change to third sector welfare pluralism.

Yet this process does not leave faith-based activists empty-handed. Robert Orsi's classic ethnography *The Madonna of 115th Street* asserted that perception of religion provide a 'lived' quality for personal faith (Orsi 2002, xliv; xiii.). A lived-religion creates associations that FBOs must use to inspire generic theological models that people can easily relate to, being neither too exclusive nor too inclusive.⁴⁸ The work of volunteering provides avenues for theology to take on new meanings, even if it that charts a new course between theological underpinnings and the social responsibility of providing state-sanctioned welfare services.

One way of accomplishing this has been via Rev. Les Isaac's emphasis that the Street Pastor movement aims to address generic 'anti-social' behavior as well as increasing in gang activity and violent crime in major urban centres like London by providing the physical and spiritual presence of street-level group patrols. Connecting with local people and understanding their misgivings about contemporary British society is also a secondary goal (Isaac and Davies 2009; 2014). This effort began in the area around Hackney (north-eastern London) and garnered support within the local urban trinity (i.e. the local church, council, police services). Faith-rooted reasoning of this variety sees the universal church as failing to address the

⁴⁸ Rodney Stark developed a conception of "differentiation" regarding contemporary religious sects. Groups must solidify an identity neither too similar nor too different from wider society in order to be readily accepted by adherents as a valid belief system (R. Stark and Bainbridge 1985; 1996)

root causes of civil unrest which have in the past erupted into violence, e.g. the Tottenham riots of 2011.

Street pastors within the larger third sector

The Ascension Trust (AT) observed the decline of many London neighbourhoods in the first decade of the twenty-first century, motivating the original ethos of the organisation as mentioned above. In Edinburgh, where high numbers of street homeless people have had a visible presence for decades, groups like ESP have transformed the original theory and design of the SP movement. ESP praxis has been made suitable to the streets of the Scottish capital (approx. population 500 000), a city with very different characteristics than London (approx. 8 million) as well as being unique when compared to large cities in the North of England. Edinburgh is in many ways also geographically and culturally different than Glasgow. Recent internal communications (from late 2018) refer to the temporary accommodations provided by the BCT night shelter in Edinburgh churches:

Many of the homeless people were reluctant to use the night shelter [BCT] last year, pray that they will be encouraged to attend it this year. Please also pray that those who use this service would find it a peaceful and secure place.⁴⁹

These spaces are provided for homeless people during the autumn and winter months (approx. Oct-March annually). In Edinburgh the AT has adapted to the local needs of the population through a unique approach. This involves referring homeless people to shelters like those provided by BCT. Since ESP and BCT do not compete over the same funds and territory they co-operate by signposting clients to other services. Homelessness is correlated to the high cost of rent which is exacerbated by the city's relationship with the festival season, particularly in August. The summer of 2017 saw four million visitors attend the cultural hubs of the old and new towns, a phenomenon which bankrolls many businesses in Edinburgh for the fiscal year. Rather than being a wealth creating cultural enterprise, these

⁴⁹ This was circulated as an internal communique for volunteers.

profits are disproportionately distributed to wealthier post code areas, as can be seen on the MDI map for Edinburgh.⁵⁰ This characteristic extends to almost all levels of social and cultural mobility in Edinburgh society. This results in negative effects and long-term geographically based neglect of marginal habitants of the city, permanent street homeless and rough sleepers, and the thousands of low-income families reliant on food banks.

FBOs in Edinburgh have so far encountered an unlimited supply of labour and organizational skills drawn primarily drawn from pensioners. This demographic also financially provides most mainline denominations with the means to survive into the twenty-first century. While churches are often proud to have spaces used by foodbanks and other FBO ventures, the sustainability of this model becomes precarious when churches are reduced to closing their doors after their congregations decline. Likewise, churches can always retract their support if situations change. Yet there are some FBO characteristics in Scotland which show signs of resilience in the arena of activism in the third sector.

The ecumenical effort required to support a generic 'common good' theology does draw appeal cross-denominationally, as evidenced in internal communications from ESP:

As Street Pastors, we are one team, regardless of ethnicity, gender, skill, talent or background. Amongst us are Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and many other religious groups but we all worship God through Jesus Christ. We have strength in our diversity and respect for each other. Our words and deeds have a common theme as we listen, help and care for the vulnerable people in the city centre. We are truly blessed for the love and peace of Christ in our hearts. ('Edinburgh Street Pastors Prayer Bulletin' 2018)

Common themes shared by many denominations are important to the ethos of the AT and ESP as many different denominations contribute funding and

⁵⁰ The 2016 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation can be found here: <http://simd.scot/2016/#/simd2016/BTTTTTT/12/-3.2437/55.9507/> (SpatialData.gov.scot 2018).

volunteers. This is linked to the biblical inspiration for the prayer letter above, drawn from Colossians 3:15-17:

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Biblical quotes provide theological content for ESP meetings and ideals. Aside from establishing the spiritual legitimacy for the work, personal convictions remain private and do not have to be expressed. Whether or not personal meaning making becomes public within the group depends on the dynamics of individuals, the type of work being done, and the nature of the division of labour within the groups.

Performing resistance in activism

Some of the above examples form an expression of what some scholars refer to as performative deliberation (Barnes et al. 2004). These situations require having the space necessary for activism to occur and the appropriate time available in which it can be enacted. The act of contesting welfare pluralism by resisting state enforced austerity can be accomplished within FBOs, but it does not have to occur in this way and certainly does not happen this way in every instance. Arabella Lyon finds that “symbolic acts in the present create a current worldview that is always already constructing the future.” She links this to the idea that,

[...] persuasion might work in the service of injustice. In effect, persuasion tends to work in the service of hegemony, for it is easier to argue for what is already present than to imagine futures and find proof for counterfactuals” (Lyon 2013, 36–37).

She concludes that deliberative politics often fail to act in due course. Perhaps this tendency provides the spaces where faith-based groups enter social justice deliberations without disrupting the status quo. More often than

advocating in public (secular) forums, most FBOs tend to get involved by contributing voluntary labour towards stop-gap solutions to welfare cuts. The origin of the cuts and sanctions placed on citizens are not questioned directly, if at all. This may or may not contribute to the mission statement, ethos, or vision of the organization, but still allows the room for faith-based ideals of justice to prevail over-against other forms of political activism.

From my ethnographic experiences and the interviews conducted I found that ESP stop short of evaluating the roots of the social problems that the parent organization seeks to solve (e.g. anti-social behavior). The AT approaches problems through Good Samaritan theology (as elaborated in chapter five) but does not offer an eschatology since doctrinarian beliefs curtail the vague unity generated through ecumenical local chapters engaged in real work. In the words of the AT founder, Rev. Les Isaac, this involves solving problems (as noted earlier in this thesis) “if need be, [by] paying the bill (as in the parable Luke 10: 25-37)” (Isaac and Davies 2009, 29), but not necessarily by asking questions about the structuration of social injustices at the point of contact with the destitute. There is a time and place for this, but it is not on the streets while serving the poor, according to Rev. Isaac. Neither is it an appropriate time for evangelizing, instead SPs are there to listen, help and care for immediate needs only.

Student volunteers in FBOs

While serving as a volunteer with ESP some of the staff and volunteers strongly suggested that I apply for the paid role of local coordinator. I did not apply, so as to maintain as impartial and objective as possible as a researching observer. I also did not feel that the administrative work itself would provide greater insight into the street-level qualities of the work. The job specifications also exceeded the legally allowable working hours for foreign student visa holders in the UK. Yet this did not deter the committee from later asking me to put my name forward as a trustee. The guiding constitutional document for the local ESP organization stipulates that all trustees simultaneously serve as committee members as well, and it is

understood that all must be volunteer street pastors of good repute. After attending all committee meetings open to volunteers (between 2016-2018) such as the annual business meetings (which included time of prayer and worship) I learned more about how the local ESP committee included members of two different interest groups. One faction focused more on evangelical outreach (especially when vetting new recruits) while the other was more open to allowing anyone to serve as a street pastor, given that candidates were at least sympathetic to the AT mandate and ethos (which is not explicitly evangelistic). I was considered a valid candidate by the former group because of my associations with a large local Baptist congregation, where my family had attended since our arrival in Scotland in the autumn of 2015. While the latter group would not have necessarily nominated me for the job (and the concurrent committee duties), I was also known to be a doctoral researcher sympathetic to the mission of the ESP, as I was an overt participant observer within the organization where all were aware of my research interests. Knowledge of my perceived theological legitimacy aided in their evaluation of my ability to first serve as a street pastor, and then later to be considered for a paid role (of which there are currently only two such roles). I was able to continue inquiry into how the position fit into the structure of local volunteer organizing even though I was not formally under consideration for the job. In doing so it became clearer that in attempting to fulfil the AT mandate of becoming good Samaritan citizens the symbolic quality of the coordinator role could only be manifested through the local work. Due to the broad nature of the position, the ESP coordinator's training extends beyond that of the regular SP role. The individual must be able to work seamlessly alongside police, council, and local churches as per the AT mandate for all SP activism. It is significant that partners from the public sector are considered equal in legitimacy and calling to the local church within the mission of the AT and SPs (Armour 2017b), and the role of the coordinator embodies this ethos in praxis. It is also within the coordinator's remit to maintain weekly communications with all ESPs, and this often touches upon evangelistic theology:

From our Coordinator: As students return to our city please pray that The Lord may protect them and keep them from harm, some of them away from home for the first time. Please also pray that some may come to know Jesus Christ as personal saviour while studying here. Please also pray that as Street Pastors we may be used to both these ends. ('Edinburgh Street Pastors Prayer Bulletin' 2018)

Students are central to the flourishing of the Edinburgh economy many ways. Student accommodation in Edinburgh is also one of the factors driving up rental costs across the city. Since university students embody superior social standing than people experiencing homelessness, it becomes a *modus operandi* for ESPs to focus some of their efforts on the evangelization of students, since both reside in the same areas of Edinburgh. This perspective does not directly align with the original AT ethos of targeting the most socio-economically deprived areas of British cities. In Edinburgh, Street Pastors patrolled only the New and Old Town areas from 2016-2018 while I was engaged in fieldwork, although these parameters do shift from time to time. These areas contain many important cultural, economic, and historical buildings like churches, governmental facilities, a royal garrison and castle, as well as many commercial and mercantile outlets. We did not patrol areas like Leith,⁵¹ Moredun, Pilton, and Granton where visible poverty and marginalized living conditions are more prevalent. Beggars and rough sleepers along the backdrop of the Royal Mile is considered a preferable target for missional work.

In Edinburgh, students are often involved in FBO work alongside pensioners. Absent are middle-aged parents and working people, yet this demographic is often on the receiving end of aid provided by both younger and elder generations living inside the same communities, e.g. at local foodbanks. This is impacted by the human geography of Edinburgh which hosts thousands of university students across many different campuses from Michaelmas to Easter and beyond every academic year. Without the presence of so many students, many from affluent levels of society and

⁵¹ Parts of Leith had been patrolled for a time prior to my tenure with ESP.

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh places beyond Edinburgh, the local FBO landscape would not have the same contours and qualities that it currently exhibits.

The incoming ESP coordinator did not end up being a student. Yet the role of students and the focus placed upon them in local FBOs is significant. In Edinburgh this is part of what makes this context so unique in that often the students involved are not from Scotland.

Austerity enforced: Universal Credit in Edinburgh

In August 2017 the Scottish Government announced that it would introduce mandatory restrictions (MR) on appeals for people who have already had their benefits cut under the rollout of UC. This was to be legislated as part of the then new Scottish Social Security Bill and was inspired by appeals blocking systems already being used by the DWP across other parts of the UK. Such a move seemed justifiable to Westminster in order to prevent the appeals process from being abused by claimants. These actions sparked warnings from many social policy experts. Paul Spicker, of the University of Glasgow, argued that the turn was unlawful: "The mandatory review is being used as a barrier to stop people getting access to justice," he said, "and it is questionable whether such a provision is consistent with recent decisions about the rule of law" (Armour 2017b). The question of whether these measures are lawful raises still more questions like whether such bracketing of benefits abates further social problems, or if it indeed makes them worse.

A great deal of clarity can be found in Scottish-American economist Mark Blyth's sweeping critique in *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* which condemns the idea that government spending cuts create growth in any economic situation. He points to the reality that current economic woes "started with the banks and will end with the banks." Since the problem did not begin with government (over-)spending in the first place, viewing the spending of public money in a negative light did not appeal to anyone other than "a few fringe conservatives" prior to the 2008 banking crisis (Blyth 2013, 5). How, then, did austerity policy become standard policy for the early

twenty first century, both on the right and the left of the British political spectrum? The UK government was one of the first in Europe to implement post-2008 austerity driven policies hoping that such measures would correct the private debt crisis originating in the globalized context of precarious and predatory US bank lending and securities practices. This was accomplished by punishing so-called 'flawed' consumers for unpaid debts (instead of the corrupt corporations that initiated the crisis), thus offloading the fiscal problems onto the general populous on both sides of the Atlantic. Neoliberal government policy prevented most banks from failing in the milieu of 'bad' private debt they created for 'flawed' and/or 'failed' consumers (Davis and Geiger 2017). Banks intended to profit from the situation whether deficient and already precarious consumers absorbed the cost or not, since the governments were not afraid to support the global financial industry's catastrophic failure of fiscal control. Blyth argues,

The United Kingdom was supposedly spared this drama [compared to the rest of the EU] by "pre-emptive tightening," that is, by adopting austerity first and then reaping the benefits of growth once confidence returns. Again, this approach hasn't turned out quite as planned. (Blyth 2013, 4).

This claim is as correct now as it was in 2013 when published, as only increased poverty has come from austerity policy in the UK. The realities of these failures have been masked even further after the 2016 'referendum and the resulting delusions of a swift Brexit from the EU.

Economist Thomas Piketty argues that economic inequality on a worldwide scale can be correlated to the globalized de-nationalisation of assets and monetary value, whereby capital flows more freely across borders (Piketty 2014). Bruno Latour takes up a similar argument in ecological-economic terms in his recent *Down to Earth* (2018). After the eventual failure of the historic 1944 Bretton Woods agreement to consolidate a replacement financial system in lieu of the nineteenth century gold standard, the global economic order was irrevocably shaken (Harrod 1982, 621–92), and a Pandora's chest of inflation, interest, and debt-based financial institutions

ensured the proliferation of the 'haves and have nots' (Reisman 2005, 49) even during the most prosperous and expansive period of corporate capitalism's iron grip on liberal democratic institutions.

After the second world war, the Bretton Woods agreement solidified global trade networks (at least for the USA and parts of the Commonwealth), oversaw the proliferation of tax havens (e.g. Swiss, Maltese, Caribbean), and increased the development of trust funds in the USA and Britain and foundations in continental Europe until the late twentieth century (Stern 2013). These Neoliberal versions of twenty-first century free trade destabilised traditional economics even more, ignoring the need for balancing inflation and the rising interest rates for private debt holders. This perpetual cycle has driven otherwise economically stable people into increasing poverty and subsistence living in the UK, which is one of the wealthiest nations per capita in the world.⁵²

The ideas presented in this chapter are modest in scope compared to the claims of the failures of austerity policies posited by Blyth and others. The main idea for this chapter is instead to introduce the religious factors effecting austerity policy. FBOs and their responses to poverty and welfare are mere by-products to economists or policy makers more interested in the bigger picture of boom-and-bust cycles in a globalized economy. Yet how does this national problem factor into the 'lived-experiences' of volunteers that this study has as its foci? The results of this study suggest that often ignored socio-political problems of the post-welfare state allow meaning-making to occur at the local level for FBO volunteers as a form of justice deliberation.

⁵² While the prominent position of the UK among post Second World War nations is declining, the British economy still generates one of the highest GDPs per capital in the world. The divide between the upper and lower classes is still greater than in other G8 countries with more modest GDP per capita, e.g., Canada and Australia. See the 2018 World Bank Report on global GDPs, which includes a nod to classic Scottish economist Adam Smith with the title "The Changing Wealth of Nations" (Lange, Wodon, and Carey 2018).

Claiming the Common Good: deliberating faith-based ideals

During an interview, one woman with a long history of organizing foodbanks in Edinburgh defined her work in these terms:

[...] my particular thing is social justice. That's probably why I wasn't trying to get into politics, which I never really felt I was getting it in there. I think perhaps I could do it actually better. If I can't change the world through delivering leaflets and going to political rallies, maybe I can change a few people's lives by giving them food and making the area a nicer place to live, and making sure people have got friends and activities, that sort of thing. – (Angela, EFP team leader)

Some of the interlocutors for this study connect ideas of activism with a purpose beyond themselves by extending care towards the well-being others, or even because it is socially convenient to be involved in volunteering as a communitarian activity. Age is reflected in the anecdotal introduction to this chapter, where pensioners are often over-represented in the ranks of volunteers who provide most of the labour for FBOs. Many of these aging citizens want to contribute to the betterment of society and see improvements to social ills while they yet remain fully functional activists.

Perhaps this latent tendency among the newly retired represents a desire to address social ills (even superficially) before things 'get even worse.' Many volunteers harken back to better days from the past when sanctions like UC were not causing as much turmoil, and the national economy seemed stronger and more productive. Yet this reflexivity on the part of pensioners has not yet limited the ability for the bureaucratic structures of third sector welfare pluralism in Scotland to expand alongside the trend towards voluntary activism. Paternalistic feelings expressed by members of certain portions of people on the wealthier end of the Scottish economic ladder are motivated morally as some of my interlocutors have suggested. The Scottish government is willing to grant greater license to FBOs eager to mobilize certain portions of the population for provisional

welfare supply. For this purpose, theology plays a crucial though mostly symbolic role.

As FBOs evolve into the cornerstone institutions of the new pluralized welfare state, more and more volunteers – those drawn from churches in particular – are becoming willing to donate their time. BCT press releases and official reports include reflections that uphold an activist volunteer standard of service that does not question the intentions of the organizational leadership:

Amazingly I am now supporting the same kind of people that I used to lock up when I was in the Police. The difference is that as a volunteer I can keep my sense of justice while putting my own faith and my own values into practice. I do believe God makes a difference in my life and in others' lives. I now act out of love, where there was grief there is now grace. Instead of conflict I can help people to get on and find solutions for themselves. I am truly blessed by my experiences every day and thank God for this transformation. I would really encourage anyone who has a heart for people who need support or who are marginalised in society to come alongside them and to love them. Becoming a befriender is a powerful and effective way to do this. --David, Community Reintegration Coordinator, Caring for Ex-Offenders Scotland w/Bethany Christian Trust (Bethany Christian Trust 2013).

As suggested in the quotation above religious themes can accomplish the work of inspiring voluntary effort while providing meaning within the theological ambiguity of archetypes and parables used in FBOs. Reference to 'social justice' is absent in much of the literature and media produced to inspire voluntary effort. Materials tend to focus instead on biblical elements of theology, associations with local public institutions, or simply the gravity of the generic social problems facing contemporary Britain. For example, an easy discussion piece is often the housing crisis gripping almost all major cities, inspiring broad-based efforts at various solutions on a national scale (BBC News 2019). Where these problematic social issues overlap with justice concerns is not always clear, as organisations legitimate their activism though creating various forms of media, at times pointing to passages of

scripture which admonish the kind of service being offered (e.g. what theologians might call *diakonia*). The three organisations studied during my fieldwork do not always reference religion or spirituality as important parts of what they are doing. When it does come up – such as when certain work borders on the focus of Bible study groups – connections to theology and scripture are attended to openly. Even though participants in these groups notice analogies to Christian scripture and reference passages from the Bible regularly as reasons for supporting FBOs, they do not provide arguments against – or practical resistance to – structural injustices experienced by the poor. For example, where the expansion of foodbanks has correlated with increasing concern over mental health problems in the UK (Loopstra et al. 2018) there has been no *theological response* from the Trussell Trust (henceforth TT). Instead, the literature and media outlets promote the idea that the TT will continue to ‘solve’ UK food poverty, no matter what is causing it. Foodbank expansion, as mapped out in prior chapters, shows no sign of being abated. There lacks inquiry into the underlying issues of the phenomenon by the TT, where current temporal problems are perceived to create additional symptoms of an unknown (or unnamed) social disease.

Where the third sector in Scotland could learn, for example, from case studies of FBO work in the US could be in the latent power of marginalized people to advocate and politically organize for themselves.⁵³ Considering Luke Bretherton’s interpretation of civic engagement within London Citizens’ broad-based organizing efforts (Bretherton 2014), potential may lie in the fact that Britain has unique cultural characteristics that are simply more diverse than comparable institutions on the other side of the Atlantic. For example, in the USA religion often (but not always) further entrenches the elements of race and class inequality as Jeffrey Stout’s analysis of grassroots organizing shows (Stout 2010), rather than proposing solutions or at least stop gaps to

⁵³ Jeffrey Stout’s interpretation of New Orleans as a ‘disaster capitalism’ phenomenon for social services after the destruction wrought by hurricane Katrina shows how corporations prepared themselves for the land grab which occurred in the vacuum opened up by the absence of government responses (Stout 2010).

social inequality as evidenced in Britain and Europe (Beaumont and Cloke 2012).

Generating support during the Universal Credit rollout

The TT uses signals, such as those made possible through social networks, that point to other media outlets or organizations which have strong opinions about increased foodbank use in Britain. This is seen as preferable to generating direct justice advocacy from within. The TT does not directly challenge the structures of systematic foodbank reliance in the UK in its promotional materials or training, as shown above and in prior chapters. UC instead has become a rallying call for third sector bureaucracy in Scotland, notwithstanding the fact that UC itself is a policy which most FBOs agree is a failure. Most FBOs as well as many secular third sector organisations are careful not to name or directly critique austerity. The concept of UC becomes symbolic of all social failures which lead to foodbank use in the view of the TT. This is not unique to Scotland, as newspaper columns across the spectrum of UK periodicals have represented many stories about the roll out of UC during the period of my fieldwork (2016-2018). Many journalists have actively denounced the ongoing effects of the roll out of UC on UK citizens.⁵⁴ Recently it was even revealed that two senior members of the DWP were awarded CBE medals despite the UN concluding that the DWP was responsible for human rights violations when cutting benefits to disabled people (Armour 2017a). Thus, FBOs often have little to gain from alerting their supporters of perceived injustices or human rights abuses which occur in conjunction with the largescale development of foodbank reliance in the UK. Many FBOs need to continue winning monetary support completely aside from any pressure to advocate and politically organise support for institutional change. Their supporters may not desire to be informed on potentially politicizing issues from a charity perspective. Theology done

⁵⁴ Concerned journalists have been some of the most vocal opponents of austerity policy, often drawing undesirable media attention to the plight of sanctioned citizens while reports on Brexit negotiations oversaturated news networks across the UK during the years of my fieldwork for this project, 2015-2018 (G. Martin 2015; F. Ryan and Domokos 2017; Marsh 2017b; Lakha 2017; Goodman 2018)

practically in this case is malleable enough to serve the meaning-making process so that other issues do not get in the way of broad-based support networks. Critique has been left to newspapers, interested academics and social commentators. This can be seen as a missed opportunity by those in positions of bureaucratic control both in the third sector and among FBOs in particular, the latter having many resources that could be mobilized in search of the source of UC problems.

A study commissioned by the TT headquarters and carried out by researchers from Oxford and KCL evaluated the nature of the increase in foodbank usage and correlations with associated phenomena. The project was led by experienced social policy researchers Rachel Loopstra and Doireann Lalor (2017),⁵⁵ but left unclear how the influence that organisational leadership had on the project. Nor was it revealed how much of the data was curated and prepared in house by the organisation itself. The TT study cited above does not denounce the role of the TT in establishing the vast bureaucracy necessary for increased foodbank use to occur on a means-tested basis. In Edinburgh referrals most often originate from the Scottish Welfare fund,⁵⁶ as well as through local channels of social services and council workers. The research revealed that the TT keeps track of clients' usage data and restricts it after three visits within a six-month period; facts known to volunteers but not always acknowledged in public.⁵⁷ The TT and EFP as a result encouraged people to sign a petition calling on the current government in Westminster to re-evaluate Universal Credit (Edinburgh Food Project 2018a). These calls stopped short of further organizing efforts and work continued with increased food donations and collections from the local supply chain of donors (both public and corporate). A recent small-scale

⁵⁵ Cf. Loopstra's similar study undertaken in Canada (Loopstra and Tarasuk 2015).

⁵⁶ The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) forms part of the Scottish Governments devolved response system to those experiencing poverty by offering crisis grants and foodbank referrals on a mean-tested basis. The application can be found online at <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund/apply-or-track-your-application/> (Scottish Welfare Fund 2019).

⁵⁷ Volunteers are easily able to circumvent these rules and provide food to those deemed needy beyond the official limit of a mere three food parcels inside six months.

study commissioned internally by the Edinburgh Food Project with the support of the Scottish Government and the EU Social Fund (Borthwick, Friend, and Tulloch 2018) confirmed findings that correlated qualitatively at the local level (including some small-scale statistics) with the nation-wide study cited above. The social ills of UC are referenced many times by the Edinburgh researchers. Again, as with other official TT documents, the EFP does not overtly denounce UC. FBOs instead relate to their supporters in positive terms as front-line volunteers do not have the ability to ignore the reality of UC. Hardships experienced by two clients of the EFP were related during interviews in the aforementioned EFP study:

Both are unemployed and rely on Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). They have been struggling to make ends meet for about two years and have used the foodbank between 5 and 10 times, in March coming because severe winter weather forced them to spend more money on gas. "After gas and electric we only have £50 to live on," Arthur explains. "I'm a diabetic so food is important and expensive. But I'm losing £30 of that £50 when going to Universal Credit in April. We have been pawning stuff to get by." (Borthwick, Friend, and Tulloch 2018)

That UC is barely if ever directly criticized in TT or in this case EFP literature is instrumental to the roll-out of UC, as this social policy has spurred the development of the bureaucracy which sustains organisations such as the TT and its ethos. The TT research into its own services is not reflexive to the role played in the establishment of welfare pluralism via UC.

Bureaucracy: space-time efficiency

While some scholars justify bureaucracies in ideological terms (Goodsell 2014), these approaches do not explain how the constant growth of the third sector in a country like Scotland is almost fully dependent upon the unfavourable socio-economic circumstances that damage civic institutions of the welfare state. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a process of "rapprochement" between FBOs and what would otherwise be separate entities, creating inroads between churches and neoliberal secular regimes

(A. Williams 2015). UC will thus continue indefinitely to afflict the lives of those dependent – or formerly dependent as in the case of those experiencing sanctions – on government benefits, increasing urban deprivation across the UK. Foodbank growth in this sense is viewed as merely symptomatic of larger issues within British welfare and devolution under austerity policy. The growth of UK foodbanks is well documented and does not appear to policy makers as cause for alarm (Lambie-Mumford and Green 2017). It has instead become an opportunity for further devolution of social services to local communities, in contrast to the top-down approach of regional and national public policy.

For the EFP, bureaucratic development takes place alongside benchmarking of efficiency regarding the delivery of services. This late 2018 internal communication for volunteers and supporters of the EFP:

April - September 2018 People Fed: 3,376 Adults and 1,448 children; Volunteers: 190 people; Donations 35,237 kgs of donations. It takes a village! Thank you to all the volunteers, donors, supporters and friends of the foodbank who make it possible for us to ensure no one goes hungry. We bought a van!! A HUGE thank you to the hundreds of financial donors who made it possible! The new van will completely transform how we are able to operate, making our collection and deliveries more time efficient. (Edinburgh Food Project 2018b)

Emphasis is often placed upon expansion of services to those experiencing food poverty by TT media and communications. For the TT and its volunteers this ethos is consistent with the concept of welcoming the stranger from Matthew 25. Since more 'strangers' are becoming needy in Scotland due to austerity spaces become available to welcome them. The efficiency of services provided by volunteers adds new plurality to British welfare services. Paternalistic models of care prior to the reforms which followed the second world war were diminished further by the transfer of faith-based social into institutional settings e.g. schools, hospitals, and reformatories (Brown and Woodhead 2016; Renwick 2017). The recent return to a 'just enough; just in time' method of providing foodbanks assumes that resources like space

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh (churches) and time (voluntary labour) are inexhaustible. But are space and time really without limits for volunteers and organisations? Social geographer Edward Relph theorized that *space* is amorphous and general in nature while the notion of place is value laden and particular to a given locality (Seamon and Sowers 2008). This concept can help explain the difference between nation-wide FBO social activism and local faith-rooted organizing. As FBO bureaucracy in Edinburgh is spurred by the effects of austerity policy, efforts are sometimes at odds with the localised faith-based ethics which create a uniquely community-oriented expression of *diakonia* through grassroots organizational efforts.

Injustices associated with land use and industrial decline in Scotland reveal the rigid system of social class evidenced by land distribution inequality in Scotland (Wightman 2015). These issues continue to curtail what remains of the welfare state in Scotland and this contributes to undermining the mission of the local church through a process of dissociation (Fergusson 2004, 2–5), diminishing the missiological interests of faith from provisional solutions that can be provided by congregations without the use of any public funds. Despite these historical legacies, the great expansion of the welfare state after the Second World War certainly created better conditions for low-income people and significant increases in the quality of living conditions (Renwick 2017, 249–67). This period also ushered in better infrastructure for low-income families to maintain and hold onto previously unobtainable generational wealth transfers (Blyth 2013). Such increases in economic mobility may now seem statistically minimal in a globalized economy. Yet when balanced for inflation the benefits system afforded to British people for the first three decades after WWII was much more effective at meeting the needs of low-income people than the current patchwork of benefits today. Scottish-American political economist Mark Blyth argues that the social mobilities afforded to him and his family while growing up in Dundee, Scotland as a child dependent on the welfare state directly contributed to him becoming a professor. He concedes that such social mobility is nearly impossible today given the current economic regime in the

UK as well as in many other Western democracies (Blyth 2013, xi).

Autobiographical musings from an economist like Blythe show how the kinds of programs which were once considered a normative part of the welfare state have been so eroded that a person today has access to only a fraction of the value of benefits available half a century ago. The direct cause of this trend, he argues, is the erosion of public responsibility for the civic life of a nation that the government of the UK formerly provided. Since the late 1970's austerity has accelerated exponentially since the global economic recession of 2008. Downward economic trends on both sides of the Atlantic opened a chasm of inequality not seen since the ('dirty') thirties (Piketty 2014). Within the UK context, enforcement of UC during the last decade has only exacerbated global economic inequality and transferred the negative effects of boom-and-bust cycles onto the general populous and its respective civic institutions. Policy makers and governments have not seriously considered the impact of these political and economic practices, which coalesce with wage stagnation and the eclipse of nearly all public institutions through privatization by multinational corporations.⁵⁸ Austerity and UC are not related in a causal sense as this phenomenon is much more complex, yet a strong correlation between practical policy like UC and the ideology of austerity exists when it comes to how efficiently FBOs have stepped up to fill the gaps left by the retreat of the welfare state, particularly in Scotland.

Devolution of welfare and FBO responses

In Scotland and the rest of the UK, giant multinational corporations like Serco profit from the instability of current economic conditions in which impoverished people are confined by regional planners to live in geographical areas designated for containing low-income citizens (Justice & Peace Scotland 2018). Private firms like Maximus for ESA (Employment and Support Allowance) and Atos and Capita for PIP (Personal Independent Payment) are extensively used by the DWP to outsource the appeals process for those sanctioned under UC (Bloom 2018). Serco is an example

⁵⁸ With the notable exception of the NHS, for the meantime.

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh of a corporation that simultaneously manages low-income housing projects in countries like the UK while also operating increasing numbers of privately managed prisons. This process has occurred in concert with the global denationalizing trend towards the takeover of formerly state-run but now locally devolved public services (Latour 2018, 1). John Hills argues that successive governments since 1979 have used their own private and third-sector payouts as evidence to incite voters into thinking that the public should not be made to pay taxes into the UK system (Hills 2014, 63–120). Where does this long-term disavowal of civic responsibility leave FBOs?

Politics, social policy and austerity

Faith-based poverty relief often falls short of standards proposed by universal declarations of human rights and other secular forms of ethics.⁵⁹ Some obvious theological shortcomings can, of course, also be found in FBO approaches to caring for the poor when these visions are idealised as expressions of *diakonia* derived from the Christian and Hebrew scriptures. Volunteer groups like those represented in Edinburgh can offer a diffuse if not nebulous form of social justice that *attempts* lasting solutions to long-term poverty cycles. Working towards achieving a form of the ‘common good’ concerns volunteers as evidenced above, though perhaps no singular conception is forthcoming. An evangelistic desire to advance the kingdom of God in the souls of the nation will undoubtedly fall afoul of contemporary and materialist forms of justice seeking, as seen in the comparison of secular justices (e.g. John Rawls) and faith-based ones (e.g. Jeffrey Stout). This may be because faith-based activists do not necessarily hold the same standards as rights-based advocates who may subscribe to a more pluralistic form of ethics. To this end, theologian John Dominic Crossan recently argued that all social concerns are in fact eschatological in nature:

[...] it is prudent to distinguish between a rhapsodic and impossible *utopia* (Greek for “not-place”) and an ecstatic but possible *eutopia* (Greek for “good-place”) [author’s emphases]. *Eutopia* imagines a social world of universal

⁵⁹ E.g., John Rawls’ theoretical construction of rights in *A Theory of Justice* (1999).

peace, a human world of nonviolent distributive justice where all get a fair and adequate share of God's world as God's Kingdom. (Crossan 2016, 338)

In a similar vein, theologian William Cavanaugh argues through ethnographic and historical work on the abuses of the Chilean Pinochet regime, that when situations arise where the church represents the soul of the nation while the government personifies the body politic, a dangerous duality then permeates public theology (Cavanaugh 1998, 151–202). Cavanaugh traces this duality back to the long shadow cast by the Vatican II conference, and the legacy of public theologian Jacques Maritain. A similarly polarizing attitude towards the so-called undeserving poor resonates strongly in British public imagination today as ecclesiology become manifest. To a certain extent this demonstrates how social life often remains theological and relies on symbolic understandings of sacred meanings created and shared across groups (Tillich 1995). Theologians like Ernst Troeltsch in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1960) and H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (1956) considered Christian hope for society as potentially missional from within the status quo yet existing completely transcendent of social realities. A similar duality exists in FBO work where faith is juxtaposed with the prevailing policies of austerity in Scotland.

Have faith-based organisations themselves contested notions of justice? While the first decades of the twenty-first century saw increasing urban austerity, third sector bureaucracy is experiencing previously unseen levels of growth with FBOs well-represented within this broad trend. A fitting example being the BCT in Edinburgh which has seen a marked increase in the demands on its homelessness resettlement services since 2010. BCT currently serves over 7000 families across Scotland with this figure increasing every year. Across the 2017-2018 autumn and winter seasons the night shelter ran for 6 months in church settings, housing up to 70 rough sleepers and feeding all who showed up hungry. BCT claims that it aims to end homelessness in Scotland – a claim which hinges on their ethos that *all people* are made in the image of God.

This ethos ensures that clients receiving front-line and resettlement services are recognised as equals and co-operatives in the Kingdom of God. Yet this does not prevent the organisation from taking part in various other social enterprises which promote their own brand of faith-based social activism. I refer here to an interview with a staff member:

This is what we do with a lot of our interns, particularly the ones that come from the States. They'll explore the UK context of charitable, particularly Christian charitable frameworks. It could be anything from environment-- wanting to look into social enterprise and the impact on the environment. The way that we run it was a Christmas tree project that funded a home and shelter. [an intern] was very interested in things like land management. "Why do we use a particular farm?" Because it had a very robust land management policy around chemicals, pesticides, etc. Most people buying their Christmas trees don't think about that, they just want a nice tree, but this guy was really into that. Then somebody else wanted to come in and look at the difference between the American model of tax relief, where you get the money back, versus the British model, which is the charity gets the money back. [chuckles] I know, obviously, in the States people will donate more because they can get the tax relief back to cover it.

Can BCT end homelessness when its marketing strategies for raising are this well-developed? Or rather, does not this kind of business minded ability to raise funds simply fuel the development of more bureaucratic administration of homelessness? The BCT receive support as well as promotion from within the Scottish government which views third sector organisations as key to ongoing devolution schemes (SNP 2017). As part of these plans social services are to be handed over in an unfettered way to communitarian groups. Willing partnerships with FBOs often provide 'efficient' stop gap mitigations of urban austerity, in which chronically homeless families are unfortunate by-products of neoliberalism. It would be too generous to assume that this kind of voluntary labour and organizing effort can continue into the indefinite future. Resources will be stretched, and volunteers will move on to other newer 'sexier' social projects towards other renewed justice concerns which also hold symbolic meaning for faith-based activists in a broad-based sense are the order of the day. To this end, John Hills has argued that "[...] if

we want to reduce poverty and inequality, we will need to pay for it” (Hills 2014, 48)⁶⁰, in that the public sector needs to take much more action in the UK. Hill’s analysis of the British situation considers the work of economists Walter Korpi and Joakim Palme from whose study of restrictions placed on the welfare state during the nineties was developed the concept of ‘paradox of redistribution’ (Korpi and Palme 1998). Hills sees their conclusion that “the more we target [cutting] benefits to the poor ... the less we are likely to reduce poverty and inequality” as evidence that the transition to UC in the UK is doomed to fail and cannot possibly provide adequate benefits to all potential claimants (Hills 2014, 47). The extreme measures taken by the DWP through local Job Centre offices to enforce a rigid form of means-testing has led more claimants to fall through social safety nets. This has opened many doors for religious charities to attempt formulating solutions which are in fact over-extended endeavors (as they appear among the mission statements of many charities) reaching far beyond the remit of the charitable sector, encroaching upon the both the sanctity of the *ekklesia* and the sacrosanct ideology of the secular state. This is especially salient when comparing the UK with countries which rely on a universal income-based model of aid, a model which stands in stark contrast to the means-tested and ragged patchwork display put on by the contemporary UK welfare apparatus.

Ethnographically approaching this phenomenon provided space for reflection within these three organizations. My observations occurred in relationship with volunteers and staff which allowed for open and frank discussion about the kind of society in which faith-based activists in Edinburgh wish to live. Conversations did not centre upon, for instance, whether progressive or proportional taxation is an effective method for maintaining public support for social services – instead interlocutors found that the gradual reduction of the welfare state and the spaces opened up for Christian mission were a welcome if not challenging option which allowed for

⁶⁰ This sentiment echoes that of Rev. Les Isaac’s Good Samaritanism, which is likewise focussed on paying the ‘bills of inequality,’ albeit from a religious and perhaps more paternalistic perspective (Isaac and Davies 2009, 29)

easy critique of the actions of the state without generating impetus for any sort of change in social policy.

Religion may be prevalent in third sector work because, as in the philosophy of the William James,

there are occasions under which faith, rather than evidence, is sufficient to justify belief [...] not only religious beliefs, but in some circumstances other kinds of beliefs as well, may be justified independently of evidential support” (Suckiel 2006, 34).

For many faith-based activists there is no ‘rupture’ to their beliefs even in the encounter with those socially ‘othered’ who are served through front-line voluntary work. Distinctly modern forms of theology can underwrite these phenomena in the third sector, and the relative absence of justice deliberation within the sector resonates in the responses I obtained through fieldwork and interviews.

As one of the progenitors of pragmatist philosophy and ethics, William James considered religion in terms of what constituted ‘healthy’ and ‘morbid’ mindedness – particularly in his Gifford lectures series eventually published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1890) occurring over a century ago. In his analysis the role of religion in the modern world was neither anachronistic nor esoteric.⁶¹ His interpretation recognized the symbolic need for meaning to arise out of lived-experienced. Ellen Suckiel argues that “[William] James meant to highlight the fact that the context in which a belief is held, as well as the desires, hopes, and goals of the believer, are relevant to the belief’s justification” (Suckiel 2006, 35). Just as beliefs support the intrinsic desires and motives that the believer already holds in a rather circular (if not self-fulfilling) fashion, religion also can be employed to underwrite the status quo of third sector bureaucracy. James himself claimed that religious people feel “as if the appeal of religion to us were made to our

⁶¹ Though it was a less secularised western world at the time of his Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh between 1901 and 1902.

own active good-will, as if evidence might be forever withheld from us unless we met the hypothesis half-way” (James 1992, 733).⁶² Faith-based activists have thus taken a novel stance on social welfare and the responsibilities of faithful Christian praxis – whether they are acutely aware of this process or not.

Conclusion

The response of faith-based activists towards social issues in a place like Edinburgh shows that volunteers and staff are not only willing to address issues practically but are also exploring alternative welfare services. This work does not require one to engage the full range of social policy issues currently represented in other areas of contemporary British society. Faith-based activism can even be seen eschatologically in that it embraces social ethics which looks towards the eventual realization of the Kingdom of God. These kinds of theological meanings can be relied upon in any of the social service contexts described above as they are fluid enough to be molded into whatever the FBOs require. It also allows participants to personalize the meaning of the work they are doing.

‘Resistance’ as *rapprochement* to welfare devolution in the UK for FBO volunteers generates meaningful challenges to the neoliberal policy changes which have insidiously enshrined economic ‘growth’ above other societal needs. In an era of post-welfare states and economies where religious organizations provide the only option for relief of the poor (Bitler and Hoynes 2010; DeVerteuil 2015), very little else other than FBOs are addressing the needs of society. Political goals which do not involve the use of distributive justice nor the notion of a heavenly kingdom suddenly possess much less ⁶³ Sometimes churches and FBOs do exhibit a level of reflexivity towards the precarious nature of modern welfare pluralism in Britain. While this awareness is perhaps an overestimate of FBO responsibility in one of the

⁶² Likewise, C.G. Jung came to a similar conclusion about the inferences of religious thinking in his *Answer to Job* (2012, 3–34).

⁶³ Colossians 3:11.

richest countries in the developed world, it again does not question the systemic failure of public policy and does not motivate an organizable political activism, while instead motivating a discernable spiritual activism and desire to serve.

Chapter 7 – "Mum called it Sin City": FBOs under austerity

Prologue

On August 10, 2017, a study published by researchers at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University predicted a marked spike in homelessness in Scotland. The authors attributed their findings to the effects of recent economic austerity policies. The study was funded by a large homelessness prevention charity called Crisis, stating that:

[...] there are currently 11,800 people across Scotland either sleeping rough, staying in hostels, living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, sofa-surfing, sleeping in cars or staying in squats or refuges. The team's analysis indicates this figure is expected to rise to 12,200 by 2021 before accelerating to 18,100 - a rise of 53% on current levels - in 2041. (Marsh 2017a)

While this research drew attention to the plight of homeless people in Scotland, it did not examine how the government planned to address the rising tide of marginalised citizens. Increasing homelessness has become accepted as normative in the UK, given the nature of the housing crisis and stagnating economic possibilities.⁶⁴ One *Guardian* columnist wrote that:

Even now many people fail to grasp the true meaning of the word "austerity". Austerity is not eight years of spending cuts, as in the UK, or even the social catastrophe inflicted on Greece. It means driving the wages, social wages and living standards in the west down for decades until they meet those of the middle class in China and India on the way up. (Mason 2015)

While in the British free press warnings of austerity and economic globalisation appear frequently, such revelations are often absent from academic and policy discussions and are also lacking in publications put out

⁶⁴ Both the BBC and the *Guardian* regularly run articles focussing on the dismantling of social housing and the rising costs of letting (BBC News 2019; Orr 2017).

by third sector sources as evidenced above. Aside from these realities, the researchers' predictions about the plight of Scotland's homeless and marginalised were shocking. New affordable houses had already been promised by the Scottish government, yet when and where they would materialise was (and still is) anyone's guess.

Something else went unmentioned by the researchers, yet was somewhat suggested by the findings: *how did faith-rooted responses to poverty having already been in motion for decades suddenly arise from within the third sector to become part of the largest foodbank network in the UK?* The ability for Christian-rooted FBOs in Scotland's third sector to absorb the costs of homelessness, food poverty, and street living while more families are being driven into social deprivation had not yet been fully tested. Adding to the dismal picture, in October of 2017 the UK charity Shelter published findings from its study of both governmental and 'Freedom of Information' data requested from various sources to conclude that one in every two-hundred people (0.5%) in the UK is currently homeless (Butler 2017). The highest rates of homelessness, according to Shelter's research, are found in London where one in every fifty-nine people has experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

While the studies referred to above shed light on some of the broad trends in UK welfare, my research is concerned with the praxis of theology and the symbolic meaning(s) of faith-based activism in Scotland. This focusses on Christian-rooted responses to homelessness, food poverty, and various forms of 'anti-social' behaviour through the work of faith-based organisations (FBOs). Being a foreign yet eventually familiar observer of FBOs in Scotland allowed me to gain insight into a phenomenon I had not encountered in prior social research closer to my home in Ontario, Canada. In Scotland this study generated three case studies over more than a year of participant observation as a member and volunteer in three Edinburgh FBOs, using seventeen in-depth interviews with volunteers and staff members, as well as a compilation spanning ten years of current and prior press releases,

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh annual reports, internal communications and memos. One concept I further explored through interpretivist methodology in participant observation fieldwork, through interviews, and from press releases and other related documents were conceptual links to what Christians have called for centuries *diakonia*, which represents material care for the poor and oppressed required by God to be provided by the church.

Introduction

Contested notions of mission among FBOs appear within the dissonance between organisational ethos and the symbolic meaning of practical work done by staff and volunteers. Conceptions of what constitutes the work of FBOs take shape in mission statements and vision outlines within these organisations. How volunteers, front line and back office staff make sense of the work in practice often contests and extends missional values in various ways. This lends new meaning and activism to the cause of FBOs, where in some cases this work might lead to further delay of action and greater deliberation over welfare provision in a small country like Scotland. Fortunately, there is much more to this story.

This chapter relies on ethnographic accounts of my time in three Edinburgh faith-based organisations between 2016-2018. Below I sketch how the ethics of evangelism and the neoliberal drive to pluralise welfare in the UK intersect, and how personal narratives represent this process in the lives of volunteers who form the new front line of welfare in Scotland. In this sense I have questioned whether faith-based organisations themselves contest notions of justice from within the entrenchment of the policies and politics of urban austerity.

FBOs and their conceptions of welfare represent a complex example of organisational culture and welfare pluralism in Scotland. Local narratives take shape within a milieu of state agencies and national trusts as stakeholders, including church volunteers who serve as determiners of how aid is provided to clients. This phenomenon includes dissonance between

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh organisational mission versus the personal experience, beliefs and activism of individuals when it comes to defining what constitutes justice. Recent developments in third-sector bureaucracy can be taken as examples of top-down corporate policy structure yet the implications of how organisations manifest their work within a Scottish context have not yet been fully explored. In Edinburgh tensions between volunteers and their respective organisations reveal displeasure with the failure of councils, governments and churches to appropriately address issues like homelessness and food poverty. Local grounding of expressions of meaning, definition, and motivation for justice and activism both align and deviate from institutional policy and theological mission. This allows for a spectrum of acquiescence and resistance (and much else betwixt and between) to state sanctions within austerity dominated policy, casting doubt upon the future of welfare pluralism.

Churches and welfare pluralism: Universal Credit and the Trussell Trust

The Trussell Trust (TT) is the largest network of foodbanks in Britain. It began in 1997 as a faith-based response to rising food poverty in England and included supporting orphans in Romania. The mission statement comes from Matthew 25:35 with special emphasis on welcoming the archetypal stranger in need. The TT provides nine local sites as foodbanks, eight of them in churches of various denominations. The use of sacred spaces is convenient as most are in historical and contemporary areas of economic deprivation in Edinburgh. The TT claims to provide over one million food parcels each year but does not keep track of individual (unique) users of the service, since records are only kept of parcels given out, and not how many people rely on the contents. Instead they inventory the number food parcels distributed as well as the gross weight and caloric quantities included, leaving it unclear as to how many people (and/or families) ultimately use the food parcels.

Especially during the last decade (since the recession of 2008) charities like the TT in the UK have absorbed the cost of austerity policies

such as Universal Credit, which is designed to consolidate the diffuse number of benefits provided by the UK state welfare apparatus. UC relies on a database of benefits holders who are systematically means tested and often denied benefits because of their metrics in the database. These sanctions are not necessarily decided by a (human) social worker or other professional designate. One main problem is that the system is tediously slow in response time to appeals of sanctions, often leaving people without benefits for up to six months at a time while they seek the resolution of their appeals. Concessions are not necessarily granted which in turn further entrenches the poverty of former claimants in the meantime. Formerly separate benefits that have been since rolled into UC include income support, income-based jobseekers' allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, housing benefit, child tax credit, and working tax credit (among others). Former claimants may have relied upon benefits for many years, only to have these taken away without explanation or replacement. Balanced for inflation, many of these formerly provided benefits were already low in financial value. Having benefits curtailed – in an ongoing process begun roughly ten years ago – through inhumane methods of means-testing, or simply deleted by computer errors, has had disastrous effects on many precariously living citizens in the UK.

The current decentralisation of the welfare state in the UK has been heralded as a resurrection of paternalistic forms of social care provided by the working-class cooperatives, friendly societies, charities and trade unions which historically provided more non-state welfare than churches such as the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. For example, the established churches were only marginal welfare providers – primarily in the form of charities and social clubs such as soup kitchens and boys brigades – prior to the groundwork laid for the modern welfare state from the late 19th century into the interwar period by social theorists such as R.H. Tawney, Benjamin Rowntree, and William Beveridge, drawing from German and other continental models (Butler 2017). Twentieth century social engineering culminated into the launch of a distinctly British welfare state by Clement

Atlee's Labour government just after the conclusion of the second world war (Renwick 2017). Rather than representing a return to Victorian ideals, contemporary welfare pluralism is instead a product of neo-liberalism engrained in twenty-first century economic policy. The TT's commissioned statistics show how UC has affected the massive task of provisioning foodbanks across the entire UK on a weekly basis (Loopstra et al. 2018). Yet the organisation will not outright challenge the injustice and short termism of a policy like UC. The TT has inherited food banking in same the spirit found in many states where other governments have traditionally supplied food stamps. The TT's massive third sector bureaucracy does not criticise the structural injustice that continues to allow for foodbank expansion, church by church.

How the former state apparatus is shifting into the work of church associated FBOs and by extension to the volunteers drawn from church congregations is a formerly unforeseen phenomenon – as Britain has been steadily secularizing since the end of the second world war (C. Brown 2000). This again begs the question of whether or not faith-based welfare provisions can be maintained in the long term.

My involvement with the locally administered EFP fell under the TT's overall theological program of 'welcoming the stranger.' Yet this generic rationale is not often brought into conversation with local volunteers and is outright derided by some of the local administration. Volunteers are often also unaware of the logistical apparatus which supplies the very food they give out on a weekly basis. For example, in an interview I had with a local EFP leader I asked, "Do other people in the organization have awareness of the potential difficulty of keeping the sustainability going with volunteers and staff?" She replied:

I don't think that bothers a lot of them. I think a lot of the people who are just coming once a fortnight or something, they really don't have an awareness at the moment of what's going on. Most people haven't been to the warehouse and that's partly why [the new] training [programme] is at the warehouse, to get the volunteers out there so they actually see more of the picture and maybe feel a bit more involved. Because I think a lot of them don't feel that much involved.

In this case third sector welfare pluralism as a response to austerity policy only allows the perpetuation of such bureaucracy.

The role that churches and congregations play in providing the space and people needed by FBOs in Edinburgh is ecumenical and interdenominational. This reality, to a certain extent, is testament to the religious heritage of Edinburgh as a post secular European city (C. R. Baker and Beaumont 2011) as well as a former hotbed of Calvinist reformation (C. Brown 2000). An ever-present “chain of memory” (Hervieu-Leger 2000) trailing back into the early modern and medieval period when Edinburgh, while historically being a bastion of the sciences and the enlightenment philosophy, was also a decidedly religious landscape both pre- and post-Reformation as the many edifices which pierce the cityscape demonstrate.

Street Pastors: Samaritanism and the ethics of evangelism

Edinburgh Street Pastors (ESP) are a local chapter of the nationally administered Ascension Trust (AT). The AT was founded over 25 years ago, and the initial SP pilots in areas like Hackney in London were launched not long afterwards during 2003. The mission of all SPs is to embody good Samaritanism by listening to, helping, and caring for anyone encountered during weekend nighttime patrols which take place in groups of three or more. These take place in almost all major cities and towns across the UK (as well as in parts of Jamaica, the US, Finland, Canada and Australia).

The SP movement in Scotland has generally been well-received publicly in the Scottish Parliament as well as in Westminster and by the former Mayoral office of London (MacLeod 2011; Forbes 2017). As urban environments in Scotland follow the trend towards twenty-four hour surveillance and fewer police on duty (Stoddart 2008), groups like ESP continue to grow. Besides their good natured-work which cites violent crime reduction by up to 66% in areas such as Northampton England (The

Christian Institute 2010) SPs are seen by some as a communitarian complement to law enforcement.

During my extensive training period with ESP – which took over a year to fully complete prior to my official commissioning – one memorable evening was spent learning about common street drugs and how Police Scotland deal with their use. It was led by two members of the Christian Police Association (CPA UK) who worked in the Edinburgh constabulary. My reflections were taken as field notes below:

OCT 26 – ESP meeting: Drugs and Substance Abuse
Training Night

This meeting takes place in a church and is part of a series of training seminars aimed at getting new recruits ready for the SP role. The theme of the evening is drugs and substance abuse, and two off-duty police officers join the group to educate all on “the drug problem in Edinburgh.”

This time the instructors were content to sit back and let the cops do all the talking – since this time the police were to have the legitimacy necessary to explain a lot about drugs (as opposed to prior meetings where ESP leaders are the experienced veterans).

They showed us over 30 samples of real street drugs which they had organized in a molded plastic carrying case. The substances (weed, meth, ecstasy, heroin, fentanyl plus others I had not heard of before) were passed around inside of transparent boxes which generated a practical and tangible object of discussion. The cops were very friendly and knowledgably shared stories about their work, but also sharing their testimonials about how they became evangelical Christians in Edinburgh. This added charisma alongside their ‘school of hard knocks’ personae helped their story resonate among many of the SP recruits who seemed to respect the position of the police to the utmost degree.

This was a significant encounter in my ESP training because it helped practically to reinforce the strong perceived link within the “urban trinity” theology taught by SPs which is purported to exist between them, the local police and additionally the local city council. The drugs and substance abuse training sessions were meaningful for most people in the session because

the constables were converted Christians and gave testimony of their personal faith.

Even though Good Samaritan theology is espoused by the AT, volunteers themselves sometimes hold much more personalised theological views of the work which do not align with the vision of the AT's urban trinity theology. One night at around 4 am as my team walked back to our base of operations in a former church-turned-community centre, one of the more elderly street pastors quipped that "my mum used to call it sin city" in reference to Edinburgh's historic old and new town districts. This occurred after a night of patrolling these areas of Edinburgh, which are busier at night than during the day on a Friday. This seemed telling on the part of that particular SP, in that even though we had been repetitively trained to act as Samaritans, there was still an air of moralism involved in the work which did see Edinburgh as a 'fallen' place in need of redemption. Similarly, at a prayer meeting just prior to a patrol one team leader vented, "If we cannot give out Bibles we may as well pack up and go home," in response to the local ESP leadership's hesitation to give out Christian literature while on patrol. This resistance to top down policy from the national and local leadership often surfaces, but does not extend toward counteracting the complacency of the SP movement to aid in, for example, the ongoing proliferation of a surveillance society through widespread CCTV enforcement (Stoddart 2008), or the continuing development of third sector bureaucracy as a stop-gap solution to government welfare cuts.

The personal sentiments expressed above illustrate part of a wider picture for ESP. Within this larger context, two factions within the local ESP trustees and steering committee members (one group being more evangelistic, the other more modest in its theological approach by allowing non-Christians to join) as well as the highlighted differences between the organisational vision and practical volunteer experience appear in stark contrast. This could be summarised as the ability for visionary leadership to see the liquidity of the poverty and antisocial behaviour being addressed,

while often local ESP volunteers are unable to see beyond the sometimes distressing and disturbing experiences encountered on a nightly basis (e.g. helping self-harming people, addicts, sex-workers, and refugees living on the streets). In an auto-ethnographic sense, it is telling that never before had I spent so much time in prayer meetings in my life as during my two-year involvement with ESP (I have been a confessional Christian since I was a child).

Perhaps the nostalgic, paternalistic and moralising feelings that accompany some of the volunteers' narratives are motivated by symbolic archetypes like the Good Samaritan, as suggested in some of the interviews. This does not interfere with the reality that the Scottish and UK governments continue to devolve more and more welfare services into the third sector as FBOs become more eager to mobilise certain portions of the population for welfare provision labour. For example, various police forces like the London Met have admitted they find SP an adequate reducer of crime in areas that paid law enforcement cannot always patrol (Wardman and London 2009; The Christian Institute 2010).

Regardless of how effective and efficient FBOs become at providing welfare, questions of economic inequality and social class could be raised on a more frequent basis. For example, within the Bethany Christian Trust programme of viewing all people as being made in the image of God. The ability to see *good*, alive inside a fellow human creature of lower social standing is seen as a noble cause for most of my interlocutors. This notion is also well supported in the relevant media channels maintained by these three organisations. Yet it still does not subvert the reality that one group has to adopt a position lower than acceptable social standards in order to interact with an 'othered' group in the decaying urban environment of many British metropolitan areas and large cities (Standing 2014). As I detail below, *it is possible* to vindicate suffering through relating to the 'urban other' as someone holy and divinely sanctified. This is a concept drawn out from the

work of Sam Wells, who posits a stark difference between *being for* and *being there* when it comes to helping the poor. Wells writes that,

‘For’ is a fine word, but it doesn’t dismantle resentment, doesn’t overcome misunderstanding, it doesn’t deal with alienation, it doesn’t overcome isolation. (Wells 2015, 2)

In this case, volunteers and third sector bureaucracy (including FBOs) help the poor with good intentions, but do not encounter the other, embrace the possibility of change, or have their view of social realities radically ruptured.

BCT and the Imago Dei: religious and secular vindications of suffering

The case of the Bethany Christian Trust (henceforth BCT) stands somewhere in the middle of the typology I am proposing, within a continuum between a) the bureaucratic complicity of the TT and the b) outward facing and often evangelistic posture of ESP. It is also the only exclusively Scottish charity that I analysed. Their services range from street level such as the Care Van which hands out food and clothing around the Old and New town areas of Edinburgh, the night shelter which houses up to seventy rough sleepers on a rotational basis, various forms of subsidized and free housing provided to those who qualify, and rehabilitation from addictive behaviours. The BCT has been publicly lauded in the Scottish government on multiple occasions for its herculean efforts at housing the ever-increasing homeless population in the Scottish capital (Forbes 2017). The BCT in Edinburgh has seen a markedly steady increase in the demand on its homelessness resettlement services since 2010. From 2017-2018 the night shelter ran for six months in church settings, housing rough sleepers and feeding as many as came into the door even if they could not be offered a bed.

The organisation is social enterprise savvy and consistently effective at raising funds through its very recognisable chain of charity shops, simply referred to as Bethany Shops. This marketing extends to Christmas trees which are also used to generate funds as mentioned in chapter six of this thesis. By becoming more socially enterprising, and able to absorb greater

authority over Scotland's poorest citizens, FBOs acquire more permanent responsibilities from the state welfare apparatus which previously provided much more robust systems like council housing and support for housing associations. The Caring Christmas trees program which is run by the BCT overseen social enterprise Bethany Enterprises Ltd., aims to increase its sales to over 2000 trees in 2018 (from promotional email correspondence). Social security bureaucrats in Whitehall London for instance, who manage what is left of the state welfare apparatus in the UK, have no intention of competing with the burgeoning ability for FBOs to generate liquid capital themselves through social enterprising. Questions still remain about how long this trend can continue in a pluralistic welfare environment, and how long theological and religious symbols can continue to be employed by charities. If charities are having an easier time becoming business savvy than altering the structural conditions that keep a steady stream of clients knocking on their doors, then the shift that Wells describes in *A Nazareth Manifesto* from *for* to *with* the poor is in practice already going in the wrong direction theologically.

The places and situations described in this chapter – whether secular, 'sinful', or sacred – all provide fodder for meaning-making both among FBO leadership and among volunteers who conduct the frontline work. The symbols offered up as meanings – welcoming the archetypal stranger, being good Samaritans, and treating people as the *Imago Dei* – solidify the diffuse theological substance which I argue provides the meaning necessary for FBOs to legitimize and establish their place in the third sector, and by extension within the welfare state in Scotland and the UK. The case of Scotland thus becomes a critical mass when testing for faith-based social activism in that it represents one of the most staunchly secular national populations in the UK.

The mission statements – 'ending hunger,' 'ending homelessness,' 'listening, helping and caring' for all those found on the street – are all aided by rough and ready theologies which, rather than being nebulous, actually

afford both administrators and front-line workers the resources they need to mobilise the new welfare pluralism enshrined in neoliberal economic and social policy. Another question that remains asks how long FBOs can take part in this process and maintain their theological credibility.

Aside from the charitable success of FBOs (the British public is very charitable, with HMRC adding twenty-five pence to every pound donated to registered charities), one of the major problems with investigating voluntary social activism is the firebrand topic of religion in the British context, which touches upon a cultural uneasiness which cannot be ignored. While the fingerprints of Christian faith appear in the past and present of much of what the charitable sector does, and this historical connections of the welfare state to the established churches in Britain is generally recognized, more needs to be understood about how people of faith volunteer, work, and are managed largely for free and in novel ways which in turn develop local theological vision. To what extent both historical religion as a “chain of memory” and professed faith fits into the big picture of faith-based welfare provision in the UK is far from clear. This kind of phenomenon has been in turn referred to as ‘little platoons’ by conservative commentators,⁶⁵ or conversely as networks of social and political activists by more progressive heralds (Baker and Beaumont 2011). While many church-based volunteers have been keen to mobilise and make use of the time and resources they do have in the service of an outward-facing project like the EFP, what may be less obvious are the political results of their social activism as a representation of Christian faith in the twenty-first century. Whether they are aware of it or not (something explored more through interview analysis in this thesis), local church congregations are creating localised theological responses to food poverty, homelessness, and street life which extend beyond the denominational and doctrinarian behaviour common to Scotland's long religious history. This

⁶⁵ Referring to the concept from the classical political commentator Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Burke 1987).

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh phenomenon can be encapsulated within the modest duty of care involved in, for example, merely handing out food.

The dominant view in much Christian literature on welfare provision is that a conception of biblical grace can serve as a corrective or at least a plausible alternative to the ills of modern humanity, particularly for social justice concerned evangelicals (Claiborne 2016) and progressive Catholics (Cronin 1994). This has been recognised by scholars sensitive to the particularly evangelical nature of a reawakening to local, national, and global social problems particularly in Britain (Chaplin 2015). Some ex-evangelicals, one example being the prolific biblical scholar Bart Ehrman, aim to expose the very human temptation to see the act of helping to ease others' suffering through a positive lens (Ehrman 2009, 155–56). While on the other hand, theologian John Dominic Crossan argues that the violence of humanity may become insatiable without the theological vision necessary to morally quell these human fallacies, "*Eutopia* or eschatology may even be [...] protected by moral conscience rather than by animal instinct" (Crossan 2016).

Chapter fifty-three in the book of Isaiah describes the suffering servant as a motif which became canonical typology for centuries, even across millennia entering into the present. Even though this servant typology is understood by Rabbinic scholars as the nation of Israel, many Christian interpretations consider Christ's ultimate sacrifice as the model for their own worldly sufferings. In Mark 10:45 Jesus understands himself in these terms and motivates his disciples to follow a life of service, something which is also taken up by Paul in his letter to the Philippians 2:5.

This permeating idea again draws our attention to the ability of religion to resist the usual effects of time and space upon ideals (Hervieu-Leger 2000; Bellah 2011). An ethics of hope is perpetual for Christian practical theology and ethics as Moltman wrote: "Christian responsibility for the world requires an ethics for changing the world, based on the righteousness and peace which we believe in and try to live, in the discipleship of Christ"

(Moltmann 2010). These ethics arise from a desire to do good beyond the constraints of the phenomenological world.

Edinburgh's poor: deserving and underserving

Suffering in life is not experienced the same way by everyone, everywhere. The idea of using Christian experience is drawn from the Nicene and Apostles' creeds, as British ethicist Michael Banner refers to the celebrations with others (birth and death) and the actions involving others' input into our lives and memorials (conception and burial) (M. C. Banner 2014). Suffering is also usually experienced in isolation. For some, suffering is a deserved part of life, or so the story goes from many in areas of public policy and enforcement: in narratives of 'deserving vs, undeserving poor' which tend to frame many debates regarding Christian responses to poverty. People using foodbanks for instance, generally suffer alone. Privately experienced hunger in one of the world's richest countries one could argue is not a visible form of poverty like street living or drug dependency.

In an anthropological sense, Banner suggests a turn away from moral philosophy as a guide for ethics towards anthropological reflections on the moral stage of human life as mirrored in the Apostles' creed. In his *The Ethics of Everyday Life* Banner notes that "Christ rose because he suffered" (88) and that "Christ triumphed over death" (179-80), referencing the anthropologist de Boulay and the celebrations of Greek villages experiencing first-hand Christ's "defeat of death." Banner's work builds on that of classical anthropological approaches in that the resurrection can be viewed as a symbolic act of remembrance of the Oedipal killing of archetypal fathers, human and divine (Eliade 1959; Freud 2003; Mary Douglas 2003). These reflections leave questions about just how much suffering can indeed be vindicated for the purposes of symbolic meaning for faith-based activists today.

Conclusion

As outlined in chapter five of this thesis, it is common for contested notions of welfare provision among FBOs to appear within the dissonance between organisational ethos and the symbolic meaning of practical work done by staff and volunteers. For example, from an interview with a local leader in the EFP:

That relationship the Trussell Trust has forged with Tesco has actually been very good. Other things like -- those four crates of food came in that was sent to us yesterday, and everything that comes in has to be [...] so that we can tell the Trussell Trust how much donation in food we had, so that they can say "This is how much has been donated, and how many people were fed." Their statistics are also important. I suppose that's to get funding. Charities need to prove that they are doing what they said they were doing. There's so much being watched over, the charities, to show that they are performing.

While a local paid administrator of the EFP said:

At the moment there is not a huge overlap: they overlap but not directly. All the centres are signposting clients on to different organisations like "Shelter" or people like that, but we don't really work closely with them. With the market research we are doing the aim is to make it more inclusive so far all of us to be working together, so in the one centre if you went in -- one of our hubs would be a foodbank centre, but there also might be someone there from shelter, be someone from an energy company, a debt adviser, there would be all those kind of different support agencies there. Not just people coming to get the food, people would be coming just to speak to the debt adviser, not coming in for a food pack at all. To try and support most people as much as possible.

These reflections by my interlocutors reveal the raw side of the work involved. Yet all this work takes place before a backdrop of sacred space, sacred texts, and meaningful spiritual action, all of which lend legitimacy to the efforts of faith-based social activists across the UK in recent years.

This chapter has presented a thematic analysis of three ethnographic case studies of FBOs active in Edinburgh. While recent developments in the

third sector can be taken as examples of top-down corporate policy structure, the implications of how organisations manifest their work within a local Scottish context are much more diverse and simultaneously both embrace and turn from the neoliberal short-termism often politically underwritten by government welfare policies. Exploring this kind of local faith-rooted activism thus reveals more of the shortfalls of welfare pluralism in Britain, as well as the religious, ethical and theological characteristics which contribute to plugging the gaps left by the transfer of welfare service provision towards the third sector in Scotland.

Chapter 8 – FBOs in the public square

This chapter addresses what is lacking in public policy discourse concerning the twenty-first century failures of the UK welfare state. Some of the elements of resistance to systemic poverty are conceived within theologies that develop from grassroots interpretations of Jesus Christ's teachings as they are represented in the New Testament. Many of Christ's teachings are thus seen as driving a special impetus upon Christians to serve the poor (Wells 2015a).

As recounted in chapter two, analysis of poverty in Scotland and the rest of the UK – by sociologists, ethnographers, and concerned activists – is either lacking depth, or, where it does exist, has largely been ignored. This ignorance extends to the top levels of government, and sadly also resounds in the private sector. Unfortunately, across the recent decades very little policy change has occurred even within the third sector itself. Developments during the last twenty years from inside the post-devolution environment have instead prepared the ground for the prominent role of faith-based organisations in Scotland. For many FBOs, this environment holds opportunities in a paternalistic sense (and is often seen as such from a secular lens) and is missional in a theological sense (a factor well-represented by faith-based organisations). While this ongoing process is described from my own ethnographic perspective as participant observer, the analysis developed in this thesis also relies on interviews and discussion of documentary evidence contemporary to my study of faith-based social activism in Edinburgh (2015-2018). The representation of sources other than my ethnographic data (and the manner in which I represent ethnographic analysis) also reflects the physical severance I experienced from my fieldwork: in June 2018 I returned to my native Canada after three years of intense research activity in Edinburgh. The remainder of this thesis thus addresses the current reality that *even though localised research and social*

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh *activism has failed to secure changes* in Scotland,⁶⁶ 'action research' which is close in proximity to the phenomena in question *generates practical, theological and spiritual resources that help to buttress the third sector over-* against the disintegration of the welfare state in the UK.

Prologue

Whilst taking part in my first care van shift with a team of Bethany Christian Trust volunteers from my church, one thing that I was initially cognizant of as a foreigner (I had been in Scotland for a year by that point, and had recently begun fieldwork in the three charities serving as case studies) was the volunteers' ability to easily rationalise the problems we were encountering. In a reflexive sense, my awareness of these incidents was perhaps linked to my rural upbringing and the fact that I had not yet lived in an urban centre as populous or diverse as Edinburgh. Still, mere reflexivity on the part of an observer takes nothing away from the enduring social issues in Scotland. These phenomena included beggars and street living, life 'on the dole' (those receiving government benefits), precarious work availability (e.g. zero hour contracts), (family) housing crises, addiction, prostitution, and even entire migrant families encountered living on the streets.

Likewise, my sensibilities were again struck when, after a few months of volunteer work at the local Edinburgh Food Project (EFP), I encountered the (somewhat) veiled reality that we were in fact giving out much more food than was permitted by the local standards of the Scottish Welfare Fund, the Jobcentre+, and the City Council, and thus were indeed supplying many more emergency food parcels than sanctioned under both Trussell Trust guidelines and local governmental rules.

⁶⁶ In particular bureaucratic institutions that resist change, namely: cross-party parliamentary committees and government fact-finding commissions, private sector philanthropy, and general third sector political complacency. This also does not ignore many Christian denominations' own inability to deal with the inundation of welfare services being offloaded to their domain. Even though my observations (and many hours of volunteer work besides) has made me sympathetic the plight of faith-based organisations, and has pressed this cause into my consciousness and lived-reality, one cannot objectively ignore the moral failings of both public and third sector complacency to endemic poverty.

During this fieldwork in Edinburgh I also experienced first-hand the tension between personally expressed concerns for social activism coupled with practiced Christian faith. These experiences galvanized in my consciousness the link between symbolic ideals of religious servitude and the current delegation of frontline welfare services towards the third sector among faith-based organisations (FBOs) in Scotland.

These findings occurred within an ethnographic process as part of the research inquiry of my study. Yet this also cannot be detached from my own lived experience I had as a person – one could say phenomenologically – which were as close as possible to the reality and *gravitas* of time and the unique social spaces encountered and attained purely through my own senses. One part of this process was overcoming my previous lack of raw street work experience, as I had engaged in few instances of street ministry prior to joining Edinburgh Street Pastors (ESP). This urban phenomenon was unlike anything my rural upbringing had involved. In some ways this activity altered my perspective as I came to sympathise with the concerns of other volunteers even as I critique(d) this obvious historical lapse of the UK welfare state, with its slow and haphazard bureaucratic transition especially in the last decade towards voluntary services over-against the former state apparatus for the poor. Even though this process as a progressive historical phenomenon will likely continue unfettered into the near future there remains much more to this story, as the socio-economic circumstances around the FBO work central to this thesis are described more fully in prior chapters.

My role as an action-researcher within the ever-growing patchwork of faith-based services available to persons experiencing poverty in Edinburgh may have been historically rather brief: representing a two year stretch of fieldwork and service within three British FBOs (June 2016 - June 2018). Yet through this cross-section of lived-experiences and religious feeling – albeit within necessarily limited parameters – a narrative window of ethnographic inquiry reveals the raw activism of Christian groups engaging in practical theology in real time (and much else besides). Theologians Elaine Graham

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh and Dawn Llewellyn have argued in their recent essay entitled 'Promoting the Good' that action research exists in order to relationally better the circumstances of interlocutors, the universal church, the academy, and society at large (2018). One could add that activist research in the realm of faith-based organising also falls within the remit of ethically 'promoting the good' *vis-à-vis* the massive shortfalls in welfare provision that are being facilitated through the transition to FBOs as pluralistic welfare providers in the UK.

One particularly memorable frame within this period occurred on what would have been a typical weekend evening for many street pastors; yet for me, it was a revelation. In addition to usual street pastor service which was overnight every Friday (and the occasional Saturday), informal but regular street ministry sessions consisted of occasional weekday evenings in connection with a cell group that served as an entry point for potential new recruits (myself included) towards fully joining ESP. This was undertaken by members of various teams over my tenure with the group. At the time, I felt it was certainly a way of 'vetting' new people before suggesting they sign on for official Street Pastor training. Recalling the discussion of the two main 'factions' within ESP (one being staunchly evangelistic, and one being more theologically open-ended), one would be mostly justified in assuming that the group out on the evening described below was associated with the more outspoken and evangelistic participants of the group.

Although time engaged in proselytization was not required as ESP service, I did feel compelled – at certain points more than others, and after receiving plenty of well-meant encouragement and gentle nudging – to take part fully in a local, church-based small group which had served as my entry point into ESP and held regular meetings in the home of a couple whom I would grow to call my friends. I had not put my name forward for the role of co-ordinator, as mentioned in prior chapters: this would have also entailed the legally binding and jointly held position of committee member/trustee. Having been asked to apply for these positions on multiple occasions, I

instead continued in the role of volunteer in which I had served in since my beginnings with ESP, so as to remain as objective as possible towards the work and in my interpretations of its meanings. The matter of (non-)employment settled, I was able to continue my fieldwork mostly unfettered by administrative duties within the ESP. This was significant, because there was often a push to get more 'evangelistic' members into positions on the board. As such, it was understood that given my spiritual (and, perhaps, political) alignment to a local Baptist congregation meant that I should be sympathetic to the evangelistic interpretation of ESP work shared by many of the local regulars in the group. Interestingly, by proximity this was taken to be my default political position within the organisation. And while I remained in good standing within all interest groups forming Edinburgh Street Pastors, it was true that my main connections and 'gatekeepers' (i.e. my actual friends) into the organisation were largely of an unapologetically evangelistic persuasion.

It seemed natural for many in this group, on what was undeniably a beautiful summer evening, to directly engage people who had earlier flocked to the Meadows to picnic, walk dogs, cycle with their children, bar-be-que or consume alcohol. On the smooth grass under the long dusk that dimly illuminates the late evening in Scotland during the summer months there may well have been hundreds of locals and tourists enjoying themselves. The meetup was arranged through hastily sent impromptu texts and WhatsApp messages, as fair-weather is not always predictable in the Scottish capital. We quickly assembled in a clearly visible circle, prayed together (aloud, in public), and then proceeded to set up a tent while laying out various evangelistic paraphernalia (some of which concerned imminent apocalypse as well as some implying theologies of personal damnation/salvation).

I conversed during most of the evening with the "the peoples' parliament" as a few of the men referred to it: an informal gathering of those often referred to as 'street homeless,' at the main intersection at the north end of the walking paths in the Meadows. Over a few spliffs, some explained

their already held religious beliefs, as well as how surprisingly glad they were to see people such as myself out engaging with folk of variegated backgrounds. That anyone should be able to peddle their goods in a respectful way was the consensus in these practical discussions around faith in public – at least among these men (no females were present that evening). They impressed upon me that “the people’s parliament,” as this gathering was referred to by these men, is never recessed except when no one is physically present, e.g. during unfavourable weather. Thus, on these park benches in this cosmopolitan European city a community of citizens held court over whatever matters appeared in the papers that day, alongside plenty of smoking and drinking.⁶⁷ While I was present, we also had to keep some off-leash dogs belonging to some of the individuals under control as they were becoming aggressive with other pets using the park.

While my dialogue involved local people sharing in the nature of Edinburgh street culture with a foreign student (i.e. me), most of my fellow street pastors were confronting people on the Jawbone walkway through the Meadows (so named in reference to the biblical Book of Judges). Their main aim was to ask as many people as possible, “where will you spend eternity?”, in reference to personal soteriology and the afterlife, and to solicit responses aimed at getting people to question their own spiritual future. One of these instances did indeed result in a baptism the following Sunday at a local Baptist church. While some members of the public appreciated being asked questions and were thoughtful about answering, many were disturbed by being quizzed about sensitive beliefs often deemed irrelevant to daily life.

This kind of peering inquiry into the personal salvation of others was something that volunteers often found they could not do enough of as Street Pastors, along with other forms of evangelistic activism like giving out tracts or carrying large crosses at busy street corners with various messages

⁶⁷ These constitute typical revelries on a warm night in parks in Edinburgh and are in no sense out of place (this interested me because I come from a place where public consumption of alcohol is illegal and punishable by law).

attached. “If we cannot give out Christian literature,” one leader stated at a weekly ESP meeting before heading out on a Friday patrol, “we may as well just pack up and go home.” This sentiment extended, for some street pastors, into the realm of apologetics and doctrinal missional outlook. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Street Pastors programme neither promotes nor prohibits evangelism. Evangelism as an objective is interestingly *not* included under the ‘listening-helping-caring’ ethos developed by Rev Les Isaac, CEO of the Ascension Trust. Thus, many of these same street pastor volunteers who wanted to alleviate drug and alcohol dependency, prostitution, gang violence, and other forms of anti-social behaviour also needed to supplement their social welfare activism with the activist nature of street evangelism.

While not a typical Edinburgh Street Pastor engagement, the evening described above was enlightening for me regarding the ethos of ESP on several fronts and timely as it occurred around halfway through my fieldwork. It revealed that the very same people who felt compelled to join an organisation like Street Pastors – which does not explicitly endorse street evangelism – also felt that they had a duty to convince others through argumentative apologetics (e.g. questioning conceptions of the afterlife and divine judgement) of the correctness of certain biblically derived doctrines such as penal substitutionary atonement.⁶⁸ Others in the ESP group would doubtless find such a starting point a bit harsh when attempting to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to an unbeliever. Therefore, such methods were kept largely outside of regular ESP service, despite the propensity of many within the group to prefer a more confrontational approach to sharing the gospel than was deemed acceptable and taught in official Ascension Trust training for new street pastors. This sentiment was shared by a significant faction among local street pastors and resonates with Elmer Theissen’s thesis of the

⁶⁸ Penal substitutionary atonement, in soteriological terms, refers to Christ’s ability to atone for the collective sins of humanity through death and resurrection. In most modern cases only those who acknowledge this theological position are considered to have received salvation.

fundamental obligations of free speech upon the conscience of many evangelicals in his *The Ethics of Evangelism* (2011).

While this thesis does not evaluate doctrinal systematics, it is significant to note that such biblical moralism is an all-important feature for many faith-based activists in that it can serve as a driver of social activism. This begs the question posed as the title for this chapter: *Does faith-based social activism in the twenty first century evidence a new form of social paternalism?* Below I address this line of inquiry but do not necessarily endorse a static interpretation of this phenomenon as FBOs in Scotland demonstrate a bureaucratic fluidity which extends beyond ecclesia, state, and private enterprise.

Welfare provision and FBO ethics

As the prologue and prior chapters illustrate, social services across Scotland are being stressed through the enforcement of austerity policies resulting in a greater level of decentralised welfare pluralism. While those sympathetic to Christian mission may be excited by this prospect (such as certain pockets of evangelicals in Scotland), the phenomenon of widespread state-sanctions on the urban poor clearly cannot be solved by only a quaint patchwork of unorganised church-based services as is sometimes imagined. This is partly why the early twenty-first century has witnessed such an increase in FBOs among the apparatus of third sector bureaucracy, and sheds light on how so many avenues of formerly ignored opportunities for Christian mission have suddenly appeared.

One prime example I have mined in this thesis has been how Edinburgh Street Pastors is administered by the Ascension Trust Scotland, which is based in Perth. In 2010, Sandy Scrimgeour was appointed as separate CEO of AT Scotland by Ascension Trust CEO Les Isaac. Their webpage states that:

Ascension Trust (Scotland) is a charity managed by 8 Directors, all of whom are Christians from different denominations and from a wide range of professional

backgrounds. They work together to access and utilise the skills and professional expertise of likeminded Christians and non Christians to develop and implement practical and effective strategies to transform lives, promote community cohesion and advance social justice. (Ascension Trust Scotland 2019)

The AT in the above quote refers to 'social justice' without actually defining it. This is but one example of how the public face of faith-based organisations interacts with the role of welfare provision in the UK is complex. Yet the Christian elements of social care provided by organisations have perhaps never been more prevalent or obvious than they are at present. How has this become normative in Scotland? This chapter examines more evidence from Edinburgh FBOs and their work as well as the perceived dichotomy of faith vs. social ethics within the milieu of state sanctioned FBO work, which can and cannot always be found *on the ground*.

Socially engaged citizens and faith-based social activists serve in the UK third sector on all levels within organisations and charities. This does not necessarily suggest that a stark difference exists between faith-based and secular models of social care under policies of welfare pluralism, or in contemporary UK theory and practice. Yet in a pluralistic welfare situation, such as in Scotland, there are differing claims concerning how faith-based activists should contribute to social care. Chapters six and seven of this thesis recalled my fieldwork among three faith-based organisations between 2016-2018 in Edinburgh, setting the scene for how this phenomenon could be observed by a foreigner and understood from a contextual perspective.

As researchers, governments, think tanks, and public policy officials come to terms with the stagnation of social mobility in the UK as well as the widening margins of inequality on a host of levels, foodbanks and homeless services become indicators of the deterioration of economic conditions in the twenty-first century. Britain is publicly seen as becoming a less equal society (BBC 2019), still reflective of class privileges and geographic situation⁶⁹ in an

⁶⁹ In what is colloquially known as the 'post-code lottery' of birth, wealth, privilege and class.

age of unprecedented globalisation and world-wide wealth creation (J. Burns and Campbell 2017). Government fact finding commissions almost universally declare that during the twenty-first century it has become more difficult to improve upon individual socio-economic standing (Social Mobility Commission 2019), much less that of an entire family. This has led to the proliferation of a class of persons known as the 'precariat' who inhabit space in the social system between the poorest and the working classes (Dean 2012; Standing 2014). Some research and advocacy groups have even gone so far as to be disbanded in order to protest the distraction that Brexit deliberations have caused from real domestic problems like social housing (Kuenssberg 2017). The depth of the problems have not even been addressed yet, as recent concerns suggest that personal issues materialising as psychological and financial effects of the roll-out of Universal Credit cannot be understood or fully witnessed (Bamrah and Chand 2019) with the charity Mind claiming that it is "destroying" lives of mentally ill people (Inews 2019).

Even those who promote a pre-globalisation, traditional version of capitalism as a wistful reading of Adam Smith's classic moralising of the division of labour in *The Wealth of Nations* (A. Smith and Skinner 1982) still find the current situation in Europe to be a Gordian knot which may indeed prove unsolvable. As economist Paul Collier muses in his *The Future of Capitalism*, "[...] it has continued to deliver for some, but has passed others by" (Collier 2018, 6). Collier furthers this argument by aligning the historical impact of utilitarianism with the ultimate demise of social democracy. The twenty-first century has thus witnessed the wide-scale collapse of social communitarianism into new forms of paternalism determined by elites (Collier 2018, 13). I would argue alongside this that a form of amoral paternalism is now being shunted from government onto the third sector of charities and FBOs who are left with maintaining a shell of services formerly expected from the welfare state to be available to the British public. Furthermore, this process demonstrates a transition in social services in the UK, as the historical churches which willingly secularised schools, hospitals and other

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh elements of the parish system apparatus across the mid-twentieth century (A. Brown and Woodhead 2016) are now coming full-circle into providing a similar social care provision establishment but within third sector bureaucratic organisations.⁷⁰ The twenty-first century, by contrast to the demise of parish systems of education and social care in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain, is now witnessing instances of return to faith-based modes of paternalistic care for the poor. As evidenced in this thesis, many FBOs are themselves free to innovate theologically without any doctrinal control from the long-disempowered establishment.⁷¹

The secular as amoral

As suggested in chapter seven, the biblical precedent of Christ's suffering often forms part of the discussion for Christians aiming to bear public witness on matters socioeconomic inequality. Even if it is not outright named as such, the ability of faith-based social activists to claim Christ's suffering as connected to their own lived experiences across time, space and *place* demonstrates a phenomenological awareness which goes beyond moralism. This is not necessarily reflective of reality, but does encompass the experiences of many of the volunteers I have recounted in prior chapters.

In contrast, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*⁷² is a common source text for scholars concerned with an activist citizenry working towards the common good. Yet there are perhaps other standards available by which to judge the fruits of faith-based social activism, particularly for Christians. Human rights scholar Arabella Lyon refers to Aristotelian ethics when arguing that

When Aristotle holds that a citizenry can come to better decisions on the good life than the individual [...] he fails to acknowledge the role that a community and its particular

⁷⁰ E.g. the neutered role of the Lord's Spiritual in contemporary British public life vs. their pivotal, if not heavily symbolic, role in the not so distant past. Whether such symbols still engage the British public in regards expressions of religious faith and their public polity is another question which falls beyond the scope of this study.

⁷¹ I.e., the clerical structure of the established churches and the political establishment.

⁷² Here I refer to a historical translation by R.W. Browne (1853).

form of the good have in creating and perpetuating injustice”
(Lyon 2013, 37).

This scholarly acknowledgement that a philosophical political grounding for activist citizenry already exists shows that faith-based and other forms of social activism also already exists. Regarding this possibility, ethicist Luke Bretherton has recently argued how some veins of contemporary Pentecostal theology⁷³ speak truth to power through its own form of political theology, based primarily in pneumatology and in what is referred to among Christians as ‘spiritual warfare’ (Bretherton 2019, 119–58).

Regarding society and Christian activism’s place within it, Scottish theologian Duncan Forrester builds on the legacy of the iconoclastic reformer John Knox, arguing that

[...] democracy needs an active citizenry that is willing to put the common good before sectional and individual interests, and sometimes make sacrifices for the benefit of others, and for a greater good. (Forrester 2001, 181)

Forrester reminds also that the current state of Scottish social care is largely descendent from the wide-ranging impact of the ‘Ballie Commission,’ known formally as the 1941-54 report entitled “Commission for the Interpretation of God’s Will in the Present Crisis as presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland” (Church of Scotland 1946; Forrester 1993). While the full meaning of this commission cannot be expressed here, the ideas around what it means for the modern church to serve the poor in a welfare-state system permeated Scottish society even during the secularisation processes endemic to the late twentieth century. While social care and theology have a long history of being intertwined in Scotland, especially post-Reformation,⁷⁴ it is now in the twenty-first century these missional seeds continue to grow, yet

⁷³ Albeit, barring forms of what many scholars have – often disdainfully – referred to as ‘neo-Pentecostalism,’ i.e. charismatic worship invoking prosperity gospel messages and ideologies.

⁷⁴ For a full account of how Scottish care for the poor changed following the Reformation see John McCallum’s recent *Poor Relief and the Church in Scotland, 1560-1650* (2018).

on decidedly different, less religious soil grounded in the new landscape of devolved social care.

Some of the themes touched upon in the chapter above give pause to ask questions such as, *Do the rights of the individual circumvent the new power of FBOs to harness voluntary labour?* and *Can FBOs covertly undermine the government's promotion of neo-conservatively minded 'little platoons' as the answer to so many social ills like homelessness and food poverty?* The civic responsibilities of citizens, and in particular those espousing an evangelical faith system, have thus been bureaucratized in such a way as to de-secularise the late twentieth century divide between state and church (Fergusson 2004).

One example of this can be drawn from the former Canadian Governor General Adrienne Clarkson who points to the famous study of the central African Ik tribe by anthropologist Colin Turnbull (1987) as a classic example of the negation of moral duty by a modern human society.⁷⁵ Although the details of the historical and geographical context surrounding it are unique, there is still the problem of how 'evil' can permeate a previously benevolent or at least benign social system. During her Massey lectures she relates this incidence to generic qualities of citizenship in a rapidly globalising world: "If we remove our sense of belonging to each other, no matter what our material and social conditions are, survival, acquisition, and selfish triumphalism will endure at the cost of our humanity" (Clarkson 2014). Aptly titled for the twenty-first century, her noteworthy lecture series in 2014 was published as *Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship*. Thus, when the government of a country like the UK begins the process of distancing itself from its moral obligations as a social safety net, does this not constitute a dysfunctionality of humanism in its most secularised form? Is this not part of what is driving the return to faith-based welfare systems? I explore more about these questions below, modestly suggesting a form of faith-based

⁷⁵ This study was not without detractors and serious criticisms, such as those objections made by Bernd Heine (1985).

meaning making into the oft-secularised discourse surrounding the meaning and function of FBOs in a free society such as in the UK.

Human rights and faith-based social activism

In summer 2019 the *Guardian* newspaper declared that the UN Special Rapporteur's recent visit in the UK resulted in warnings that "unless austerity is ended, the UK's poorest people face lives that are 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'" (Booth 2019). The report was commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council on extreme poverty and human rights, and found that 20% of British people lived below the poverty line and the organisations like "foodbanks have proliferated" (Human Rights Council 2019). This was met by immediate denials from the chancellor of the exchequer Phillip Hammond, whose own conservative majority government's programme of austerity policies and cuts to social welfare have been socio-economically linked to the decrease in living conditions across the UK. The thrust of the UN report claimed that:

the UK had violated its human rights obligations through sustained and widespread cuts to social support. He said the scale of poverty in the UK was "patently unjust and contrary to British values" and labelled it a "political choice", rather than an economic necessity (Rawlinson 2019).

One question raised here is whether governments are responsible in an *absolute* sense when it comes to defending or even acknowledging human rights (and the possible abuses of those rights). This question becomes more pertinent if various faith groups, as in the case of FBOs in Scotland examined in this thesis, begin to attach different meanings, motives, and definitions to social justice and by extension greater legitimacy over human rights discourse.

One element of faith-based social activism that I discovered while volunteering in these three organisations was that direct responsibility is in fact being taken for the poor and needy in Scotland: but only when volunteers and staff were directly faced with those living under extremely difficult

circumstances on the front line of welfare provision. The same individuals could actually behave and speak contrarily to the ethics of service I witnessed while volunteering while going about their own personal lives as well as through contrarian opinions expressed about the urban poor in Scotland. These reflections by my companions occur just as FBOs are fast becoming the front line of welfare provision in the UK, yet professing Christians are a minority in contemporary Scotland. This strange opportunity has given rise to the colourful patchwork of individuals, leaders, churches and of course organisations that feed into the cornucopia of former state services.

Human rights and faith

The former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams refers to philosopher Alasdair McIntyre's seminal work in *After Virtue* (1981) for the serious challenge that contemporary ethics discourse poses to the fundamental nature of the concept of human rights (R. Williams 2012, 149–51). This is because, harking back again to Augustine, the *ekklesia* is the temporal expression of what we now refer to as human rights. If the contemporary *ekklesia* does not protect the rights of individuals, this is indicative of current Christian tendencies – unwittingly or not – to serve the false gods of the Roman Empire (or typologically, Babylon), and its myriad of divinities and occultisms. Symbolically, this reality does not bode well for faith-based social activism and does not demonstrate service to the true God or creation. The ecclesial human right to worship God substantively grounds the common good as benefiting both those within and without the universal church. For Augustine this occurs through the grace of a God prevailing over-against the great evil and the potentially sinful and irrational desires of the human heart (Augustine 1998).

Human rights are paramount to the ability of the universal church body politic to serve all the earth. This immanently and societally concerned aspect of the gospel does not become separated in a reductionist sense from the centrality it holds within the entirety of the evangelion of Christ for faith-based

Christian activists. Christian hopes are set free to give and likewise receive at the disposal within a Christian faith in a common good. Human rights are sacred when considered in terms of lived religion as practiced theology. Those same rights allow the activist to create good with God through fulfilling the mission of their respective organisations.

The loss of rights therefore is not the loss of receiving but the loss of the ability to give. Living in the image of God (i.e. humanity as embodiment of *Imago Dei*) grounds human rights in the theology of creation and redemption. Nourishing the 'other' therefore concerns the conception of human rights as the common good not with politicised social entitlements but with the co-creation of the Kingdom of God. The language of rights is merely human language, but in its symbolic function it is not only rationalist as per Lockean reason or purely theoretical as in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. Furthermore, these rights are not based substantially in secular reason alone, even though this argument persists in the important analysis offered by some Christian ethicists (M. C. Banner 2014; M. Banner 1999; M. C. Banner and Torrance 2006).

These ecclesial human rights are a virtuous and positive aspiration. Contemporary philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour argues that there is an inextricable link between socio-economic inequality and environmental degradation on a global scale in *Down to Earth* (Latour 2018). Is this what is behind the current legislative attempts at controlling religious expressions in modern pluralistic democratic societies (such as recent cases in Quebec, France, and some parts of England and certainly parts of Northern Ireland)? Do identity politics 'trump' reality? Again, such questions fall beyond the bounds of this thesis, yet still involve the notion of whether human rights can indeed be grounded in the public witness of the church in the twenty-first century rather than in secular constitutions.

Ecclesial human rights can represent in an abstract sense the being and well-being of what is not God: humanity. This belief, in defiance to strict secularism, allows entry into the true rights of individuals within communities

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh and is how it becomes possible to see the dignity of other human beings. The sacred therefore grounds a sensibility that there is something terribly wrong about the failure to respond to a crisis (humanitarian or otherwise). Ecclesial rights are thus more than a mere claim. The response demanded of those 'called' to a life of service in activism transforms the individual alongside participation in the redemption of the world: serving the creator whilst serving creation. This suggests that there does exist a well from which to draw more power for the powerless in a world wracked by inequality, greed, and the ongoing worldly lust for total domination of the public sphere.

Conclusion

The larger an FBO becomes the less able it is to follow its original mission and potentially biblical mandate. Yet this reality may, in fact, not necessarily impede upon the conscious efforts of a given organisation to be pigeonholed into any sort of tangible value to civil society at large (economically or otherwise). This can be illustrated by a typology wherein The Trussell Trust, Bethany Christian Trust, and Edinburgh Street Pastors provide exemplars of how meanings become more deviated, motives become more fluid, and definitions become more granulated as the charity grows. This is the case more visibly for a massive organisation like the TT, as I have shown in prior chapters which outline how the organisation has reached near saturation into the expansive and pluralistic alternative welfare environment it offers the state apparatus – all this for a modest 'commission.' This environment curtails the ability of the organisation itself to 'welcome the Stranger' of Matthew 25 in a manner consistent with the public-facing ethos of this enormous British FBO. Christian obligation to "relieve the poor" as part of the seven works of mercy is theologically exegeted from the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, while in particular the imperative for Christian service in Britain historically stretches back into the late middle ages (Duffy 2005, 358). While FBOs today sometimes struggle to uphold the ethical impetus of the biblical texts from which they draw their inspiration, volunteers and their contemporary works of mercy offer a stark alternative to the catastrophe initiated through Universal Credit. One bears in mind, however, that the

current milieu of opportunities for Christian service has undoubtedly developed alongside the historical iniquity of UK FBO leadership to name austerity policy as increasingly problematic for both Christian mission and society in general.

As stated above, this chapter concludes the argument at the beginning of this thesis in which I claim that the meanings, motives, and definitions offered through faith-based social activism in Scotland embody and promote a stop-gap and ephemeral solution to the welfare crisis currently engulfing millions of poor and low-income families and individuals in the UK. For the purposes of the argument herein, this was shown through examination of the work of three FBOs in Scotland as case studies. Other examples, such as those offered by secular outlets for third sector welfare provision are also of course manifold and prominent in Scotland. Yet a thorough analysis of the secular third sector comparative to FBOs lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

Still more, the vision of faith-based social activism as embodied by the volunteer ethos inherent to FBO expansion in Scotland does not nullify the reality that such backstop solutions cannot maintain this service the country's poor and needy until the point of exhaustion. At this rate, FBOs cannot continue to absorb the current offloading of services begun over a decade earlier than the period studied during my fieldwork. This is because given current forecasts in the wake of economic aftershocks following decades of state-enforced austerity policy in Britain, it is clear that Universal Credit is a failed scheme and its policy directives have bankrupted and sullied the former remit of the national social care system. Likewise, the technocratic nature of the procedural logic applied to the provision of poor through government schemes like Universal Credit is unprecedented in scale making it even more speculative to comment upon the future – except that without a sudden halt such policy will inevitably result in greater strain being placed upon the already scarce resources available to FBOs.

What will indeed outlast the current neoliberal age is the resistance enacted through a theological approach to serving the poor (as already

Faith-based social activism in Edinburgh referred to as the historically ecclesial and theological “works of mercy”). This sees others as being made in God’s image, as strangers to be welcomed to the table and hospitality of the Lord, and which also demands practical embodiment of the Good Samaritan. These theological principles are indeed guided by the command to provide for the poor as codified in the biblical literature. This symbolic quality is central (and necessary) to many evangelicals and socially activist Christians represented in the ranks of FBOs in Scotland in the early twenty-first century.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

The Scottish land-reform activist, academic, and theologian Alastair McIntosh – with whom I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking to on occasion in Edinburgh – along with his colleague Matt Carmichael recently penned this message for those hoping to link activism with the spiritual:

The causes to which any one of us might apply ourselves in life should be more than just personal passions. They should also be wake-up calls to those around us. Equally, wake-up calls to our own deeper selves and thus, spiritual journeys; a form of activist pilgrimage through life. What makes “spiritual” activism so exciting is that it approaches demanding issues in ways that invite an ever-deepening perception of reality and of our positioning – individually and collectively – within it. (McIntosh and Carmichael 2015, 13)

This statement, though more closely related to the spiritually contemplative traditions of Christian activism, is entirely relevant to any person aiming to engage in faith-based, or even ‘spiritually-based,’ social activism in the contemporary world. It also seems fitting as McIntosh has roots in the Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland, and thus has a grounded connection with Scottish culture and its spiritual heritage.

Scotland and Edinburgh in particular form a distinctive context for the activist life, as recounted from a Christian perspective ethnographically, sociologically, and theologically through this thesis and its research mandate. As detailed across the chapters of this thesis, the phenomena associated with the work being done by volunteers hold much greater symbolic meaning than the simple process of absorbing welfare pluralism and its various policy realities from the hands of the modern neoliberal state.

The Stranger, the *Imago Dei* and the Samaritan

This thesis project was designed to result in an ethnographic account which furthers current knowledge within the sociology of post-institutional religion by examining forms of social meaning-making in faith-based organisations. This

forms a scholarly contribution to current understandings of the place of religion in secular culture by focussing on case studies of relevant organisations in Edinburgh, Scotland. The nature of the mobilisation of FBOs in recent times is framed within the dual reality that both state-level social provision from former welfare systems and the presence of traditional religious institutions in western countries are largely on the wane. This is widely accepted as being related to austerity cuts and secularisation respectively, and these basic categorisations also inform the context of this study. This leads to consideration of whether FBOs use different means to achieve different ends than the state and/or secular institutions with regard to how this phenomenon occurs and what conditions may be which sustain it. Further sociological investigation of the roles taken by faith-based activists is thus warranted in order to reveal part of what makes them practical deliverers of certain social services, and how personal meaning-making aids this process. One potential result could be a detailed typological analysis of different forms of voluntary labour and the meanings that typically become assigned to them in this context. This thesis will thus contribute to advancing sociological understanding in this area of scholarship by revealing what it means to believe in activism, what motivates this for the long term, and how this can be defined in any way that symbolically supports the vision of the organisation. This notion values the historically religious conception of a “Godly Commonwealth” which traces its roots from within the ongoing relationship between ecclesial (sacred) and national (secular) social concerns as these are represented in a country like Scotland.⁷⁶

But this is not the end of the story, theologically. For faith-based social activists in Scotland, ‘Welcoming the Stranger’, encountering and honouring (‘being-with’) the *Imago Dei*, and becoming the Good Samaritan are realised as symbolic imaginaries to help ordinary people envision their part in FBO

⁷⁶ See Stewart Brown’s careful recounting of the life of theologian Thomas Chalmers (b. 1780* – d. 1847⁺) and his remarkable historical influence on social welfare provision in Scotland, grounded as it was within a distinct social service vision during the Disruption in *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (1983).

work today. It is in all likelihood that faith-based activists within the third sector will continue this process well into the future. The main item for consideration concerning this research agenda moving forward is whether these well-situated and, in many cases, well-heeled organisations can bring their members' meanings, motives and definitions to the fore and enact real change within the enormity of the crisis of endemic poverty in Scotland. As demonstrated across the case studies that form the body of evidence discussed in this thesis, the qualities that make faith-based social activism uniquely diverse with regards to its intrinsic meanings, motives, and definitive place in the Scottish situation of devolved welfare provision are manifold and not easily discernible into a single solid kernel. Essentially, FBOs in Scotland have themselves out of necessity become 'moving targets.' The fluidity with which the third sector has evolved in the twenty-first century in Scotland (and in the UK more broadly) holds the key to this emerging context for FBOs to achieve greater prominence within the civil society found in twenty-first century Euro-capitals like Edinburgh (Baker et al 2011, 184-198). In this context, as has been demonstrated in prior chapters, *spiritual* meaning-making provides a near limitless context for the development of new 'stop-gap' solutions to old problems plaguing the marginalised, exacerbated as they are by neoliberal proceduralism embedded in welfare policy as encountered within an urban centre like Edinburgh (Cloke 2010, 223-239).

Excursus: anger, resistance, the prophetic and the-ethics

I spoke over the phone to numerous foodbank clients who used less than honest tactics to obtain food after being sanctioned by large third sector charities (from which they could only obtain strictly limited amounts of provisions): enter a grocery store, fill a shopping cart with food, exit without paying –hoping to afterwards go hurriedly and unnoticed into the highways and byways of Edinburgh. Clients who expressed this were not proud of their behaviour. On the contrary, they expressed to me (myself a stranger and a foreigner!) that they were ashamed that they had to resort to such measures.

This sentiment echoes the same shame connected with using foodbanks in the first place: the shame of having ‘no class.’

This shame eventually transpires into some form of anger (Bretherton 2012b; 2012a; Alinsky 1972), as these emotions feedback to workers in the front-line services described throughout this thesis. Even from an initially skeptical humanistic perspective – while risking being slightly auto-biographical – I certainly did not concern myself with these kinds of initiatives before beginning this thesis project. This has become, in the case of this researcher, a form of ‘action-research’ of which, while having no precedent in my own life, has distilled in my own mind a sense of purpose that extends far beyond the boundaries of acceptable academic discourse. How does one even begin to describe this except transcendently, or, in specifically Christian terms, pneumatologically? I have to admit, as a person of faith, I felt strongly what can only be called the Spirit providing *feelings* of the peace “which passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). This emotion sustained my effort on many occasions while encountering what amounted to some of the most hopeless situations of fellow citizens, and brethren, I have ever experienced. This feeling can only be described, from both an ethnographic and theological perspective, as being filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8) in order to prophetically envision what could be done in order to “seek the welfare of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7). Realising that the typological interpretation of ancient scriptures entirely unrelated to each other is not tolerable in academia – yet wholly necessary to the prophetic imagination of any religious adherent (Brueggemann 2018) – I must offer the reflection that it was certainly not my intention to become a politicised member of these various and diverse faith-based organisations. This process – ethnographic, ethical, moral, academic, personal, spiritual, and otherwise – has altered the existential *telos* of many a volunteer and activist across innumerable faith-based efforts and visions (Ludwig 2015; Wood 2009). This could be the effect of so much faith-based social activism across the remainder of the twenty-first century: courage to ‘speak truth to power’ (Comm and Cary 2011) while resisting the urge to violence and ushering in what has been called “the

peaceable kingdom” (Wells 1998; Rasmusson 1994; Thomson 2010; Hauerwas 1991).

While action research does allow greater understanding of the contemporary issues surrounding welfare pluralism, does it really help theological researchers to alter the future phenomenologically? Some researchers argue that this kind of ethnographic action research is one of the only options left for theology among the modern, corporate, and ‘banking’ models of education on offer at many leading research institutions and universities world-wide (Moschella and Willhauck 2018), reflecting the (Anglo-centric) academic cloisters of what often (but not always) passes for academic theology across of much of the developed world. This can at least be understood from the perspective of those who view theology as arising from the bottom of human society, rather than from the upper echelons of a decadent and acquiescent system of willing enablers of co-dependent suffering (Gutiérrez 2001; 1987), the cycle of poverty and the violently systematic abuse of creatures, creator and nature itself (Latour 2018; 2017). These realities leave one with the revelation that prophetic criticism of the systems that bind humanity down does not amount to mere cynicism: as long as it motivates peaceable activism.

Faith-based social activism opposes the corrupt austerity policies which enforce poverty as well as the late twentieth century technocracy already critiqued by theologians like Paul Tillich (1995). These aberrations of political power have attempted to establish in the twenty-first century conditions to the extent that the poor can only be morally redeemed by state intervention and the rest of us (FBOs included) are simply mediators in the process (Latour 2018). Rob Reich has recently argued that the philanthropic nature of welfare services in the United States actually undermines democracy in *Just Giving: Why Democracy is Failing and How It Can Do Better* (Reich 2018). Incidentally, the title of his book happens to include the public moniker of a large philanthropic platform in the UK (JustGiving) which aims to make online donations easier to process for UK charities. What is happening on both

sides of the Atlantic unfortunately finds an eerily accurate microcosm in the situation of a small country like Scotland, and on an even more minute level, in a global city of culture like Edinburgh. This small but innocuous place, like the many individuals across the globe who have been left by the wayside in favour of mass-market globalisation (Standing 2014), finds itself caught in a much larger web of globalised neoliberal economics which are as insidious and corrupt as the same elites who benefit from these policies yet also adamantly deny scientific realities like anthropogenic climate change (Latour 2017; Northcott 2017a; 2014). This can, in turn, appear very eschatological indeed, whether from a secular perspective or otherwise (Žižek 2010).

Fortunately, and as always, this is not the end of the story. The neo pragmatism of ethicists already mentioned such as Jeffrey Stout, Luke Bretherton – and even the philosopher Richard Rorty – has reached theological application already in the pneumatology of American Pentecostal theologians actively seeking to establish a revived precedent for peace and equality in society (Rorty 2008; Medina 2018; Yong 2015). As demonstrated through both historical and emerging scholarship, a vein of theology linked to social care has a long pedigree in British history (Forrester 2001; Northcott 2017b; Gorringer 1994; Tawney 2016; Weber 2012). Practical ethics are thus not reducible to utilitarian philosophy (theologically or otherwise), and certainly should not simply be employed as a linear process for policy makers as outlined in the work of ethicists like Peter Singer (1993) and implied by the thought found in the more broad strokes of John Rawls, which can be taken as buttressing a modernist and contemporary form of utilitarianism (1999). With these sorts of theoretical bulwarks in mind, activism *can* and *should* alter the ending, for the common good (Volf 2011; Hollenbach 2002; Gorringer 2011).

Research Significance and Outcome

This thesis was designed to answer the question: *In what ways do faith-based organisations (FBOs) and their efforts in social activism provide examples of the complex relationship between theology and welfare*

pluralism in Scotland? As described throughout this thesis, the qualitative research undertaken for this project in Edinburgh suggests that *themes of meaning, motive, and definition that are regularly used by both FBOs and the volunteers who carry out the labour to provide infinite possibilities for sustaining faith-based social activism in practice.* In Edinburgh this is represented in the theologically symbolic (and biblical) tropes of ‘welcoming the Stranger,’ treating people as the *Imago Dei*, and becoming ‘Good Samaritans.’ Yet this means even more than these archetypal symbols can encapsulate, even for confessional Christians. These meaning-laden forms of labour extend all the way through entire faith-based organisations, creating deep wells of meaning which can be drawn from almost inextinguishably. This is exemplified in the three case studies of organisations engaged in faith-based social activism as presented in this thesis: 1) the Bethany Christian Trust, 2) Edinburgh Street Pastors and 3) the Northwest Edinburgh Foodbank of the Edinburgh Food Project.

In recent years the Bethany Christian Trust has enlarged its remit while at the same time has somewhat inhibited its own ability to propagate the belief that all persons are truly ‘made in the Image of God,’ yet it is still accomplishing its mission. Perhaps rather than becoming cynical and fatalistic in the face of Universal Credit and other austerity measures currently being devolved towards the general populace, as is often the case with Trussell Trust initiatives, Christians serving in these activist endeavours also in bear in mind and spirit an eschatological dimension to their work which provides hope in the aftermath of lost prosperity. Hope for the ideal which lies beyond the worldly concerns of creation has long been a theme in Christian theology – one which hints at the transcendental quality of living beyond one’s own immediate concerns in an effort to bring the Peace of God into being, as seen in the theology of accompaniment suggested by the difficult work of Street Pastors across the UK and beyond. This sentiment resounds again with what ethicist Sam Wells refers to in *A Nazareth Manifesto* as ‘being with’ over against ‘being for’ the needs of marginalised citizens in developed societies (Wells 2015b).

In some ways, the after effects secularisation of the welfare state in a country like Scotland has confined the ability of faith-based social activists to profess the ethics they intend to promote in the public square. Thankfully, this is again not the end of the story. By all accounts, the devolution of pluralistic welfare policy has spurred the development of third sector and FBO bureaucracy in ways which would have likely been unfathomable in the still more secular public policy lifecycle environment of the nineties in Britain. In this sense, faith-based social activism is alive and well in Scotland, and while imperfect in so many ways, heralds a distinctly new era in the engagement of the church with the welfare of the symbolic “City of God” (Augustine 2000).

Future research prospects

In the long-term, it is likely that upon completion of the project and degree programme, the thesis manuscript could be extended into a monograph length account of faith-based social activism in Edinburgh. In the short term, a condensed account of the findings will be written up as a research article seeking publication in a relevant academic journal. I also want to leave open the future option of potentially using this dataset as a comparator with Canadian and US related data, in order to discover more about third sector trends as they are emerging internationally to continue developing a better understanding of the full extent to which volunteers represent their labour in story, narrative, meaning, and symbolism.

One ongoing issue I am having is how best to establish a new analytical method by which to compare the parameters of case (i.e., clients, staff, volunteers) with the references to massive amounts of ‘quantifiable’ qualitative data (e.g., faith statements, testimonials, etc.) and how these relate to the generation of thematic interpretation. My own technical skills within the vast realm of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software will still need to be developed to properly demonstrate the ability of the software to present these relationships in a meaningful way. This would likely involve a follow up study, focussed mostly on clients. This would include multiple groups of people considered ‘high risk’ and therefore would require

more involved research in ethics approval, from whichever body could fund the study. While some researchers hesitated to take analysis further away from a 'purist' sociological and interpretivist perspective by initiating a greater reliance on CAQDAS like NVivo, make meaningful insights into the data I have already invested so much time and effort into gathering. This process may also implicate quantitative regression analysis (e.g. IBM's SPSS data analysis platform), a process which would approach research questions from an entirely different, though equally relevant angle.

Typologies of faith-based activism and organisations

Themes surrounding meaning, motives, and definitions in FBOs in Edinburgh are but one angle from which to view these and other phenomena associated with faith-based social activism in general. What remains to be explored, from the perspective of extending the research question opened up by this project, is how organisations inhabit a matrix whereby their traits can be qualitatively evaluated in a manner contributing to a more graphic understanding of the groups and societies which give rise to these kinds of initiatives. For example, when placed upon a continuum of adherence to an 'ethics of evangelism' (Thiessen 2011) ESP/AT would appear closer to the core, while BCT somewhere close but with more blurry and fuzzy lines of connection, and the EFP/TT would appear further to the fringe of concentric circles of closeness to this particular ethos. Given more variables, criteria, and data, a spectrum fuller and a picture more illustrative, detailed, and colourful would almost certainly emerge as a result. Circles of closeness is but one concept among a spectrum of ways to illustrate how more and more relevant data sets could contribute to academic understandings of faith-based social activism in reality. A broad spectrum of missiological, eschatological and pneumatological concepts also lies latent in this empirical though interpretive project in which faith seeks to understand and understanding also seeks faith. One hopes this would do justice to the same tradition of Augustine and Anselm, but would also carry the scent of fresh, clear air that new knowledge breathes into the economy and ecology of human learning and art.

Appendix:

A) Interview Schedule

*Note: all questions are non-prescriptive and are intended to be followed up by the interviewer, probing inquiry further depending on how the interlocutors frame the dialogue. Thus, these questions serve as a guide, and less of a strict schedule *per se*. Follow up questions are in parenthesis and (smaller print).

All research was approved by the School of Divinity Ethics in Research assessment.

Introduction to the Study (approx. 5 mins):

1. Introduce my own identity, the purpose of the project (make sure the interviewee has reviewed participation letter and informed consent forms)
2. Explain recording procedures, anonymity, confidentiality, encryption and storage of data
3. Obtain informed consent (written and audible) based on mutual understanding of participant involvement
4. Explain length of interview (approx. 65 mins)
5. Basic check of inclusion criteria: over 18, occupation (if one), residency (must self-identify as living in Edinburgh)
6. Warm up questions: Have you volunteered lately? (Can you describe this experience? Where do you typically volunteer {i.e. if potentially belonging to another organisation outside the case studies: i.e. ENWF; ESP, BCT}?)

Meanings (approx. 15 mins)

1. Could you tell me about how you became involved in volunteering? (Can you give an example of who or what got you involved in the first place?)
2. What are some of the good things and bad things about volunteering in general? (Can you describe an aspect of it this is enjoyable?) (How would you describe any negative experiences of voluntarism?)
3. How does volunteering make you feel in general? (Can you describe what a usual shift/day spend volunteering is like?) (What activities do you engage in?)
4. What is it like to be involved in organisation *x*? (What are the characteristics of it?)
5. Can you describe a situation that is memorable in your voluntary work? (What kinds of events stick in your mind afterwards?)

Motivations (approx. 15 mins)

1. How often do you volunteer? (For example, how many shifts per week, or hours per month? How does this relate to the rest of your schedule?)
2. What helps you continue to volunteer? (Can you provide examples of helpful habits?)
3. How do you relate to the people you help? (What are their needs? How do you approach different problems?)
4. Can you describe other volunteers' approaches to organisation *x*? (How does your understanding compare with others in the organisation, or on your team?)
5. Can you describe/recall a time when you received aid from an organisation like *x*? (How would you describe the relationship between volunteer and client from your own experiences?)

Definitions (approx. 15 mins)

1. How would you describe the work of organisation *x*? (Could you give examples of which aspects of the work are harder than others?)
2. How would you describe the result of the work done in this organisation? (What are some examples that are important to you?)
3. How well do you think the work of organisation *x* is going? (What are things that seem to be working?)
4. How would you describe your relationship to other volunteers? (Can you explain how volunteers work together at organisation *x*?)

5. How would you describe your relationship with leaders of this organisation? (What characteristics do leaders exhibit?)

Conclusion, debriefing, feedback: (approx. 10 mins)

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about related to your voluntary work?
2. Is there anything you expected me to ask that I did not bring up?
3. Do you require any more information about the study itself?
4. Express gratitude to the interviewee; schedule follow-up interview if this is deemed necessary.
5. Discuss timeline for the project, and how interviewees can follow up with the study and any related publications should they express interest in doing so.

B) Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE

Faith-Based Social Activism in Edinburgh

INVITATION

You are being asked to take part in a research study on faith-based organisations (FBOs) in Edinburgh, Scotland.

I am a doctoral student in Divinity at New College, University of Edinburgh, working towards earning a Ph.D. in Christian Ethics and Practical theology. The Principal Investigator for this study, also my supervisor, is Professor Michael Northcott.

This project has been approved by the Divinity Research Ethics Committee.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to answer questions in a one-on-one interview about your involvement in faith-based organisations.

The format of the interviews is relaxed, as pace and direction of the interview are at the discretion of the interviewee. The interviews will be recorded for subsequent transcription, and analysis, which may or may not be used for the purposes of publication or presentation of this research project.

Debriefing after the interview will occur immediately, ensuring that the interviewee has the time and space to ask any further questions and provide any feedback they would like to make known to the interviewer.

TIME COMMITMENT

An interview will usually range in time from 30 to 60 minutes. This will only involve one occasion, unless a follow-up interview is deemed necessary.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop your involvement in this research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any input you have supplied up to that point be withdrawn/destroyed. You will still be thanked for your contribution and exit the study without penalty.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you and proceed with or decline from the rest of the interview.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

COST, REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and there is no reimbursement or compensation in any form.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data we collect do not contain any personal information about you. No one will link the data you provided to the identifying information you supplied (e.g., your name, area you reside in, groups you belong to, etc.). As stated above, the interviews will be recorded for subsequent transcription, and analysis, which may or may not be used for the purposes of publication or presentation of this research project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Professor Michael Northcott will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact him at:

Email:

Address: Room 1.02, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh EH1 2LX

If you want to find out about the final results of this study, you should contact the research student, Christopher Medland, after due course, at chrisjmedland@gmail.com

C) Consent form

**School of Divinity
ETHICS IN RESEARCH**

Consent Form for participation and personal data to be used for research.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project, the details of which are:

Research Project name:	Faith-Based Social Activism in Edinburgh
Name of researcher:	Christopher Medland
Researcher's Contact details:	Tel. 07563 809020 Email: chrisjmedland@gmail.com
Scope of the project:	This study is interested in the work of faith-based organisations in Edinburgh, Scotland. This study contributes to my overall dissertation research for the earning of the Ph.D. in Divinity degree. The only persons with access to the data are myself and my primary research supervisor. The recorded data in the form of interviews, and transcripts, will be kept by the researcher. The analysis of the data and certain portions of the transcripts from the recordings may appear in future publications related to this research, but the identity of participants will remain confidential and anonymised.
Confidentiality and Anonymity	Confidentiality is ensured because participants will not be identified, and no personal details provided in any form. Anonymity will be maintained in any published form of the data by pseudonyms, or mere general reference to interviews without any identification of the particular speech of any participant.

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above YES NO

Recorded interviews – the recordings of the interviews will be held for transcription and kept by the researcher.

Transcripts of interviews – the transcripts of the interviews will be kept by the researcher for analysis of the words and expressions used, and the meaning of them, in order to inform this research study about the concerns of the persons interviewed.

Signature:	
Date:	

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