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The experience of lay singers in Anglican cathedrals, and its spiritual reality: theological, institutional and historical influences in understanding the Anglican Choral Tradition

Nicholas James Watson Brown

ABSTRACT

The choral foundations of the Church of England sustain a well-established tradition of choral music. This has been subject to musicological study (repertory/performance practice), sociological investigation (education/gender) and reflection by the Church (congregational growth). Despite the centrality of their role, the experiences of adult lay singers have only received superficial treatment.

This study addresses this gap through qualitative study. With no previous studies to draw on, the initial research question focused on identifying the spiritual experiences of lay singers. Data was gathered in two stages: group conversations with 30 participants identifying significant themes, followed by seven detailed one-to-one interviews providing the central data for analysis. Both stages of data gathering included a cross-section of institutional settings (historic cathedrals of both 'old' and 'new' foundation, 'parish church cathedrals' and academic choral foundations). This data is analysed utilising three lenses – systematic theology, ecclesiology, and ecclesiastical history.

Articulating disparate personal patterns of experience and understanding, the study identifies how those patterns express a strong corporate account of meaning attributed to musical performance in the liturgy. This corporate narrative correlates closely to definably Anglican patterns of understanding in all three areas of analysis; demonstrating the way experiences can best be understood through a triangulation of theological, institutional and historical factors.

Located at the intersection of Music Theology and Practical Theology, this study identifies diverse individual accounts from participants that are unified by a strong corporate sense of meaning; highlighting the importance of corporate meaning-making. Musicologically, it identifies spiritual meaning within the performance setting of Anglican choral foundations. These corporate understandings of liturgical activity are also important for a Church seeking to identify key features of a context that provides an atypical example of congregational growth.

**The experience of lay singers in Anglican
cathedrals, and its spiritual reality:
theological, institutional and historical
influences in understanding the
Anglican Choral Tradition**

Nicholas James Watson Brown

Thesis presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the
Department of Music
of the University of Durham

2024

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PART 1:

Introduction

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Exploring the scene

This study explores the spiritual experience of adult singers performing in the context of cathedral choirs in the Church of England, identifying the theological potential that it may have. In doing so, the central thesis is that the theological significance of the work of lay singers can only be properly understood by looking at the institutional and historical perspectives that shape their experiences of singing within the Anglican liturgy.

The cathedral churches of the Church of England are one of its significant visible ‘shop windows’,¹ and have also, in recent years, been seen as one of its missional success stories.² With their origins in the collegiate and monastic cathedral foundations of the pre-Tudor Church of England,³ they hold a story of continuity and a distinctiveness of their style of worship that makes them easily identifiable. This distinctive identity is tied up both with their historic and institutional continuity, and their role in retaining an institutional space for a more conservative style of celebrating the daily offices of the Book of Common Prayer. Together, these have provided the nurturing ground for the cultural phenomenon of ‘the English cathedral choir’ and the associated Anglican Choral Tradition which, whilst perhaps not as unique as some might promote, is distinctive and much imitated both within England and further afield.⁴ These characteristics have seen cathedrals of the Church of England establish themselves at the heart of a tradition of choral (and organ) music within the liturgy that has also been a feature of some of the collegiate foundations of the historic universities of Oxford and Cambridge,⁵ and which has subsequently influenced a broader group of parish churches (including those that in recent times have themselves become cathedrals),⁶ becoming a source of inspiration for worship within the chaplaincies in some more recent universities.⁷

¹ Judith A. Muskett, ‘Reflections on the Shop Windows of the Church of England: Anglican Cathedrals and Vicarious Religion’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Volume 30 (2015), Issue 2, pp. 273-289.

² *Spiritual Capital*, (London: Theos and the Grubb Institute, 2012).

³ Appendix A.

⁴ For example, Hanna Rijken, *My Soul Doth Magnify: The Appropriation of Anglican Choral Evensong in the Netherlands*, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2020); and Jeffrey Sondborg, *English Ways: Conversations with English Choral Conductors*, (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw, 2001).

⁵ Notably the choirs of New College, Magdalen College and Christ Church in Oxford, and King’s College and St John’s College in Cambridge. In more recent times these have been joined by the mixed voice foundations of Trinity College Cambridge and Merton College Oxford – the former coming to prominence as a mixed voice foundation in the time since soprano choral scholars replaced boy choristers in the 1980s and the latter being established as an intentional choral foundation of mixed voices in the 2010s.

⁶ Appendix A.

⁷ For example, some of the college chapels within the University of Durham, and the Chapel Choirs of Kings College, London and Royal Holloway University of London.

Given the growth in attendance at services in cathedrals in the decades prior to COVID-19,⁸ cathedrals and their worship have been the subject of some attention within recent official reports of the Church of England relating to mission, growth and strategic development.⁹ In each of these reports, there has been little consideration to the experience and insights of those involved directly in the singing of music within the cathedral's liturgical life, with most attention being directed toward the reception of cathedral worship (and music) by those encountering it from outside the core cathedral body. Beyond these reports, the main focus of official attention regarding cathedrals has been reform of their governance structures.¹⁰ It is necessary to go back to 1992 to find any official national reports that focus on the subject of cathedral music.¹¹ Even within this work, attention to cathedral music is only a part of a much wider survey of church music, and again focuses much on the resourcing of music rather than the experience of its practitioners and its spiritual or theological significance for them.

Beyond official reports of the Church of England, there is a variety of second-tier literature written regarding cathedrals. Notably, this includes four books written between 1994 and 2017 by practitioners involved in the leadership or governance of cathedrals,¹² three of which have substantive chapters on music or musical matters.¹³ However, whilst the centrality of worship and

⁸ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Cathedral%20Statistics%202017_1.pdf accessed on 26th November 2018; <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/record-numbers-attend-cathedrals-christmas>, accessed on 26th November 2018; and <https://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/latest-news/visitor-and-worshipper-numbers-up-then-covid/#:~:text=Attendances%20at%20public%20or%20civic%20services%20in%20cathedrals,highest-ever%20figure%20of%2010.1%20million%20reported%20in%202018>, accessed on 14th April 2023.

⁹ *From Anecdote to Evidence*, downloaded from www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from_anecdote_to_evidence_-_the_report.pdf on 14th March 2023.

¹⁰ *Heritage & Renewal: The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals*, (London: Church House Publishing, 1994);

Cathedrals Measure 1999, accessed via <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1999/1/contents> on 14th March 2023;

Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990, accessed via www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1990/2/enacted on 15th March 2023;

Final Report from the Cathedrals Working Group, downloaded from https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Cathedrals%20Working%20Group%20-%20Final%20Report_0.pdf on 14th April 2023; and

Cathedrals Measure 2020, accessed via <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2021/2/contents/enacted> on 14th April 2023.

¹¹ *In tune with heaven*, (London: Church House Publishing and Hodder & Stoughton, 1992).

¹² Iain M. MacKenzie (Editor), *Cathedrals Now: Their use and place in society*, (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1996); Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (Editors), *Flagships of the spirit*, (London: DLT, 1998); Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (Editors), *Dreaming Spires?: Cathedrals in a new age*, (London: SPCK, 2006); and Stephen Platten (Editor), *Holy Ground: Cathedrals in the twenty-first century*, (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2017).

¹³ David Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition' in MacKenzie (Ed), *Cathedrals Now*, pp. 9-23; and Richard Shephard, 'Sostenuto con brio' in Platten (Ed), *Holy Ground*, pp. 111-122.

importance of music to the daily offices is affirmed,¹⁴ none of the contributors looks at the experiences of those involved in music making or what meaning they ascribe to it.

Scholarly study brings a slightly richer vein of material to light. There are a small number of studies relating to the historical background of the various institutions of Vicars Choral,¹⁵ and a developing body of material exploring issues related to musical aspects of cathedral life from a social science background. The broad field of 'cathedral studies' was approached by a series of sociological studies of cathedral life and experience which were brought together in Francis' *Anglican Cathedrals in Modern Life* which, whilst only having limited engagement with music, highlights the need for greater empirical study to enable better reflection on the life of the cathedrals of the Church of England.¹⁶ There is evidence from recent and ongoing work in the study of cathedral choirs that the field of study has indeed expanded, and now includes studies of the following discrete areas relating to the contemporary musical life of English cathedrals:

- Gender studies;¹⁷
- Empirical research regarding Evensong (on reasons for increasing attendance in England and the phenomenon of Choral Evensong in Holland);¹⁸
- Secular singers;¹⁹ and
- Choir schools and their institutional relationship to their parent organisations.²⁰

¹⁴ Platten (Ed), *Holy Ground*, p. 11; and Peter Atkinson, 'Cathedrals at prayer' in Platten (Ed), *Holy Ground*, p. 128.

¹⁵ R. M. Beaumont, *The Chapter of Southwell Minster: A story of 1,000 years*, (Derby: English Life Publications, 1994); Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005); Malcolm S. Beer and Howard M. Crawshaw, *Music at Ripon Cathedral*, (Ripon: The Chapter of Ripon Cathedral, 2008); and Anne Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells: A History of the College of Vicars Choral*, (Wells: Close Publications, 2016).

¹⁶ Leslie J. Francis, *Anglican Cathedrals in Modern Life: The Science of Cathedral Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁷ For example, Amanda Mackey, *New Voice: the patterns and provisions for girl choristers in the English cathedral choirs*, PhD thesis, Bangor University, 2015, downloaded from <https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/files/20576801/null> on 21st April 2023; Benjamin Liberatore, "'The Ceremony of Innocence': Anglican Child Choristers and the Queer Production of the Sacred Voice." in *Reimagining the Child: Proceedings of the 2016 Rutgers-Camden Graduate Student Conference in Childhood Studies*, edited by Julian Burton and Katie Fredericks, (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017); Claire Elizabeth Stewart, *The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs*, PhD thesis, University College London, 2021, downloaded from <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10122161/> on 21st April 2023; and Enya Doyle, *Let My Voice Be Heard: Barriers to Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Anglican Cathedral Music*, Doctoral thesis, Durham University, downloaded from <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13806/> on 15th March 2023.

¹⁸ Kathryn King, *Tranquillity, transcendence, and retreat: the transformative practice of listening at Evensong*, (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2022), downloaded from <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0772a6ce-d68e-4356-af39-dfab545ee108> on 15th March 2023; and Rijken, *My Soul Doth Magnify*.

¹⁹ Jonathan Arnold, *Sacred Music in Secular Society*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

²⁰ Lan Dong, *Lifelong Influences of Being a Chorister: a Phenomenological Study*, PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2018, p. 201, downloaded from Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12843/> on 8th January 2019.

However, despite exploration of the experiences of those attending services (especially Evensong), and studies relating to choristers from educational and formational perspectives, there remains a lacuna when it comes to study of the experiences of those adult musicians involved in the liturgical life of England's cathedrals and what meaning might be given to the performances in which they are involved. This study seeks to provide an initial exploration of this area; seeking to understand the experiences of those adults who sing within the cathedral choirs of the Church of England and how they invest these performances with meaning.

Alongside these historical/archaeological and social science approaches there has also been a more established engagement with the music of cathedral choirs from a musicological approach. It is the case that a huge amount of musicological focus has gone into recovering music of earlier ages, with a huge revival during the 20th century in the editing and performance of music from previous eras.²¹ Alongside this there have been a limited number of biographical studies relating to cathedral musicians – mostly focusing either on bodies of choristers,²² or significant characters within the musical life of cathedrals.²³ With the limited exception of two books by Jonathan Arnold, the issue of what performance of music within the liturgy means to the practitioners involved still receives little attention. As with much of the scholarly material relating to the historical development of English cathedrals as institutions or the study of the architectural or archaeological evidence; it is just as much the case with regard to these musical studies that, as one writer notes:

there is a dramatic contrast between the enormous amount of scholarly attention paid to the cathedral as a building, and the more or less complete neglect...of the men who actually worshipped within that building.²⁴

This comment, written in the context of the historical study of cathedrals, applies equally to the present situation with regard to the study of lay singers within cathedral choirs; especially when it comes to understanding what meaning they give to their singing within the liturgical life of the cathedrals of the Church of England and what, if any, spiritual or theological value it might have for them or for others. Whilst we may not easily be able to fill the lacunae of our historical understanding of how performers have viewed their performances and invested them with meaning, this study aims to acknowledge and investigate the experiences of those involved in

²¹ For example, <http://www.eecm.ac.uk/eecmvolumes/>, accessed on 6th July 2023.

²² Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History*, (London: Continuum, 2007).

²³ Francis Jackson, *Blessed City: The Life and Works of Edward C. Bairstow*, (York: Ebor Press, 2003); Trevor Beeson, *In Tuneful Accord: The Musicians*, (London: SCM Press, 2009); Francis Jackson, *Music for a Long While*, (York: York Publishing Services, 2013); John Henderson and Trevor Jarvis, *Sydney Nicholson and his 'Musings of a Musician'*, (Salisbury: RSCM, 2013); and Charlotte Elizabeth O'Neill, *Organist and Master of the Choristers: The changing role of the church musician in the nineteenth-century Anglican cathedral – Four case studies*, PhD thesis, University of Utrecht, 2018, downloaded from www.dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/370747 on 14th March 2023.

²⁴ Barrie Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral: An Introduction' to Hall and Stocker (Eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*, pp. 9-10.

music-making within the liturgical lives of cathedrals within the contemporary Church of England and establish what meaning they might give to those performances.

1.2 The aims of this study

This thesis aims to prove that lay singers hold a fundamentally corporate understanding of their role – a role shaped by distinct theological, institutional and historical factors. The influence of lay singers has been marginalised in academic and ecclesiastical writing and this dissertation reappraises their importance, situating them within a broadly qualitative analytical framework. At the same time, it contributes a further perspective to discussions, already underway within the Church, that seek to identify contexts of congregational growth.²⁵

This study gathers experiential evidence of those involved in singing within the liturgical life of England's Anglican cathedrals and, to better understand this musical activity in which they engage, to interpret this through three distinct narrative lenses, namely:

1. The spiritual or theological perspectives of participants within the context of the life of Anglican cathedrals that are key to understanding the meaning given to musical performance in its liturgical context;
2. Institutional narratives that shape, at both personal and corporate levels, the self-understanding of the musical activity of choirs in choral foundations; and
3. The sense of these spiritual/theological and institutional understandings being located within a specific tradition and historical context which underpins the responses of many individuals taking part in the study.

In its overall shape, this study places the reflections of a number of individuals involved in the day-to-day life of Anglican choral foundations into a wider exploration of the historical, institutional and spiritual themes that emerged from the individual conversations. In doing this, the study aims to bring together empirical data with insights from the disciplines of philosophical theology and ecclesiastical history, responding to Pete Ward's challenge that Practical Theology should adopt an approach that 'takes both practice and theology seriously'.²⁶ Responding to this, this study seeks to develop a theologically informed understanding of the meaning of musical performance within the discipline of Practical Theology, merging an approach articulating the 'voices of people' with the insights of more formal theological disciplines.

²⁵ For the Church, this study identifies that it is only by considering these factors that the activity of lay singers in the liturgy – and their place within the Church – can be properly understood in spiritual as well as musical terms. This is particularly important given the context of atypical congregational growth evident in the worship of cathedrals in the Church of England.

²⁶ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), p. 5.

By the means outlined above, this study aims to establish a way of understanding the activity of lay singers in cathedral choirs from three perspectives:

1. By understanding the experience of the individual, this study seeks to provide a framework of understanding within which the experiences of individual musicians can be understood – specifically drawing out the ways in which those experiences are spiritual in nature and might be seen to have theological potential.
2. At the level of cathedrals as institutions, the study seeks to articulate the theological nature of the performances that take place within the setting of the cathedrals of the Church of England, enabling a wider appreciation of the spiritual and theological nature of this activity (rather than just its missiological output).
3. In methodological terms, the study seeks to provide a pattern for triangulating individual experiences within their institutional setting and historical context, providing a methodological process which might equally be applied to other aspect of institutional life within the Church and beyond.

1.3 Definitions

There are number of words or terms that are frequently used within the course of this study that it is convenient to provide a clarification regarding their meaning, these include:

- **The Anglican Choral Tradition**

The tradition of choral music within the liturgical setting that is characteristic of the worship of cathedrals and collegiate foundations within the Church of England (this latter category includes several foundations within the historic universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the royal collegiate foundations of Westminster and Windsor). This is popularly associated with the daily singing of choral evensong, but also encompasses liturgical music within the eucharistic worship of such foundations and distinctive acts of worship, such as the service of Lessons and Carols popularised by the broadcasts from King's College, Cambridge. The pattern of musical performance within the liturgical life of these churches has also been influential on a number of parish churches, some of which maintain resources and patterns of musical performance that are similar to that of cathedrals and collegiate chapels.

- **Anglican**

The word 'Anglican' can denote different things in different contexts. (A short exploration of these meanings is provided in section 7.1). In this study it is normally used to indicate the distinct spiritual and theological tradition that arose within the Church of England in the period leading up to 1660, and that has been synonymous with the worshipping

traditions of the historic cathedrals of the Church of England. At critical times in the historical development of the Church of England, this tradition has been seen in opposition to a different theological tradition – often denoted by use of the term ‘Puritan’.

- **Lay singers**

The term ‘lay singers’ is used as a general term to describe the adult singers of a cathedral or collegiate choir. Distinct from the child choristers, this group may, within any individual choral setting, be made up of lay vicars, lay clerks, songmen and choral scholars.

- **Spirituality**

Spirituality is taken to be the subjective experience of being moved beyond our normal day-to-day experience of the physical world. This allows for the range of personal experiences that were recounted by the participants in this study. Such a definition also avoids the presupposition of a theological basis to spiritual experience.

- **Theology**

By contrast with the general and subjective nature of the use of the term ‘spiritual’, ‘theology’ and ‘theological experience’ assume a theological content – whether implicit or explicit within the account of the participant. Thus, it is possible for a participant’s subjective spiritual experience to be attributed an implicit theological value. Sometimes these attributions are made to others by the participants when recounting their understanding of the effect of their activity.

1.4 An outline of the study

This study is founded on the premise that Anglican theology is historically contingent and institutionally contextualised. This is the methodological underpinning of the study; seeing these factors as a means to triangulate the experiences of those participating in the institutional and spiritual life of the cathedrals of the Church of England and to frame the deeper meaning of these experiences.

The introductory chapters of the study explore the writing that has already been undertaken regarding the musical life of cathedrals within the Church of England – revealing that there is a lacuna when it comes to understanding the experiences of the adult singers who have such a prominent part in the liturgical life of these institutions. This survey of existing literature reveals the tendency of official reports within the Church of England that touch on the life and work of cathedrals to be focused on structural issues of institutional governance or the missionary output of activity rather than the theological and spiritual factors that underpin the life and work of these institutions.

Part 2 of the study presents the reflections of those participating in the musical life of Anglican choirs – describing the overall spiritual themes that arise within the experiences of their daily musical performance in a liturgical context. This identifies six overall themes that provided the starting point for more in-depth discussion of personal experiences in the form of individual conversations with participants who represent a variety of positions and have experience of a wide range of Anglican (and other) choral foundations.

These individual discussions lead to an exploration, in Part 3, of how both the individual and corporate understandings of this activity (and the relationship that they have to each other) reveal theological, institutional and historical influences in the understanding of the singers. This tests the thesis that the experiences of those singing in Anglican choral foundations are shaped by the institutional identity of the choral foundations, and how the implicit theological narrative that underpins them is grounded in the specific historical context within which Anglican choral foundations developed.

This final part of the study summarises the themes that arose from the material gathered during the empirical study, illustrating the way that these embody implicit theological patterns of understanding that clearly correlate to the institutional nature of Anglican cathedrals and are grounded in the various episodes of the historical development of the Anglican theological and spiritual tradition. It also articulates the way that these understandings can be seen operating at both individual and corporate levels – highlighting the importance of institutional understanding and its embodied theological framework to the way that participants in the musical life of Anglican cathedrals understand their experiences of liturgical singing.

Central to this study are the insights gained from a series of conversations and interviews with those involved in the daily work of making music in cathedral choirs. In this, I have been privileged to have been able to speak with groups of singers at a number of choral foundations and undertake some more in-depth interviews with a smaller number of singers who provided reflections that were exemplary of the themes that arose within the broader conversations. Thus, this study is founded on material gained from 30 musicians who, between them have experience of singing in 22 contemporary choral foundations. The range of institutions encompassed in the wider experiences of participants included historic Anglican cathedrals (of both old and new foundation), choral foundations within the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Anglican parish-church cathedrals, royal peculiars, and Roman Catholic cathedrals. This gives a breadth of experiences and enables the study to cover a diversity of approaches as to how the singers within cathedral choirs understand their performances.

The subject material of this study sits at the intersection of the fields of Theology and Musicology and, as such raises some methodological questions. Whilst the core subject being considered is the meaning that is given to music by those performing it, the specific context of these performances means that this is not merely a musicological discussion but one that draws on theological insights. Sitting at this intersection of music and theology, this study therefore draws on the varied insights of both disciplines and, being primarily a study of the experience of practitioners is most naturally situated within the discipline of Practical Theology (itself a somewhat contested and far from settled discipline). Paying attention to Ward's restatement of the discipline of Practical Theology as attending to the relationship between 'practice' and 'theology',²⁷ this study seeks to place the material gathered in the empirical study alongside sources that embody the historical, institutional and theological elements that the material itself reveals.

The central evidence presented within this study was gathered in the course of semi-structured interviews with seven participants who had taken part in an earlier series of open discussions around the role of lay singers in cathedral choirs. In the body of this study this empirical evidence is explored alongside documentary research that draws on a range of resources relating to the historical development of Anglican spirituality within the Church of England, the development of cathedrals as institutions with a distinctive voice within the Church of England, and ways of understanding musical meaning within a spiritualised context. This multi-disciplinary approach seeks to explore the range of meaning that those involved apply to their experiences as singers within cathedral choirs, and to elucidate the ways in which this understanding can be best categorised and understood. In this way, a taxonomy can be discerned which both allows the framing of the evidence gathered within this study and provides a potential framework for future engagement in this subject area.

Following the initial conversations, a series of very broad themes were identified, which informed the later semi-structured interviews by providing a very loose framework by which to structure the sessions. Following the completion of the seven sets of interviews, they were each individually subjected to a thematic analysis where individual ideas were coded and then grouped into themes. The themes that emerged within each individual interview were then compared with those from other interviews. This process revealed three overarching, or guiding, themes (Spirituality/theology, Institution and Tradition/history), each of which in turn contained a variety of subsidiary themes, with some of the sub-themes being shared across participants and some being unique to individual interviews.

²⁷ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, p.5.

CHAPTER 2 LAY SINGERS AND MUSICAL CULTURE IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This chapter introduces the group of people at the centre of this study, the institutions within which they operate and literature about them and their activity. This begins with three short vignettes providing pictures in words of the three categories of institution with which the study is concerned. There follows a summary of literature relating to lay singers within cathedral choirs and their place within the Church of England covering the academic and general literature, and official church material relating to the activity of choral singers in cathedrals of the Church of England. This identifies that, whilst there is an interest in the musical and institutional history of the institutions, there has been little attention paid to the experience of the singers themselves and the meaning that they attribute to their activity within academic study. Similarly, there is a lacuna within official reports relating to cathedrals within the Church when it comes to understanding the experience of lay singers and the spiritual and theological nature of their activity. By identifying that the experience and understanding of these key players within significant church institutions have not been subject to intentional study the scene is set for this study, which seeks to engage with these questions. This study begins the process of filling this lacuna by empirical study examined in the light of institutional and ecclesiastical history. This highlights the importance of considering lay singers as individuals with diverse spiritual experiences whose activity takes place within a shared corporate spiritual framework.

2.1 Setting the scene: three pictures in words

Our first picture: A winter visit for a weekday evensong (An 'Old Foundation' cathedral)

It is a dark February evening, and with the rain now stopped the street-lamps outside the cathedral glisten on the cobbles outside. Stepping inside, the grandeur of mediaeval arches reaching into the darkness leads the eye to the glowing lamps in the choirstalls at the far end of the cathedral. There are already a couple of figures dressed in cassocks and hunched over the music desks preparing for what lies ahead – a couple of Lay Vicars (one a local solicitor, and the other a teacher at a nearby school). They are soon joined by the other Lay Vicars (variously working in a local hospital, an office manager and a peripatetic music teacher). Very soon the calm of the cathedral is broken as a group of 16 choristers bustle down the aisles and file into their places. They are accompanied by the remaining adult singers – choral scholars who combine their duties in the cathedral with their studies at one of the city's two universities – and the Master of the Choristers. Very soon the sound of voices fills the building as the choir use their precious 20 minutes together to rehearse some of the music for the service that will follow – there only being time to check the beginning and end of most items and to fine-tune a few particularly difficult passages that past experience tells the choir

director need to be at the forefront of everyone's minds. As the choir rehearse a few people begin to file into the other stalls in the Quire – gathering around the choir and (almost) silently preparing themselves for the service that lies ahead. After rehearsing, the choir go out to prepare themselves for the service itself; returning in procession ten minutes later as the clock strikes the half-hour – now dressed with white surplices, and joined by two of the cathedral's resident clergy.

By the time the choir enters in procession at the beginning of the service the stalls have been gently populated by about forty people. This group is made up of several different categories of people: some of them are present almost every day, and others perhaps attend evensong weekly, others are visiting as part of a regular pattern of experiencing worship in different cathedrals (it is even possible that there will be visitor from as far as northern America who is making a pilgrimage around different English cathedrals), and a small number may be present for the first time. The service, which lasts a little over half-an-hour, sees the choir singing music to a professional standard, interspersed with two readings from scripture and concluding with some intercessory prayers – the bulk of the service being formed by the choir singing an opening set of response, a section of about 30 verses from various psalms, the traditional evening canticles (Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis), a set of sung prayers and an anthem. Once these 30 minutes of musical activity and spoken word come to an end, the choir and clergy file out of the cathedral, and the other people quietly leave the building. Within quarter of an hour everyone has gone elsewhere: the choristers back to school for dinner, and the congregation and lay vicars to their homes (albeit after two or three of the singers have met in a nearby pub to review the musical performance that they have just been a part of!). One by one, the lights in the cathedral have gone out and darkness falls over the building – which will remain quiet and peaceful until a verger returns in the morning to prepare the cathedral for the early morning service which will mark the beginning of a new day.

This continues a pattern that has been sustained over a period of nine centuries with only two significant interruptions (firstly the period between the mid-1640s and 1660 when cathedral choirs were abolished following the Civil War, and more recently during 2020 and 2021, when cathedral choirs fell almost silent as a result of the lockdowns to try and combat the effects of the COVID-19 virus). The cathedral was founded by the Normans (who moved it from the site of its Anglo-Saxon predecessor), and is the symbolic focus of the ministry of the local bishop and spiritual home of a community of nearly 40 canons (only four of whom are present on a day-to-day basis, with their colleagues serving as parish priests elsewhere in the diocese or serving as members of the bishop's staff).

But as this group of 22 singers, joined by two clergy and a congregation of three dozen or so people gather, and as music is performed to a professional standard to what seems to be a very scanty

audience, what is going on? Why are they here, and what does it mean to each of those taking part?

Before moving on to explore some of the answers to these questions in the course of this study, it is necessary to paint another picture in order to make clear the broader picture of the day-to-day work of choirs in the cathedral and collegiate choral foundations of the Church of England.

Our second picture: A civic evensong (A 'Parish-Church' cathedral)

Our second visit takes us to what in the 19th century was a proud and busy industrial town. Here there is not such a substantial cathedral church – it is a large town centre church, and there have been some clear alterations during the past century or so to extend it at its east end. Here is the clue to the third type of cathedral in the Church of England – what has historically been called a 'parish-church cathedral'. Rather than have a centuries old inheritance as a cathedral, this church has for most of its life been the centre of the spiritual life of a town, taking on the mantle of being a cathedral only a little over a century ago. A survey of the service schedule shows that the choir sings on fewer days of the week – and often find one section (boys, girls, lower voices) singing on their own during the week. However, our visit takes place on a Sunday afternoon, and the gentlemen of the choir are joined by one of the groups of choristers for a service of Evensong that also marks the beginning of the legal year. For this reason, we find the civic community (including the city's mayor, the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of the county, together with the High Sheriffs of two or three neighbouring areas) gathered together with solicitors, barristers, local magistrates and judges together with a visiting high court judge.

A final, third visit: Oxbridge (Academic choral foundation)

For our final visit we find ourselves standing at the back of the chapel of an Oxford or Cambridge college having just been part of a small group of people who have participated (almost entirely by listening) in a service sung entirely by the adult singers of the college choir. Founded as a part of the mediaeval foundation of this academic college, the adults of the choir maintain a rhythm of prayer almost identical with that of a cathedral; singing six or seven choral services each week. Whilst in the past the singers were lay clerks appointed solely for their musical task (and like their cathedral cousins having to hold supplementary employment, the lower voices of the college choir are, in common with most of their fellow historic collegiate foundations across the two universities made up entirely of choral scholars who are largely undergraduate students studying within the college (though a couple of choral scholars with particular musical skills have been appointed from other colleges within the university). Whilst they mostly sing services together with a group of boy choristers, this evening is the evening that only the lower voices sing the service – and it seems to be a consequence of this that the number of people attending the service is relatively small. Having

been able to hear music of an outstanding standard, sung by a choir of choral scholars we fall into conversation with a couple of the singers before they head off for dinner in the college hall. Across the city on any one evening there may be upwards of 80 singers participating in college choirs at services that are attended by students and visitors to what are essentially private college chapels.

Putting the pictures together – and some questions that arise

In these pictures we have seen something of the variety of institution that comprises the home of the Anglican Choral Tradition – from ancient cathedrals to more modern foundations that have blossomed from their origins as civic parish churches, and including some colleges of the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge. From this heartland, the tradition reaches out to a myriad of parish churches throughout England and beyond, and is influential in the worshipping life of most other colleges within both the ancient universities and the chapels of a number of the more recently founded universities. We have also seen something of the range of circumstances in which singers of cathedral choirs find themselves singing – from the daily rhythm of singing with relatively few people present to their contribution to large-scale celebratory events and projects which can range to events such as concerts, recordings and radio/TV broadcasts. Appendix A provides a summary of these varied institutions together with a summary of the present-day situation with regard to the provision and duties of adult lay singers in cathedral choirs; the group that forms the basis for this study.

As well as the boys (and in recent decades, girls) who sing with them, we have encountered a varied group of adult singers – the first group made up mostly of those working in middle class, professional full-time jobs but dedicating themselves to the significant commitment of singing almost daily, and the second drawn from student or recent post-graduates for whom the discipline of singing in cathedral choirs has the potential to form the foundations of a wider musical career. A majority of these singers will have studied at university, and many will have trained as professional musicians. But, as we will see in the brief survey of literature that follows, their own experiences (nor those of their predecessors) have rarely been touched on in academic literature, and have not been the subject of intentional study as to what theological potential they may have.

The rest of this chapter charts the material that has been written about the institutions within which these singers work. This survey both outlines the field of study and establishes that in academic literature, other writing about cathedrals and their music, and official reports within the Church there is no significant engagement with the experience lay singers in cathedral and collegiate choirs have of singing in these institutions, or the meaning that they see as present in this activity.

2.2 Academic studies and wider literature

This section explores relevant academic literature, building a picture of the historical development of cathedrals as institutions and the relationship the bodies of singers within the wider life of the cathedrals in which they are located. Further exploration of academic engagement from a musical perspective allows us to see a window into the musical life of cathedrals from the perspective of biographical studies of cathedral musicians, focusing almost exclusively on choristers or senior figures (such as Organists or Masters of the Choristers). Complementing this are recent academic studies exploring discrete aspects of the musical life of cathedrals; including studies from perspectives of education, gender studies and experience of those attending evensong as members of the congregation. Non-academic writing on the topic of cathedrals and their music reveals a similar pattern. In all this material, we find a rich account of the institutional history of lay singers within various choral foundations, but it remains the case that the experience of adult lay singers themselves, and a consideration of its spiritual significance and theological potential does not receive substantive treatment. Beginning just such a consideration is the aim of this study.

Whilst distinctive today as collegiate foundations, cathedrals are surviving examples of a once much more widely seen category of collegiate church, a useful summary of which is provided in a recent study of collegiate foundations.²⁸ Within this context, the development of cathedral choirs has two historic impetuses; elaboration of liturgical provision in monastic Lady Chapels, and development of vicars choral in secular cathedral foundations. As noted in a recent institutional study of vicars choral, such a study is a new area for detailed study,²⁹ and one which until recently has been non-liturgical in focus,³⁰ with liturgical and musical foci lying elsewhere than the adult singers within cathedral foundations.³¹ Broadly speaking, literature can be grouped into one of five distinct bodies of study:

- historical study of cathedrals, largely focusing on architectural, archaeological and social aspects of their life;³²
- liturgical study of the forms used in worship, and the music composed for this;³³

²⁸ Paul Jeffery, *The Collegiate Churches of England and Wales*, (London: Hale, 2007), p. 36.

²⁹ Richard Hall, 'Preface' to Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedral*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), p. viii.

³⁰ Hall, 'Preface', p. vii.

³¹ John Harper, 'The Vicar Choral in Choir', in Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedral*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), p. 22.

³² For example, Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedral*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005) and Jon Cannon, *Cathedrals: The Great English Cathedrals and the world that made them*, (London: Constable, 2011).

³³ For example, John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001); John Morehen (Editor), *English Choral Practice, 1400-1650*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Nick Sandon, *The Use of Sarum*, (Newton Abbot: Antico Church Music, Multiple volumes and dates).

- the 19th century reform of cathedrals and cathedral music;³⁴
- biographical studies, focusing on significant figures (such as deans and organists);³⁵
- contemporary study of choristers, focused especially on gender and education.³⁶

Whilst each of these areas contributes to understanding the context in which lay adult singers live, work and worship, there is an acknowledged absence of study of their role from a spiritual or theological perspective. This is reflected by comments, such as those by Hall, noting that the evidence drawn together in the first distinct study of English Vicars Choral contains ‘a wealth of architectural, archaeological and historical information’,³⁷ whilst, in the same collection, John Harper states that ‘the study of the music and liturgy of the mediaeval cathedral choir has been relatively neglected’.³⁸ Nonetheless, it is possible to trace the development of the mediaeval vicar choral, the emergence of a choir of lay adult singers as their successors following the reformations of the Tudor period, and the development of the almost entirely lay choir of today’s cathedrals.

2.2a Academic studies: The development of the lay clerk

The first comprehensive survey of the life and work of lay adult singers in cathedral choirs is a 2005 inter-disciplinary collection of essays.³⁹ This focuses on historical and architectural developments of the institutions surrounding their work, largely limited in scope to a period ending in the 16th-century. Whilst considering the musical activity of lay vicars, it does not contribute to understanding the spirituality or theological implications for those involved.⁴⁰ There are smaller-scale works incorporating comment on cathedral singers; sometimes as part of wider studies,⁴¹ or

³⁴ For example, Timothy Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night: King’s College, Cambridge, and an English Singing Style*, (London: Allen Lane, 2018); and Phillip Barrett, ‘English Cathedral Choirs in the Nineteenth Century’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, January 1974, pp. 15-37.

³⁵ For example, Charlotte Elizabeth O’Neill, *Organist and Master of the Choristers: The changing role of the church musician in the nineteenth-century Anglican cathedral – Four case studies*, PhD thesis, University of Utrecht, 2018, downloaded from www.dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/370747 on 14th March 2023; Francis Jackson, *Blessed City: The Life and Works of Edward C. Bairstow*, (York: Ebor Press, 2003); John Henderson and Trevor Jarvis, *Sydney Nicholson and his ‘Musings of a Musician’*, (Salisbury: RSCM, 2013); and A. Herbert Brewer (edited by John Morehen), *Memories of Choirs and Cloisters: Fifty Years of Music*, (London: Stainer and Bell, 2015).

³⁶ For example, Lan Dong, *Lifelong Influences of Being a Chorister: a Phenomenological Study*, PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2018, p. 201, downloaded from Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12843/> on 8th January 2019.; Amanda Mackey, *New Voice : the patterns and provisions for girl choristers in the English cathedral choirs*, PhD thesis, Bangor University, 2015, downloaded from <https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/files/20576801/null> on 21st April 2023.; Claire Elizabeth Stewart, *The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs*, PhD thesis, University College London, 2021, downloaded from <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10122161/> on 21st April 2023.; and Enya Doyle, *Let My Voice Be Heard: Barriers to Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Anglican Cathedral Music*, Doctoral thesis, Durham University, downloaded from <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13806/> on 15th March 2023.

³⁷ Hall, ‘Preface’, p. vii.

³⁸ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

³⁹ Hall and Stocker (Eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*.

⁴⁰ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

⁴¹ For example, Stanley Lehmborg, *Cathedrals under siege*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996).

in the context of historical accounts of the musical life of a particular institution.⁴² The material that follows is a summary of two recent works – the 2005 collection and Orme’s later synthesis of the historiography of cathedrals, including their musicians. Illustrating the present state of this field, and highlighting its focus on historical, archaeological and purely musical matters, this reveals the lacunae regarding understanding the spiritual and theological aspects of the activity of lay singers in cathedral choirs.

Vicars Choral at English cathedrals

This 2005 collection draws together various aspects of the study of this group for the first time, producing ‘a wealth of new information from ... different disciplines and permitting the first properly rounded view of this remarkable group of churchmen’.⁴³ Historical in basis, this volume identifies the recent genesis of such study of minor clergy within cathedrals and established areas of architectural, archaeological and historical study. It leaves an absence surrounding the spirituality of singers and the theological import of their activity.

The introductory chapters offer a broad foundation; offering a broad analysis of the origins of vicars choral,⁴⁴ exploring their parallels in wider European culture,⁴⁵ and outlining the liturgical and musical context in which they worked.⁴⁶ The development of the corporate body of vicars choral is traced from Anglo-Saxon origins, tracing a series of developmental stages of progressively increasing corporate identity and collegial character, especially noting:

- the compulsion on absentee canons to provide a deputy during the 12th-century;⁴⁷
- the extension of this practice to include resident canons during the following century;⁴⁸
- the development of security of tenure and corporate character;⁴⁹
- the incorporation of these groups as legally constituted bodies by the mid-15th-century;⁵⁰
- and
- continuity during the Edwardine reforms of the 1540s.⁵¹

These conclusions are drawn from the evidence that is available, and again it is important to note the qualification offered relating to:

⁴² For example, Malcolm S. Beer and Howard M. Crawshaw, *Music at Ripon Cathedral*, (Ripon: The Chapter of Ripon Cathedral, 2008); R. M. Beaumont, *The Chapter of Southwell Minster: A story of 1,000 years*, (Derby: English Life Publications, 1994); and Anne Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells: A History of the College of Vicars Choral*, (Wells: Close Publications, 2016).

⁴³ Hall, ‘Preface’, p. viii.

⁴⁴ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, pp. 1-10.

⁴⁵ Julia Barrow, ‘The Origins of Vicars Choral to c.1300’ in Hall and Stocker (Eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*, p. 11-16.

⁴⁶ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 17-22.

⁴⁷ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 4-5.

⁴⁸ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 6-7.

⁵¹ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 6.

‘the dramatic contrast between the enormous amount of scholarly attention paid to the cathedral as a building and the more or less complete neglect...of the men who actually worshipped within that building’.⁵²

This lacuna in the study of the mediaeval Vicars Choral parallels the approach to their successors in the modern setting in contemporary reports within the Church (see 2.3).

John Harper links the archaeological elements of study with their liturgical and musical context,⁵³ reflecting.⁵⁴ Outlining the practical, ceremonial, and musical activity of Vicars Choral within the cathedral community,⁵⁵ Harper identifies that they ‘undertook the lion’s share of the work...overseen by one of their seniors or by a small group of minor canons’ and ‘formed the core of the larger body gathered for worship’;⁵⁶ a description equally applicable to their modern day successors. Outlining the progression through three forms, Harper demonstrates the structured transition allowing choristers to become Vicars Choral;⁵⁷ a pattern common to other non-cathedral collegiate churches.⁵⁸ By this process, choristers and secondaries would gain the necessary confidence in singing and reading, demonstrating the necessary good conduct required for admission to security of tenure as a Vicar Choral.⁵⁹ This acquisition of skills is examined in relation to the increasing musical specialisation during the 16th-century, including the ability to play the organ and perform more complex written polyphony alongside the ability to sing simple, improvised polyphony.⁶⁰ This specialisation is accompanied by more frequent incidences of lay personnel becoming involved in the musical establishment of cathedrals.⁶¹ This pattern is also reflected in the evolution of other ecclesiastical foundations, including the monastic cousins of the secular collegiate churches and cathedrals.⁶² In this way, Harper traces the development of the cathedral choir from a body deputing for the canons in singing the daily liturgy to a more specialised group of singers, increasingly involving lay participation as musical competence became more keenly required for the better performance of cathedral worship. In conclusion, Harper restates the neglect of previous study in this area, stating that ‘it is time for musicologists to do more to seek out the voice of the mediaeval vicar choral’.⁶³

⁵² Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 9-10.

⁵³ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 17-22.

⁵⁴ Hall, ‘Preface’, p. vii.

⁵⁵ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 17-18.

⁵⁶ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 18-19.

⁵⁸ Nick Brown, *Empty vessels?: The cultural and spiritual contribution of the collegiate churches in Ottery St. Mary and Crediton prior to the reformation*, (Unpublished BTh dissertation, University of Oxford), pp. 8-10.

⁵⁹ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 21.

⁶¹ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

⁶² Nick Brown, *Musico-Liturgical Performance in the Parish Churches of Pre-Reformation Devon*, (Unpublished FMusTCL dissertation, Trinity College London), pp. 28-32 and

Roger Bowers, ‘The Musicians of the Lady Chapel of Winchester Cathedral Priory, 1402-1539’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 45, No. 2, April 1994, pp. 210-237.

⁶³ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

Phillip Barrett, 'English Cathedral Choirs in the Nineteenth Century'

In an earlier example of study in this area, Barrett traces a later stage in the development of cathedral choirs. Moving forward to the 19th-century, Barrett tracks the development of cathedral choirs during the 19th-century (which had previously been characterised by their small size, lack of attendance, unrehearsed performance and bad discipline) as they became better resourced, organised and professional in performance.⁶⁴ Laying foundations both for the higher musical standards achieved by cathedral choirs as they develop in the 20th-century, this study also indicates a change as the clerical duty of the daily office became more singularly perceived a musical performance within the liturgy – an important, if little understood, change when it comes to understanding the formation, training and role of singers within cathedral choirs.

Institutional histories of bodies of lay singers

More recently, three historical accounts of the development of musical resources at three individual secular collegiate foundations have been written: Ripon, Southwell and Wells.⁶⁵ These provide comprehensive pictures of the institutional development of musical resources. However, whilst the material available leads to full accounts of the institutional provision and musical activity, there is only passing mention of the spiritual or theological attitudes of lay singers, reflecting the limitations of the 2005 collection outlined above.

Nicholas Orme, *The History of English cathedrals*

Orme provides a summary of the development of English cathedrals, outlining the development of both new and old foundation from their monastic and secular origins.⁶⁶ Reflecting Haigh's perspective that the origins of cathedrals in the present day lies in the 'messiness' of the English reformations,⁶⁷ Orme looks back to the pre-reformation origins of cathedral choirs, noting the origins of polyphonic music within the specialised lay singers within monastic settings,⁶⁸ drawing on Bowers to trace the development of polyphonic singing in pre-reformation monastic churches.⁶⁹ In this, Orme traces the parallel development of lay singers from their origins either singing daily services in the place of absent canons (in the case of secular, old foundation cathedrals) or in the maintenance of the daily offering of prayer and worship that is at the heart of the monastic *opus*

⁶⁴ Barrett, 'English Cathedral Choirs'.

⁶⁵ Beer and Crawshaw, *Music at Ripon Cathedral*; Beaumont, *The Chapter of Southwell Minster*; and Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells*.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, (Exeter: Impress Books, 2017)

⁶⁷ Christopher Haigh, *Why do we have cathedrals?*, St George's Cathedral Lectures, (Perth: St George's Cathedral, 1998).

⁶⁸ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 81-2.

⁶⁹ Roger Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet: the performing resource for English church polyphony, c. 1390-1559' in Morehen (Ed), *English Choral Practice, 1400-1650*, p. 13 and Bowers, 'Musicians of the Lady Chapel of Winchester'.

Dei (in the formerly monastic, new foundation cathedrals).⁷⁰ Orme also describes both old and new foundation cathedrals as comprising both lay and clerical singers (lay vicar choral and priest vicars choral in old foundation cathedrals, and lay clerks and minor canons in new foundations cathedrals).⁷¹

Drawing on a wide-ranging sources, Orme represents a consensus view of the development of the personnel within cathedral institutions which, by the Restoration had taken on the form that was to persist until recent times (and still exists in modified form in cathedrals to this day, as a result of the *Cathedrals Measure 1999*), with the duty of maintaining the daily rhythm of prayer becoming a key task of either the Vicars Choral (in old foundations) and Minor Canons with Lay Clerks (in new foundations, and some parish-church cathedrals).⁷² The pattern whereby most of the canons are non-residentiary, with governance of the cathedral in the hands of the smaller number of 'dignitaries' (now formally designated as residentiary canons) is also evident.

It can be seen that study of adult singers in cathedral choirs is neglected within scholarly literature. Recent research has begun redressing this, with the main foci on archaeological, institutional and musical understanding. The ongoing lack of attention paid to the spiritual impact of the activity of lay singers, and its theological potential, raises the possibility that theological insights are being lost to the wider church, or indeed not recognised at all. In wider terms, this lack of focus means developments that may shape the future life and ministry of cathedrals could ignore the undoubted contribution made by cathedral musicians to the spiritual life that is a key part of the mission of cathedrals, and future developments may consequently damage this contribution.

2.2b Studies of church musicians

In addition to the institutional studies summarised above, there have been various wider studies of cathedral music. The summary that follows outlines writing (both academic and more general) that relates directly to the Anglican Choral Tradition, illustrating its tendency to focus on organists and choristers. Within this body there is a bias toward institutional history, and musical and educational development, leaving an exploration of spiritual or theological dimensions, at best, as tangential.

Recent academic studies of cathedral music: biographies of organists, the education and development of choristers, and the experience of evensong

The first category of literature outlined concerns biographical accounts of cathedral musicians, tending to focus on prominent individuals.⁷³ Secondly, there are biographical accounts of groups

⁷⁰ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, pp. 45, 216.

⁷¹ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 109.

⁷² Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 162-165.

⁷³ Jackson, *Blessed City*; Henderson and Jarvis, *Sydney Nicholson*; Brewer, *Memories of Choirs and Cloisters*; and Francis Jackson, *Music for a Long While*, (York: York Publishing Services, 2013).

within choral foundations, with the most prominent work being a survey of the history of the English chorister.⁷⁴ One contrasting study, that does focus on the role of the lay singers in Day's analysis of the changing sound of English choirs that, focusing primarily on King's College Cambridge, tracing the sonic effect of the professionalisation of cathedral and Oxbridge choirs during the 20th-century.⁷⁵ This latter study, whilst including material both on other foundations and the social changes that have taken place within many choirs only tangentially touches on spiritual aspects of the experience of those involved in singing within these foundations.

The trends apparent in these more general studies are replicated in academic studies of church musicians. There are significant parallels with general literature; biographical approaches, focusing on the historical development of the choral tradition, are exemplified by O'Neil's study of 19th century cathedral organists,⁷⁶ and sit alongside studies of the impact being a chorister has on individuals.⁷⁷ Specific areas of study include developments involving girls choristers,⁷⁸ and wider issues of gender.⁷⁹ A final area of study has seen exploration of the experience of those attending choral services – particularly focusing on choral evensong.⁸⁰

Finally three sets of interviews can be seen to represent the scope for further study with regard to the spirituality of those singing within the liturgy of England's cathedrals and its theological potential: a series of interviews that tangentially touch on spiritual experience, a book that focuses almost exclusively on the musical aspects of the English choral tradition, and two books that open the door on the world of singers' experiences – albeit focusing largely on the singing of sacred music in secular contexts. It is the lacunae revealed in this literature that this study seeks to begin to explore – looking at the world of the singer in cathedral choirs from a spiritual perspective and seeking to understand the theological potential of these experiences in the light of the tradition within which musical performance takes place.

Three sets of interviews

Potential spiritual and theological issues encountered by cathedral musicians are revealed in a small volume offering snapshots by Danziger, encompassing a range of personnel at a single cathedral

⁷⁴ Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History*, (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁷⁵ Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Day*.

⁷⁶ O'Neill, *Organist and Master of the Choristers*.

⁷⁷ Lucinda Murphy, *The Chorister's Church: An initiation of faith or a chasm of sermon doodles?* (Unpublished material: Durham University, 2015); Jenevora Williams, 'Cathedral Choirs in the United Kingdom: the professional boy chorister' in Scott Harrison, Graham Welch and Adam Adler, *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, (New York: Springer, 2012), pp. 123-147; and Dong, *Lifelong Influences of Being a Chorister*.

⁷⁸ Mackey, *New Voice*; and Stewart, *The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury*.

⁷⁹ Doyle, *Let My Voice Be Heard*.

⁸⁰ Hanna Rijken, *My Soul Doth Magnify: The Appropriation of Anglican Choral Evensong in the Netherlands*, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2020); and Kathryn King, *Tranquillity, transcendence, and retreat: the transformative practice of listening at Evensong*, (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2022), downloaded from <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0772a6ce-d68e-4356-af39-dfab545ee108> on 15th March 2023.

that reveal the variety of responses that are possible.⁸¹ In this volume, which engages with staff from across the areas of the cathedral's life, the clearest theological rationale is provided in the interview with the Organist who states that 'I think you have to be quite religious to do this job' before going on to mention that 'in the middle of February, with no heating...just a few in the congregation – that's when it comes alive'.⁸² This clear focus on something that is other than mere musical performance to an audience contrasts strongly with the interview with the Assistant Organist where there is no mention of religion or spirituality, and a clear focus on performance and career progression within the wider musical field.⁸³ More subtle approaches to music and spirituality are demonstrated in a couple of other interviews, with one lay clerk explaining that '[the singers] may or may not be religious,...we do it for the love' and that 'most of us have faith...[though] not always Anglican...[but] obviously the music inspires us'.⁸⁴ A contrasting view, revealing the possibility of disappointment at a lack of spiritual engagement or response, comes from another lay clerk who said they had thought 'living on the doorstep of a place of worship...would make it easier to develop a spiritual life, and there have been times when it has been true'. This book is the single example (albeit minimal) of attention being intentionally paid to the voices of lay singers in cathedral choirs.

A further selection of interviews is contained in Sondberg's, *English Voices*, a volume written for an American audience and seeking to introduce and explore contemporary trends and influences in English choral music to that audience.⁸⁵ It is notable that, despite containing a good proportion of interviews with directors of choirs in ecclesiastical settings, this volume focuses almost entirely on interpretative, musically technical discussion and educational matters, with very few references to any spiritual aspect that performance in these contexts might imply.

A contrasting approach is taken by Jonathan Arnold in *Sacred Music in Secular Society*, where the interviewees deliberately include performers and composers as well as directors, and the focus is explicitly located in the spiritual dynamics at play in the composition, performance and reception of sacred music in both liturgical and concert contexts.⁸⁶ This collection of interviews demonstrates how the systematic exploration of spirituality is an emerging trend within a field that has lacked focus and attention, both in terms of historical investigation and contemporary reflection. These first steps to explore the link between singing, spirituality and faith stem from Arnold's reflections on his own experiences singing sacred music in both liturgical and secular settings. This link

⁸¹ Danny Danziger, *The Cathedral: Behind Open Doors, Talking With People Who Give Their Lives To A Cathedral*, (London: Viking, 1989).

⁸² Danziger, *The Cathedral*, p. 179.

⁸³ Danziger, *The Cathedral*, pp. 25-30.

⁸⁴ Danziger, *The Cathedral*, p. 127-8.

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Sondborg, *English Ways: Conversations with English Choral Conductors*, (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw, 2001).

⁸⁶ Jonathan Arnold, *Sacred Music in Secular Society*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

between music and faith was further developed in a second book on Music and Faith.⁸⁷ Whilst Arnold's duo of books opens a door into the world of the experience of performers, they respectively do this from the vantage point of the secular world of concert performance and a broader exploration of the link between music, spirituality and faith. Thus, whilst raising some of the issues of how performers engage with the spiritual content of their performances, Arnold leaves the spiritual experience of singers in the daily round of liturgical worship and understanding its theological potential as areas that remain identified but unexplored. It is this area of study that the research presented in Parts 2 and 3 seek to address in more depth.

2.2c Wider literature about cathedrals

One book and a 'trilogy' exploring cathedrals and their life

The first book considered here is a collection originating from lectures by Deans and Provosts of English cathedrals during 1994,⁸⁸ containing an article by David Shearlock which explores issues within the musical tradition of cathedral worship.⁸⁹ Shearlock starts by recognising the cathedral community as 'a team of clergy and lay people [who] exist primarily to maintain the daily round of worship'.⁹⁰ In a theological reflection on the musical content of worship he goes on to quote Sydney Evans (former Dean of Salisbury), who, reflecting the much earlier concerns of Augustine and Aquinas, highlighted the possibility for the aesthetic of musical performance to be a substitute for God.⁹¹ However, having made this point Shearlock goes on to assert the capacity of music to 'lift the soul of humanity into the presence of God',⁹² and gives thanks for the grace of God that is revealed in musical performance and those who enable this theological expression in worship.⁹³ In this Shearlock is almost unique in explicitly recognising the spiritual contribution made by lay clerks, not just as musical functionaries but as members of a worshipping community. He goes further by noting the deeply formational effect that music can have on singers,⁹⁴ and the need to foster the vocational call of those involved in a cathedral's music.⁹⁵

Following shortly after MacKenzie's book was the publication of the first of three books, edited by two people who have served as cathedral deans.⁹⁶ This contains a chapter looking at issues in

⁸⁷ Jonathan Arnold, *Music and Faith: Conversations in a Post-secular Age*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019).

⁸⁸ Iain M. MacKenzie (Editor), *Cathedrals Now: Their use and place in society*, (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1996).

⁸⁹ David Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition' in MacKenzie (Ed), *Cathedrals Now*, pp. 9-23.

⁹⁰ Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', p. 10.

⁹¹ Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', p. 13.

⁹² Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', p. 13.

⁹³ Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', pp. 13-14.

⁹⁴ Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', p. 13.

⁹⁵ Shearlock, 'Cathedrals and the Christian Musical Tradition', p. 15.

⁹⁶ Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (Editors), *Flagships of the spirit*, (London: DLT, 1998).

cathedral music.⁹⁷ Within this, lay singers are covered, with a short description of their role covering financial and non-tangible rewards they receive. Whilst there is no extended discussion of their spiritual engagement (or otherwise), the recognition of non-tangible rewards (an allusion to the fact that the monetary rewards alone are not sufficient) is followed by an acknowledgment of their role when noting that failure to address matters of musical competency strikes at the heart of the attempt to offer the best in worship to God that is at the heart of their role.⁹⁸ The second book of the trilogy,⁹⁹ touched on a wider range of topics relating to cathedrals and their role in modern society, but does not provide an explicit treatment of music and musicians. However, music returns as a theme in the third volume whose opening chapter outlines the 'primary purpose' of the cathedral (as the parish church) is to be 'a place of worship...where people gather to celebrate the church's liturgy through words, music, silence, symbols and sacramental signs'.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in the chapter on prayer there is a clear identification of the centrality of the musical celebration of the daily office by 'a musical establishment capable of the best liturgical music'.¹⁰¹ Despite these affirmations of the centrality of the lay musicians in a cathedral's life as a place of prayer and worship the chapter treating music focuses more on the challenges of diverse musical styles within worship and the changed (and changing) role of directors of music.¹⁰² The sole focus of this chapter in relation to lay singers is their functionality and the sustainability of their financial support.¹⁰³

Other writing about cathedrals from within the church

Martin Thomas, a former Precentor picks up the theme, mentioned tangentially in the last essay, of the relationship between the cathedral tradition and contemporary classical music.¹⁰⁴ This study provides a strong critique of the stylistic conservatism of musical repertoire in English cathedrals. However, this argument engages at a deep level with matters of style and aesthetic, there is little engagement with the personnel involved in performing music, and none of the spiritual significance of musical performance of these musicians. Similarly, a collection of essays, *Anglican Cathedrals in modern life*, embraces the study of cathedrals, but, although providing a conscious effort to ground the study of cathedrals and the life in social-scientific methods, does not address the role or spirituality of those lay singers who are at the heart of their daily worship.¹⁰⁵ There is a single essay

⁹⁷ Richard Shepherd, 'Music in these stones', in Platten and Lewis (Eds), *Flagships of the spirit*, pp. 74-89.

⁹⁸ Shepherd, 'Music in these stones', p. 82.

⁹⁹ Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (Editors), *Dreaming Spires?: Cathedrals in a new age*, (London: SPCK, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Platten (Editor), *Holy Ground: Cathedrals in the twenty-first century*, (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2017), p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Peter Atkinson, 'Cathedrals at prayer' in Platten (Ed), *Holy Ground*, p. 128.

¹⁰² Richard Shephard, 'Sostenuto con brio' in Platten (Ed), *Holy Ground*, pp. 111-122.

¹⁰³ Shephard, 'Sostenuto con brio', pp. 117.

¹⁰⁴ Martin Thomas, *English Cathedral Music and Liturgy in the Twentieth Century*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)

¹⁰⁵ Leslie J. Francis, *Anglican Cathedrals in Modern Life: The Science of Cathedral Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

which touches on the musical life of cathedrals, focusing on the single phenomenon of carol services and those who attend these services.¹⁰⁶

Whilst recent years have seen a definite effort to study the role of cathedrals within Church and Society, this has not yet included an examination of the contribution made by lay singers within the cathedral structures, nor of their spirituality. The individual essays within these collections have tended to focus on specific issues and, with the single exception of that by Shearlock, do not engage with the spiritual and formational potential of the singers who work within them. In a way that echoes the manner in which official reports have focused on particular concerns, it would seem that this group of people – who are vital within the life and mission of cathedrals – remain valued for their contribution, yet falling between stools when it comes to exploring and understanding their own distinctive role, their spiritual needs and the contribution that they might make to the theological endeavour of the Church.

Academic studies and wider literature: Some initial conclusions

In the literature surveyed so far, we have seen the way that lay singers are the direct lineal descendants of the vicars engaged to maintain the round on behalf of absent canons and, as lay clerks, taking the place of choir monks in the re-formed foundations that replaced the monastic cathedral communities at the Reformation the present-day adult singers in the choirs of the Church of England cathedrals have a role that is central to their liturgical life. Despite this, this survey of the literature of different types that relates to the life and work of these cathedrals tends to sit lightly to this particular group within the life of the cathedral. Noticeably, despite their central role in the worship of cathedrals, there is little attempt to explore the spiritual or theological content of their activity, nor to look at the life of the cathedral through the lens of their experience.

Beyond institutional writing about cathedrals, such literature as does exist tends to focus on the musical and historical aspects in relation to lay clerks, and will be explored more fully below. However, this does highlight the lack of formal reflection on the role of musicians within cathedral foundations, and especially their role as communities offering prayer and worship. This lack of study with regard to the spiritual and theological formation of singers, is noted in a recent study into the parallel study of choristers undertaken by Dong, who highlights the stark contrast between the maintenance of a tradition stretching back over 1,400 years and the fact that ‘there is very little scholarly literature concerning choristers’ spiritual development’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ David S. Walker, ‘Cathedral Carol Services: Who Attends and Why?’ in Francis, *Anglican Cathedrals in Modern Life*, pp. 111-29.

¹⁰⁷ Dong, *Lifelong Influences of Being a Chorister*.

2.3 Official Church reports and their engagement with cathedrals

Strategic reflections within the Church of England in recent years have led to the creation of a number of reports into church life, recently coalescing into a definable programme of 'Reform & Renewal'. There have been two significant reports which have shaped thinking: *Mission-shaped Church* and *Anecdote to Evidence*.¹⁰⁸ The first of these makes little mention of the life of cathedrals, whilst the latter identifies the growth that has been a feature of cathedral ministry over the past couple of decades. There have been two further reports relating specifically to the missionary activity of cathedrals: *Spiritual Capital* and *Pilgrimage & England's cathedrals: Past & present*.¹⁰⁹ However, it will be seen that even when these are taken into account, it remains the case that official reports have not explored the dynamics at play within a significant part of the body that forms the cathedral community – the group of lay singers who, in many cathedrals, form the heart of the daily worshipping community.

2.3a Official reports on mission

Mission-shaped Church

In recent years studies of church attendance have regularly identified cathedrals as places of growth.¹¹⁰ It is therefore surprising that cathedrals merit only a brief mention in the 2004 report to the General Synod of the Church of England entitled *Mission-shaped Church* – where it was only noted that 'there is some evidence of an increase in attendance at cathedral and other churches offering traditional styles of worship'.¹¹¹ Given the stated focus of the original report the report's origins in work of the Board of Mission to explore developing the concept of 'church-planting',¹¹² it is not surprising that the follow-up volume, *Mission-shaped Spirituality*, does not address the spirituality of those engaged at the heart of the worship of cathedral communities,¹¹³ focusing rather on the needs of those engaged in 'the tide of mission' as identified in the specific activity of church-planting envisaged by the parent report.¹¹⁴ However, it is more surprising that *Mission-shaped Parish* does not engage with the musical and liturgical life of cathedral communities in its chapter exploring 'Mission-shaped cathedrals'.¹¹⁵ Here the focus remains is on those who are not part of the church, with cathedrals' ability 'to engage pre-Christians better than many other large

¹⁰⁸ *Mission-shaped Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), and *From Anecdote to Evidence*, downloaded from www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from_anecdote_to_evidence_-_the_report.pdf on 14th March 2023.

¹⁰⁹ *Spiritual Capital*, (London: Theos and the Grubb Institute, 2012).

¹¹⁰ For example, https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Cathedral%20Statistics%202017_1.pdf and <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/record-numbers-attend-cathedrals-christmas>, accessed on 26th November 2018.

¹¹¹ *Mission-shaped Church*, p. 73.

¹¹² *Mission-shaped Church*, pp. xi-xiii.

¹¹³ Susan Hope, *Mission-shaped Spirituality*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Hope, *Mission-shaped Spirituality*, p. xi.

¹¹⁵ Mark Rylands 'Mission-shaped cathedrals' in Paul Bayes and Tim Sledge (Editors), *Mission-shaped Parish*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), pp. 122-133.

and growing churches' is seen as a point of strength, whilst the presuppositions of the writer are revealed in the critique of cathedrals as 'worship-shaped churches' (and implicitly not 'mission-shaped' in character). Thus, *Mission-shaped Church* and its companion volumes, one of the most important strategic documents presented to General Synod, that has shaped church strategy for a generation, engage only tangentially with the fundamental characteristics of cathedrals as places that have stimulated significant church growth, not engaging with the spirituality or formation of those at the heart of its liturgical life in anything but a cursory way.

Spiritual Capital and Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals

This report, published in 2012, was significant in providing evidence of the wider spiritual value cathedrals have, noting the spiritual effect that they have as places of prayer and 'the extraordinary power of the choral music',¹¹⁶ with its power to connect in a spiritual manner with those approaching the Church from outside.¹¹⁷ The main focus of this report is on the capacity of cathedral churches to engage in the spirituality of those approaching them from the wider community, and it does note the 'considerable financial investment' that maintains the musical resources essential for their liturgical life.¹¹⁸ The spiritual element of this investment is recognised, with the report identifying that this investment 'not only underpins the choral tradition but contributes to the spiritual development of a new generation'.¹¹⁹ However, the focus remains on those approaching cathedrals from the outside, rather than developing an understanding more fully those who sustain their spiritual life. Responding to this report, Jane Shaw asserts that cathedrals operate in a way that is not captured by the most common ways of understanding and measuring mission (as reflected in *Mission-shaped Church*), but that cathedrals meet the challenges of secularisation in a distinctive way that contributes to the missionary task of the Church.¹²⁰

Building on this wider understanding of the spiritual life of cathedrals is research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, undertaken between 2014 and 2017 that explores cathedrals as places of 'pilgrimage'.¹²¹ Issues identified by this research include the perceived conflicts between the 'multiple identities' cathedrals inhabit, and the resulting necessity to balance the need to retain the 'core role of offering worship' whilst meeting the varied demands cathedrals face as visitor attractions, civic locations and heritage sites.¹²² The case studies central to this project break the idea that the tension between the worshipping life of a cathedral and its spiritual

¹¹⁶ *Spiritual Capital*, p. 28.

¹¹⁷ *Spiritual Capital*, pp. 29-31.

¹¹⁸ *Spiritual Capital*, p. 31.

¹¹⁹ *Spiritual Capital*, p. 31.

¹²⁰ Jane Shaw, 'The Potential of Cathedrals' in *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol. 95, No 1 Winter 2013, pp. 137-147.

¹²¹ *Pilgrimage & England's cathedrals: Past & present*, downloaded from www.pilgrimageandcathedrals.ac.uk on 23rd November 2018.

¹²² *Pilgrimage & England's cathedrals*.

value in welcoming visitors in significant numbers is necessarily oppositional, but highlight that it is possible to engender a creative engagement between these two activities.¹²³ Whilst the focus of both reports is the spiritual importance of cathedrals to the wider community (rather than those involved in their inner spiritual life), it is heartening that they identify and recognise the importance of investment (both financial and spiritual) that is made to the praying, musical communities at their heart, and the contribution this can make to their wider spiritual task.

From Anecdote to Evidence

The Church Growth Research Programme undertaken between 2011 and 2013 represents a further stage of the Church of England's reflection and strategic review.¹²⁴ This programme informed the work of the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners by underpinning decision-making with empirical research.¹²⁵ By contrast to *Mission-shaped Church*, the resulting report, *Anecdote to Evidence* provides an explicit focus on the aspects of growth characterised in cathedrals and greater churches in recent years.¹²⁶ Focusing on evidence available from cathedrals, the report notes the importance of good quality worship and music as drivers for church growth; supported this with evidence gathered both from cathedral deans and the wider survey of worshippers within cathedrals.¹²⁷ Similarities between the ministry of cathedrals and some of the greater parish churches is noted, with particular reference to recently defined 'urban minsters'.¹²⁸ Providing an affirmation of the place that cathedrals, and their worship, have to play within the missional life of the contemporary Church of England, it remains the case that the scale and scope of the research does not result in a detailed examination of the spiritual and theological aspects that might be at play within the 'resident' community of musicians at the heart of the liturgical life of almost all cathedrals.

These reports demonstrate a general focus within recent research on the missional outreach of the Church – reflecting its priority to reach new people. This leads to a focus on numerical growth that can be seen at odds with some of the fundamental understandings of the Anglican spirituality that undergirds the tradition of choral worship within Anglican cathedrals – which places a strong emphasis on the offering of beauty to God, and might be seen to prioritise this over purely numerical attractiveness to others. Whilst such a focus is understandable in considering the report on church-planting (*Mission-shaped Church*), the underlying focus on numerical metrics as a measure of Church success challenges those for whom the focus is on offering worship to God (into

¹²³ *Pilgrimage & England's cathedrals*.

¹²⁴ *Anecdote to Evidence*.

¹²⁵ *Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 5.

¹²⁶ *Anecdote to Evidence*, pp. 21-24.

¹²⁷ *Anecdote to Evidence*, pp. 21-22.

¹²⁸ *Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 24.

which others might be swept up) and for whom numerical attendance is not the prime motivation. In contrast, these reports focus on musical activity for its attractive qualities, measuring its success on the basis of how many people other than the performers are engaged in the act of worship. This exposes a paucity of understanding regarding different spiritual and theological perspectives that underly the methodological approaches of these reports, and this study provides an opportunity to describe the spiritual experience of those involved in musical performance within the worship of cathedrals in the Church of England. In turn, exploring how this experience might be grounded in an underlying theological reality opens a way to articulate a more doxological approach within a Church that is largely focused on a missiological paradigm in its strategic thinking.

2.3b Official reports into cathedral life and church music

For different reasons official reports dealing specifically with cathedrals are also notable by their lack of engagement with those personnel sustaining the musical and liturgical life of cathedrals. An explicit and obvious example is provided by the report of the Working Group on Cathedrals presented to General Synod in 2018. In the introduction, the chairman identifies limits dictated both by limited time and the specific needs it fulfilled;¹²⁹ being instigated to resolve issues of governance and financial support of cathedrals that had been identified in episcopal visitations of two cathedrals.¹³⁰ Building on earlier revisions to governance structures within cathedrals, and a broader trend of reform that has seen cathedral communities change in their nature and emphasis over the last two hundred years. This process of periodic review of the structure of cathedrals, started with reforms of the 1830s/40s, and is marked out more recently by formal Cathedral Commissions established in 1925, 1958 and 1992. The overall shape of reform has been to reduce and redistribute endowments, and restructure the various bodies that constitute the cathedrals community, including creating far more commonality in structure between the parish-church cathedrals and more ancient foundations.¹³¹ The most recent of the commissions mentioned above resulted in legislation, embodied in the Cathedrals Measure 1999,¹³² that initiated a thorough revision of the constitution and statutes of every cathedral within the Church of England (itself presently being overhauled as a result of the 2018 report). These changes are fundamental to

¹²⁹ *Final Report* from the Cathedrals Working Group, downloaded from https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Cathedrals%20Working%20Group%20-%20Final%20Report_0.pdf on 14th April 2023, p. 4, para. 10.

¹³⁰ Visitation Charges for Peterborough and Exeter cathedrals: <http://www.peterborough-cathedral.org.uk/userfiles/bishops-charge.pdf> downloaded on 16th April 2023 and <https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Visitation-Charge.pdf> downloaded on 16th April 2023.

¹³¹ Garth Turner, *Cathedrals and Change in the Twentieth Century: Aspects of the life of the cathedrals of the Church of England with special reference to the Cathedral Commissions of 1925; 1958; 1992*, PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2011, p. 3, downloaded from https://pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/54512293/FULL_TEXT.PDF on 16th April 2023.

¹³² *Cathedrals Measure 1999*, accessed via <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1999/1/contents> on 14th March 2023.

understanding the present-day structures of cathedrals which focus on the governing chapter and the role of residentiary canons within this body, with a far lighter touch when it comes to other members of the historic foundations and their role.

Heritage & Renewal

The report of the 1992 commission, entitled *Heritage and Renewal*,¹³³ offered a summary of the historical background to cathedral reform which suggested that many of the features of cathedral life seen in today's cathedrals are a result of Victorian reinvention,¹³⁴ minimising continuity represented by the body of musical work for the celebration of the choral office that flowered in the years following the Tudor reformations and (notwithstanding the significant break of the Commonwealth) continued to be written for the celebration of the choral liturgy through the subsequent intervening centuries. This is a consequence of the report's focus on a much earlier model – of cathedrals as a focus for the episcopal familia and the teaching ministry of the diocesan bishop,¹³⁵ and alerts us to underlying tensions about the role of cathedrals. A consequence of this approach is that the resulting recommendations focus on these relationships rather than the internal dynamics of the constituent parts of the resident cathedral community.

The historical summary traces the development of the common life of cathedrals;¹³⁶ outlining their development as corporations focused primarily on worship, administration and (where this was the case) the maintenance of a shrine.¹³⁷ The conservative Tudor reformation of cathedrals is noted,¹³⁸ identifying a 1559 Commission's outcome that 'cathedrals were to attend to their duties [i.e. the proper celebration of daily prayer], and to make provision for sound theology'.¹³⁹ *Heritage & Renewal* traces this as a prime purpose of cathedrals through the reforms of 1840 and reports in 1854 and 1855.¹⁴⁰ Having laid these historical foundations, *Heritage & Renewal* plots ways in which the varied functions of a modern cathedral can be brought together – taking as its starting point an statement, taken from the Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990,¹⁴¹ summarising the purpose of cathedrals in a single statement, with their episcopal role foremost:

'[A cathedral is] the seat of the bishop and a centre of worship and mission'¹⁴²

¹³³ *Heritage & Renewal: The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals*, (London: Church House Publishing, 1994).

¹³⁴ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 187.

¹³⁵ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 187.

¹³⁶ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 189.

¹³⁷ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 190.

¹³⁸ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 190-1.

¹³⁹ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁰ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 192-3.

¹⁴¹ *Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990*, accessed via www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1990/2/enacted on 15th March 2023.

¹⁴² *Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990, Article 1.*

From this starting point, the report affirms the importance of ‘provision for the worship and pastoral care of its own community’ alongside its wider role.¹⁴³ Articulating the importance of the cathedral’s life of prayer and worship is stressed, saying that ‘centr[al to] the life of the cathedral is the daily offering of worship and praise – Eucharist, Morning Prayer, and on most days Choral Evensong’;¹⁴⁴ something that provides the ‘spiritual heartbeat’ for the Church not only within the immediate cathedral community but in the wider Church.¹⁴⁵ The report affirms the value of music for ‘its ability to express...better than words, and transcend...barriers’,¹⁴⁶ but does not engage at depth with those involved in its performance within the cathedral. Recognising work of a separate commission reporting on church music,¹⁴⁷ *Heritage and Renewal* affirms that report’s recommendations, including:

- the place of girls within cathedral choirs (something that has been significantly, though not completely, addressed by many cathedrals since the report was written);¹⁴⁸
- recruitment both of choristers and adult singers;¹⁴⁹ and
- the changed role of the Organist (which has become more explicitly that of Director of Music).¹⁵⁰

The value of the musical element of the cathedral foundation is acknowledged as a vital resource that can stimulate others and maintain a spiritual heartbeat. Meanwhile, in reflecting on a cathedral’s mission, the understanding of this part of the community as a worshipping community in its own right is undeveloped, and therefore the implications there might be for those involved remain unexplored.

Much of the report focuses on governance, structure and business aspects of the life of a cathedral, revealing an insight into the perception of the adult singers within the cathedral community by their categorisation as staff¹⁵¹ rather than a part of the residential community, which is instead confined to the residentiary members of chapter. In this respect, it is notable that the place and role of clergy other than residentiary canons is restricted to members of the wider college of canons – ignoring the historic (and enduring) significance of priest vicars/minor canons alongside lay singers.¹⁵² Beyond identifying the role of the cathedral in maintaining a ‘spiritual heartbeat’ within the wider Church, the work of this commission did not provide a deep theological or ecclesiological rationale for these aspects of its life and work.

¹⁴³ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 21-2.

¹⁴⁷ *In tune with heaven*, (London: Church House Publishing and Hodder & Stoughton, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁹ *Heritage & Renewal*, pp. 52-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 55.

¹⁵¹ *Heritage & Renewal*, p. 81.

¹⁵² Appendix A.

In Tune With Heaven

For an explicit treatment of the role of musicians and the issues that surround their work in official church literature, it is necessary to go back to *In Tune With Heaven*, a report made by the Archbishops' Commission on Church Music in 1992.¹⁵³ This includes a section focusing on a theological framework for music and its place in liturgical practice, and includes specific treatment of the place of music in cathedrals. In common with other reports, there is a tendency to focus on common concerns, such as the cathedral tradition and its impact on choice of repertoire, choir schools and choristers (including the then very live issue about equal access for girls as well as boys) as well as issues regarding lay clerks and organists.¹⁵⁴ As is in other writings, there is a tendency to focus on the resources available (especially remuneration and accommodation) rather than looking at the spiritual aspects of the lay clerks' formation and work.¹⁵⁵ However, in its concluding sections, the report returns to the place of cathedrals in the wider musical life of the church. The observation that 'Choral Evensong...has little to offer except beautiful music'¹⁵⁶ now seems anachronistic when the growth of just this service as a spiritual experience for many on the fringes of the church is acknowledged as a positive contribution to the Church's mission (as reported in various mission reports summarised above and in popular literature),¹⁵⁷ whilst also revealing a confusion within the report itself, which elsewhere identifies the regular singing of Evensong as 'an important part of the rhythm of a cathedral's worship' which 'remains enormously popular' and a source of 'prayerful refreshment'.¹⁵⁸ In a positive affirmation of the role of the lay clerk in the cathedral community, lay clerks and choral scholars are identified as 'the most visible expression of the cathedral's music' and that they '**require perhaps more consideration [than] is given to them**'.¹⁵⁹ Again the financial aspects regarding satisfactory remuneration are dealt with, but the deeper motivations that may underlie a lay clerk's commitment to the task of musical performance are implied by the report's recognition of the 'high degree of commitment' and its clear understanding that '[a] layclerkship is not just another job'.¹⁶⁰ In its concluding remarks, the final section dealing with cathedral musicians within the report highlights the need for improved recognition and their full integration with the whole cathedral staff.¹⁶¹

¹⁵³ *In tune with heaven*.

¹⁵⁴ *In tune with heaven*, p. 86-92.

¹⁵⁵ *In tune with heaven*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁶ *In tune with heaven*, p. 216.

¹⁵⁷ For example, Jonathan Arnold. 'Evensong' at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/evensong/>, accessed on 6th October 2023.

¹⁵⁸ *In tune with heaven*, p. 88.

¹⁵⁹ *In tune with heaven*, p. 221.

¹⁶⁰ *In tune with heaven*, p. 221.

¹⁶¹ *In tune with heaven*, p. 227.

Official Church reports and literature: Some initial conclusions

It can be seen that an overriding emphasis in official reports within the Church of England has been mission, and in terms of engagement of cathedrals as institutions this has led to a focus on those areas of their life that interact with the wider community. Where liturgy and music has been the subject of discussion it has invariably been from this perspective. Meanwhile, internal attention has been directed more at matters of governance and financial sustainability. This has led to a relative lack of engagement in the theological and ecclesial issues that may surround the core worshipping body within the statutory foundation of cathedrals, and (in formal terms within the Church of England) a lack of exploration of the theological implications for musical performance in the liturgy.

The scene is set

This chapter has introduced us to the work of lay singers within cathedral and collegiate settings, identifying the range of institutions in which they operate, and the wide range of performance situations that are a part of their normal work. We have traced the origin of their roles within mediaeval collegiate and monastic institutions, and seen something of the institutional and musical developments that contribute to the contemporary context in which they perform. However, each of the five areas of literature covered in this review point towards lacunae when it comes to understanding the spiritual experience of these singers in daily liturgy of the cathedrals of the Church of England and its theological potential:

1. The historical study of lay vicars largely focuses on the development of their institutional roles within their respective environments (secular and monastic cathedrals). Within the most recent papers (from the 2005 conference) this is supplemented by a thorough examination of the social history of the various bodies of lay vicars and the patterns of liturgical practice and musical activity within the liturgy which were the object of their work. However, as is identified within the 2005 collection of papers this leaves an absence when it comes to the spiritual practices of lay singers and the theological understanding of their daily activity.
2. The remaining studies in cathedral music focus on areas that are proximate to but distinctive from the experience of lay singers; namely, significant musical figures (such as organists and composers), choristers (including their education), and the experience of those engaging with acts of worship within the Anglican Choral tradition as either worshippers or listeners.
3. Academic studies relating to cathedral music are focused on distinct musicological areas, historiographical accounts or contemporary concerns, including issues of gender and reception. Although the centrality of the place of music within the worshipping life of cathedrals is clearly articulated within wider literature, it remains the case that the spirituality of those directly involved in its performance remains unexplored. Other more general writing relates to the exploration of musical style or the application of social-science methods to various phenomena within the life of English Cathedrals. However, in none of these cases are the experiences of the lay singers whose activity lies at the heart of the daily rhythm of cathedral worship the focus of study.
4. The Church of England's reports about mission within the life of the Church fail to engage in any depth with the place of lay singers as an integral part of the Church's life of worship and mission. When there is engagement with the

tradition of worship that is characteristic of Anglican cathedrals it is from the perspective of noting the attractive quality of that worship and its capacity to engage with those on the fringes of the life of the Church. However, there is no reflection on the spirituality inherent within the practice of maintaining a daily round of worship for and on behalf of the Church of which the lay singers are such an important part. This leaves the impression that lay singers have a purely functional contribution to make in attracting new worshippers rather than having an integral place within the spiritual and ecclesiological reality of the Church.

5. Reports into cathedral life generally exhibit a focus away from the spiritual experience of singers within the institutions of which they are a part, with their dominant focus being on governance and structural reform – something that was explicitly stated in the most recent report. Of the previous reports relating to cathedral the *Heritage and Renewal* articulated the centrality of the daily round of prayer and worship and the distinctive place of choral music within this, whilst *In tune with heaven* provides a (sometimes ambiguous) engagement with the spirituality and theology of cathedral worship whilst noting that more work on understanding this is required. However, in both reports the then contentious issue of gender relating to the younger singers and the financial issues of the terms under which adult lay singers dominate over discussion of the underlying spirituality and theology of their work.

Given the paucity of information in literature about the particular role of the lay clerk, and an especial absence of a detailed consideration of the spiritual and theological perspectives, this is a potentially rich area for engagement. From all of this come some key questions:

- what is the spiritual experience of the singers themselves, and how this might reflect their vicarious role in singing God's praises on behalf of the wider Church?
- what is the nature of spiritual and theological engagement in music by these singers, and how might this relate to the wider theological venture of the Church in revealing, making known and exploring the nature of God?
- what role does the Church understand the singers in its cathedrals are performing, given that it so infrequently deals with their place in cathedral foundations?

In Parts 2 and 3 of this study these questions are explored within the overarching question of what is the spiritual experience of lay singers within cathedral choirs, and what might be the theological potential of their activity? In the course of answering this question, a range of further literature will be drawn upon – most notably in the exploration of the theological implications of music and the institutional and historical context within which these singers perform. By focusing on the

experience of singers articulated in the first two questions (in terms of the experience of singers, and the spiritual and theological character of their performances) the study seeks to offer something of substance to answer the third question; helping the wider Church of England to understand the potential spiritual and theological content of the music performed by lay singers within its cathedral choirs. This chapter has examined the scope of existing research and study of lay singers within cathedral settings. This has identified some of the limitations of research in this area, and the manner that official Church reports leave aside consideration the corporate spiritual identity and formation of lay singers. The next chapter outlines the methodological approach that will be taken in this study, before we return in Part 2 to a description of the experiences of these singers in more detail.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Within the overall shape of this research, there are two clear research strategies at work: empirical data collection, which is placed in dialogue with the resources of theological understanding (doctrinal theology, ecclesiology and ecclesiastical history). Each of these brings different viewpoints on the single issue of the spiritual experience of singers in the liturgy and, once merged, articulates the theological potential of musical performance. The context in which these different categories of information are integrated is twofold: (i) by way of case studies to explore both the varieties of choral foundation present within the Church of England and the individual experiences of singers within these institutions; and (ii) by looking at themes arising across the case studies relating to the prime question: 'What (if any) is the spiritual experience of singers within the liturgy, and what is the theological potential of their performances?'.

This study is, by its nature, interdisciplinary and located at the intersection of the academic disciplines of music and theology – having at its core the spiritual and theological responses of musicians within a liturgical ecclesial context. However, given the varied ways in which these two aspects of the study could relate to each other, it is necessary to locate it more precisely within these disciplines. Following the pattern suggested by Denscombe, this chapter outlines the research strategies adopted, leading to an exploration of the particular methods to be used in the research and the means by which analysis of data will take place.¹⁶² In order to set the context, the chapter begins with an outline of the general academic fields within which this study is situated.

The overall shape of this study is based on the well-practiced pattern of the pastoral cycle (Experience→Reflection→Learning→Action),¹⁶³ and takes into account the challenge addressed by Pete Ward, that Practical Theology needs to be a discipline 'that takes both practice and theology seriously'.¹⁶⁴ To this end the results of the empirical study are thematically outlined in Part 2 of the study (which constitutes a description of the Experience phase of the cycle). In the course of this it is apparent that the descriptions of the experiences of singing within the liturgical setting of cathedrals operate at both personal and corporate levels, and echoing Packiam's use of Stringer's theory of individual, communal and official layers of discourse,¹⁶⁵ Part 3 offers an approach to analysing these experiences using the insights of doctrinal theology (to explore the implicit theologies contained in the accounts provided by the participants), ecclesiology (examining

¹⁶² Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, (London: Open University Press, 2017), pp.361-363.

¹⁶³ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), pp. 96-102.

¹⁶⁴ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Stringer, described in Glenn Packiam, 'Worship' in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), p. 324.

possible institutional factors that may shape their understanding) and ecclesiastical history (providing an overview of the context within which their activity has developed and continues to take place). In this manner, Part 3 constitutes the Reflection phase of the pastoral cycle – leading to the learning that is summarised in the Conclusion to this study and which may shape understanding of the practice. In making connections between the understanding expressed by the participants and the ways that this may be shaped by institutional and historical factors attention is paid to Pattison and Browning's concept of correlation when making connections between expressed understanding and theological, institutional and historical contexts of Anglican worship of cathedrals within the data, as described by Brittain.¹⁶⁶ As will be noted in the conclusion, whilst there is evidence of correlation between the empirical data and the insights gained from theological disciplines, further work would be required before it could be asserted that these are causal in nature.

¹⁶⁶ Christopher Brittain, 'Anglo-American Practical Theology' in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), p. 293.

3.1. Conceptual Framework: Implicit, or Lived Theology within an ethnomusicological context – the need for theological tools

At face value the substance of this study appears to relate to the musical content of performances within liturgical settings, and it would seem obvious therefore to adopt a musicological or ethnomusicological methodological approach. However, its focus on the spiritual experience of the participants, and the implicit theological content that they understand to be present in their performances, calls for a methodological approach that goes beyond the theological neutrality that is normally adopted within these disciplines. The presence of these theological assumptions within an otherwise ethnomusicological context represents a need for theological tools, taking this study into the territory of Practical Theology.

Practical Theology tends towards inductive methods that start from experience and analyse this in order to derive both concepts and theories to bring theological insight to a situation, and thereby shape future praxis.¹⁶⁷ This is exemplified in the now somewhat dated (but still in use within ministerial formation) text by Laurie Green; putting the pastoral cycle at the centre of the theological process.¹⁶⁸ Whilst this is a single example, it is representative of a process that is common within less mature expressions of Practical Theology; being fundamental to approaches such as, and is a distinctive feature of Liberation Theology,¹⁶⁹ and more subtly present in the approaches of theologians such as Rahner and Schillebeeckx.¹⁷⁰ In these forms, Practical Theology has been open to criticism that its methodological tendency toward the social sciences leads to the conclusion that any theological method founded on purely secular methods has an inevitable tendency to de-theologise many attempts to undertake Practical Theology as a result of their secular methodological foundations.¹⁷¹

In response to these criticisms, recent writing in the field of Practical Theology has sought to maintain a necessary tension between the practical and conceptual elements so that full attention is paid to both the experiential elements and their theological import; a relationship that has been categorised as ‘an uneasy relationship’.¹⁷² One such approach is found in Healy’s work within the

¹⁶⁷ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SCM Press, 2016), p. 89-92.

¹⁶⁸ Laurie Green, *Let’s do theology: a pastoral cycle resource book*, (London: Continuum, 2004), pp.25ff.

¹⁶⁹ Rebecca S. Chopp and Ethna Regan, ‘Latin American Liberation Theology’ in David Ford with Rachel Muers (Editors), *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian theology since 1918*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

¹⁷⁰ For comment on this see Tracey Rowlands, *Catholic Theology*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017) and Robin Gill, *Theology Shaped by Society: Sociological Theology*, Volume 2, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 69-72.

¹⁷¹ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond secular reason*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

¹⁷² Pete Ward, ‘Theology and Qualitative Research: An uneasy relationship’ in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), pp. 7-15.

field of Catholic theology which proposes that a gap has arisen between a 'general ecclesiology' that has become 'highly systematic and theoretical' and the reality of the 'living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is'.¹⁷³ In his reflections in the field of ecclesiology, Healy seeks to 'reconfigure the discipline' so that it becomes 'more of a practical and prophetic discipline than a speculative and systematic one' in order to bridge this gap between theoretical, doctrinal theology and the lived reality of the church.¹⁷⁴ In this, we find an approach in which the Church can 'reflect theologically and critically upon its concrete identity'.¹⁷⁵ Drawing on the theo-dramatic theory of von Balthasar and critiquing the universalising tendency of Rahner's theological method, he highlights a way of undertaking the task of theology that 'permits the church to absorb the world into its horizon' without losing a sense of its own 'concrete' reality, with a resulting approach that, in paying attention to both context and theological truth, seeks to be 'thoroughly theological yet oriented toward the concrete church'.¹⁷⁶

Pete Ward, noting the criticisms levelled at Practical Theology, offers an explicit restatement of the discipline of Practical Theology by outlining methodological developments that are rooted not just in reflection on experience, but a broader attention to a relationship 'that takes both practice and theology seriously'.¹⁷⁷ Of importance to this study is his observation that two different approaches to the theological task – doctrinal and experiential – need to be considered together and that 'both should be regarded as possible ways of approaching the discipline'.¹⁷⁸ Drawing this approach into the context of exploring the meaning of musical performance in a specific liturgical context, this study seeks to use the methodological tools of Practical Theology to concretise the experiences of lay singers, articulate its explicit and implicit theological underpinning and to explore this theological potential. The importance of paying attention to praxis in the overall theological venture of the Church is stressed by Swinton who, in an article on the theological limits of qualitative research,¹⁷⁹ explores the way that the subjective understanding of what people have experienced or understood of God is different from actual knowledge of God, but has a valuable role where

theological insights that are gained through the process are brought into constructive conversation with theology that is developed using other

¹⁷³ Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁵ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁶ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, p. 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ John Swinton, 'Empirical research, Theological Limits, and Possibilities' in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), pp. 81-90.

methods, in the hope that the theological enterprise as a whole can throw fresh light on the knowledge of God.¹⁸⁰

In seeking to integrate these different ways of doing theology, this study starts from the concept articulated by Ward, that Practical Theology should pay full attention to both practice and theology, the material gained through the empirical research is analysed so as to identify its spiritual effect on performers, any theological value they identify within it and their perception of the spiritual and theological value that their performances have on others. In this way, the implicit theological content of the musical performances is expressed in concrete terms; here the study draws on the ideas relating to Implicit Theology as expressed by Martyn Percy:

On the one hand, [implicit theology] is examining the basic-but-nascent theological habits...that more properly account for the daily life of churches, congregations and denominations. On the other, it is guessing at the hidden meanings in structures that on the surface appear to be benign and innocent. Fundamentally, the invitation to engage in the exploration of implicit theology is centred on the premise that not everything that shapes the church can be or is plainly expressed.¹⁸¹

In the context of this study, this places the focus on the implicit theological habits of those involved in singing within the liturgical context of Anglican cathedrals whilst looking below the surface to explore the oft unexpressed meaning of the musical performance, and voicing this as plainly as possible. It will be seen in the course of the study that this results in layers of theological understanding that operate at both personal and corporate levels. In approaching this, the study draws on the categories that Packiam appropriates from Stringer of 'individual discourse', 'communal discourse', and 'official discourse' in order to understand the way in which multiple understandings of the meaning of musical experience are understood by those involved in their performance.¹⁸² This identification of multiple levels of theological discourse lead back to a consideration of the balance that is achieved between personal experience (individual discourse) and dogmatic or doctrinal theology (official discourse) – the very issue at the heart of the criticism of Practical Theological by writers such as Milbank and Webster.¹⁸³ In response to this difficulty, this study adopts a position reflecting Brittain's assertion that 'the two poles of the dialogical interaction – social science and theology – are regarded as equal partners in the pursuit of truth.'¹⁸⁴ With this in mind, this study seeks to place qualitative data in dialogue with other forms of theology in a way that seeks to establish correlations between personal, communal and official/institutional patterns of understanding. In this way, the qualitative data provides a means by which to identify

¹⁸⁰ Swinton, 'Empirical research, Theological Limits, and Possibilities', p.82.

¹⁸¹ Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 2.

¹⁸² Glenn Packiam, 'Worship' in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), p. 324.

¹⁸³ Milbank and Webster cited in Brittain, 'Anglo-American Practical Theology', p. 292.

¹⁸⁴ Brittain, 'Anglo-American Practical Theology', p. 293.

the ways in which lived experience of lay singers correlates with more traditionally conceived knowledge in the fields of doctrinal theology, ecclesiology and ecclesiastical history. In the course of the study, it will be seen that the data gathered counters the critique that is often made of this approach, that it 'renders theology with the mere task of responding to a description of the world', by demonstrating the ways in which the experiences of the singers are shaped by the underlying ecclesiological culture and historically grounded context within which they sing.¹⁸⁵

Alongside identifying implicit and explicit theological patterns of understanding at both individual and corporate levels, Part 3 integrates these within a framework that pays full attention not only to the insights of doctrinal theological understanding but also to the institutional context of the activity (ecclesiology) and the historically contingent context within which praxis has developed (ecclesiastical history). In looking at the potential difference between 'universal norms and the local details of an situation which ethnography explores',¹⁸⁶ Fiddes observes that 'when the story of a particular community is examined by qualitative methods, the gaps between norm and empirical actuality, and the tensions existing between norms, are exposed and revelation can happen'.¹⁸⁷ Brouwer responds to these tensions within the realm of ecclesiology by drawing on the earlier work of Healy to reiterate the ecclesiological implications of comparisons of the concrete lived reality of Church life expressed within a qualitative study and the 'blueprint ecclesiology' that might be generated by other theological disciplines.¹⁸⁸ Brouwer highlights the manner in which the knowledge of the lived life of the concrete church and its points of divergence from the 'idealization' of dogmatic theology can be a means by which 'ethnographical methods and research tools expose ecclesiology to the experiences of God's children'.¹⁸⁹ Taking these prompts from both Fiddes and Brouwer, Part 3 seeks to understand the way in which the experience of lay singers can be seen as theologically informed, and how the experiences of lay singers may correlate to the theological, institutional and historical context within which they sing.

The resulting study is multidisciplinary in nature; bringing empirical, qualitative research into the experiences of lay singers into dialogue with the insights of both Doctrinal Theology (regarding the theological content of these experiences) and Ecclesiastical History (in terms of the way that these experiences arise within the context of institutions that are shaped by historical context). Using a

¹⁸⁵ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p. 83, cited in Christopher Craig Brittain, 'Anglo-American Practical Theology', p. 293.

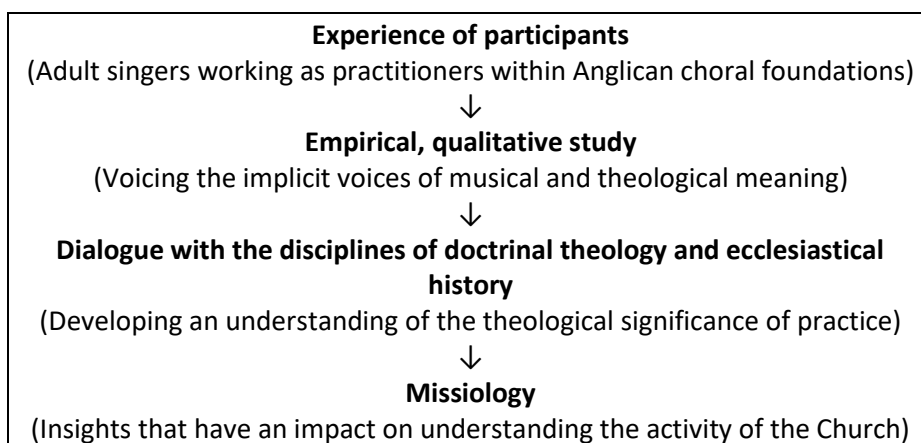
¹⁸⁶ Paul Fiddes, 'Revelation and Normativity' in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), p. 121.

¹⁸⁷ Fiddes, 'Revelation and Normativity', p. 122.

¹⁸⁸ Rein Brouwer, 'Ecclesiology: The Study of the Formal Church', in Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Editors), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), pp. 212.

¹⁸⁹ Brouwer, 'Ecclesiology: The Study of the Formal Church', p. 216.

methodological framework drawn from the discipline of Practical Theology, the study contributes to the Musicological understanding of what music might mean from a theologically informed perspective and offers a parallel contribution to the field of Missiology by informing practice through a deeper understanding of the spiritual effect and theological potential of musical performance in liturgical settings.



3.2. Research Structure: Overall structure of the study

The project is shaped by the aim of drawing the understanding of musicians alongside the ecclesiastical understanding of music in the liturgy – as understood from theological, ecclesiological (institutional) and historical perspectives. The result is a multi-faceted approach to research design so that these areas can be explored and brought into dialogue with each other. This results in two distinct areas being present within this study: (i) the individual experiences of musicians, which are the subject of empirical study; and (ii) the institutional and historical development of cathedral choirs within the wider Church, an area requiring a documentary approach.

The first of these areas was explored by the informal gathering of data to identify broad themes within the experience of lay singers. This was followed by semi-structured one-to-one interviews as the data source for further detailed exploration. Whilst illusory to assert that any method is ideologically neutral, the use of ethnographic techniques aims to provide a descriptive account of musicians' experiences of performing in the liturgy (see 2.1 and Part 2). Meanwhile the institutional understanding has been built up using a series of approaches, drawing on historical, ecclesiological and theological resources (primarily within the Anglican tradition).

Exploring the application of varied approaches to investigate the same issue led to the consideration of ethnographic, phenomenological and grounded theory approaches, placed alongside documentary and historiographical approaches in the context of a Mixed Methods study. This results in a triangulation that brings together:

- the experience of individuals working within Anglican choral foundations;
- the implied theological imperatives within Anglican theology; and
- the institutional history of choral foundations and their functional purpose.

This combination of approaches reflects the complex institutional context within which the performance of music in the liturgical setting of cathedrals is placed. In drawing together these varied influences, the study pays attention to the idea of 'Lived Theology' articulated by Ward which encourages practical approaches to theology to draw together insights from a variety of approaches alongside exploration of practice.

The methodological approach of this study in summary:

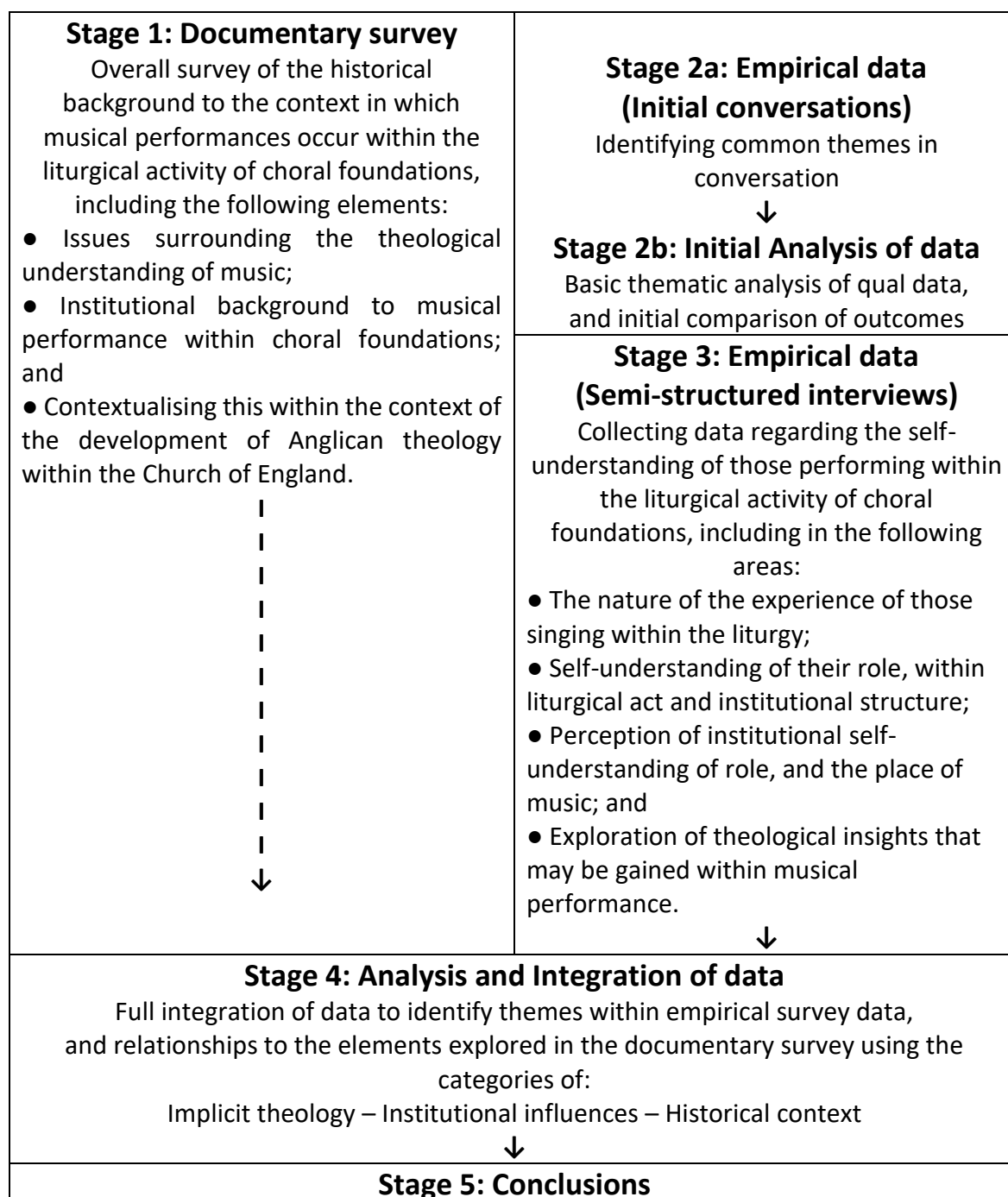
Reflecting the triangulated approach outlined above, the research takes the following steps which are represented in tabular form in Table 1:

1. An initial gathering of data recounting the experience of singers within the liturgical activity of the cathedral choirs of the Church of England was subjected to a thematic analysis, paying especial attention to its spiritual or theological content.

2. On the basis of this thematic analysis, more in-depth interviews explored the themes identified in the informal phase of data gathering.
3. The data was examined within a framework that draws on the Anglican theological and spiritual tradition, paying attention to:
 - a. the implicit theological content contained within the narratives provided by the participants of this study;
 - b. the institutional structures that influence the context within the activity takes place; and
 - c. the ways in which historical development may have conditioned both the theological content and institutional context of the activity undertaken by singers within the liturgy.

The resulting material provides an examination of the way in which the (implicit) theological experience of singers within the liturgy relates to the institutional structures and historical context of their work. This addresses the question as to how we can better understand the work of singers in the context of the liturgical life of the Church, and contribute to an increased understanding of the theological nature of musical understanding that arises within their performances.

Table 1: Overall shape of the research¹⁹⁰



¹⁹⁰ John W. Cresswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2015), p. 39

3.3. Empirical methods, Data gathering and Analysis

The location of this study within the paired fields of Practical Theology and Musicology suggests a largely qualitative approach to the empirical element of the study. Noting Denscombe's caution that most empirical studies stray beyond the strict confines of one single paradigm of research, this study takes a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm as a means to understand and interpret the complex reality of the experiences singers may have in the context of liturgical performance.¹⁹¹ This approach is justified by the desire to create a descriptive account of the experience of those performing music within the setting of liturgical performance. Given the lack of comprehensive previous studies, and the consequent lack of existing data or theoretical frameworks, the key aim of this part of the study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of these people through an ethnographic approach, reflecting the 'routine life' approach outlined by Denscombe.¹⁹² This allows the creation of an account of the experiences of singers and the context in which they sing to be established which can then, from this ethnographic base, be placed alongside theological, ecclesiological and historical resources of the Anglican theological and spiritual tradition within the Church of England.

In discussing approaches to ethnography, Gobo and Marciniak highlight three common features of ethnographic research: participant observation, fieldwork and case study.¹⁹³ Commenting that the use of the term ethnography has been progressively stretched, and in the process been emptied of some of its meaning, they reclaim the prime focus on participant observation as distinctive of ethnographic study. There are two reasons why such an approach is not the most appropriate in this study: firstly, the highly specialised nature of the role of lay singers creates a barrier to entry for the researcher, and secondly the tightly drawn focus of the research question, which means that a conventional long-term approach may produce significant amounts of irrelevant data. In this context a researcher could spend significant amounts of time observing the activity of liturgical music without accessing any data regarding the experience of performers within the context. For this reason, I have adopted the slightly broader definition outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson, who state that ethnography involves 'gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of enquiry'.¹⁹⁴ With this in mind, and in the light of similar decisions (though made for different reasons) described by Swinton and Mowatt,¹⁹⁵ my research

¹⁹¹ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁹² Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p. 85.

¹⁹³ Giampietro Gobo and Lukas T. Marciniak, 'What is Ethnography?' in David Silverman (Editor), *Qualitative Research*, (London: SAGE, 2011), p. 104.

¹⁹⁴ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p. 161.

process focuses on the accounts of individuals regarding their experience of the spiritual content to their activity and the theological potential these performances may have.

Whilst using observation and interviews to gather data, in some ways they are constituent parts of a series of three case studies which reflect the different types of institution within which the Anglican Choral tradition operates (historic cathedrals, parish-church cathedrals and academic choral foundations). Following Denscombe's outline of the appropriate features for a case study, the focus on these institutions provides a series of short case studies that are naturally occurring settings with defined boundaries.¹⁹⁶ Again, Denscombe's criteria for a case study are fulfilled with this study's focus on depth of engagement regarding the relationship a number of individuals have to their activity within a specific organisation.¹⁹⁷ In order to gain sufficiently deep insights, multiple methods of data gathering are employed to gain sufficient detail.¹⁹⁸ The appropriateness of this approach was verified by a consideration of Creswell's analysis of five approaches to qualitative inquiry, in which he describes the characteristics of a case study as 'developing an in-depth description and analysis of...multiple cases' involving studying 'an event, program, activity, or more than one individual' in order to provide 'an in-depth understanding [of the case]'.¹⁹⁹ These requirements are fulfilled by this study's aim of providing an in-depth exploration of the activity of lay singers in the context of Anglican choral foundations. It also meets Creswell's final criteria for a case study, of drawing on other disciplines, through its engagement with theological, ecclesiological and historical resources.²⁰⁰

Within each case study there are three elements to capturing data: my own observations of attending liturgical services at three institutions; informal conversations with musicians during the course of the observation visits; and more detailed one-to-one interviews with participants exploring in more depth the commonly arising themes.

Sampling: The selection of institutions and participants

The selection of the locations for the initial observations and group conversations was undertaken in a way that provided a cross-section of the different types of institution.²⁰¹ The institutions, selected on the basis of purposive sampling, included one historical cathedral foundation, one parish-church cathedral and one academic college. The fact that many singers had sung in multiple settings during their career meant that a much wider range of institutions were represented within

¹⁹⁶ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p.56.

¹⁹⁷ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁸ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p.58.

¹⁹⁹ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, (London: Sage, 2017), p. 104..

²⁰⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p. 104.

²⁰¹ See Introduction and Appendix A.

their combined experience. This means that within the compass of the 30 participants at this first stage, there were experiences of 22 directly relevant institutions; these encompassed historic cathedrals (both old and new foundation), parish-church cathedrals and academic colleges. In addition, choral experiences within a church setting also included individuals who had sung in a wide range of parish churches and some singers who also had experience of singing in Roman Catholic cathedrals within England and Wales as well as Anglican cathedrals in Scotland and Wales. Therefore, although only three institutions were selected, the breakdown of experience presented in Appendix C shows that the selected institutions acted as gateways to a group of people who represented a much broader range of experiences in choral settings.

At the individual interview stage participant self-selection was reviewed to ensure that this range of experience was replicated within the much smaller selection of participants. Whilst the participants self-selected, they remain representative of the wider grouping involved in the initial conversations. However, whilst this broader representation has been assured, the process of selection by participants volunteering does introduce the possibility of some motivational bias within the selected group. However, the level and depth of engagement that resulted from this voluntarist approach to selection and the richness of material gained as a result balances any bias that may be present.

Gaining access

Whilst some commentators regard access to enable research to take place to be sometimes difficult and often challenging,²⁰² the initial stages of gaining access were marked by a sense of openness from both institutional gatekeepers and individual participants. This may be due to my own status as someone who is both an active church musician and an ordained minister (thus bridging the gap between musician and cleric). However, this might also reveal something that is itself of note; that positive engagement with the issues might reflect a desire on the part of participants and gatekeepers to understand more about the relationship between music in liturgy, spirituality and theology. Permission was given by institutional gatekeepers in each location to seek voluntary participation of members of their institutions subject to ethical approval by the university and participants came forward willingly at both stages of the empirical survey.

²⁰² For example, Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 425 and Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 41.

Data gathering: Observation and initial conversations

The first stage of practical research involved attending services at the three selected institutions and, with permission from institutional gatekeepers having informal conversations with a range of individuals singing within these contexts. As well as providing the researcher with an understanding of the context within which singers perform, this initial stage of research provided an opportunity to identify common themes and concerns within the experience of the singers – thus helping to focus the semi-structured interviews that provide the central source of empirical data within this study. The descriptions of the liturgical events that arose from these visits has already been encountered in the introductory material of this survey (Section 1.2.1, whilst the range of themes covered in the conversations can be found in Appendix D). This basic thematic analysis identified 18 first level themes. These were then grouped according to their prevalence, with those themes that recurred in all (or a significant number of conversations then being grouped into five higher level themes that helped to shape the semi-structured interviews which form the main source of data for analysis within this study.

Data gathering: Semi-structured interviews

The format of the interviews has been adopted in order to reflect the qualitative nature of this aspect of the study – seeking to establish the nature of singers' experiences whilst performing in liturgical contexts and to explore the potential this has both in terms of spirituality and theological development. It is acknowledged that such an interview is likely to be less structured than its quantitative counterpart,²⁰³ and in order to obtain readily analysable material which can be justified in terms of reliability and validity a semi-structured approach is proposed.²⁰⁴ Whilst the use of unstructured interviews would be possible, and would allow in depth exploration of issues relating to an individual, there are factors that militate against this approach. Although flexibility and depth are important, adopting a semi-structured approach, utilising the themes arising at the informal data gathering stage to shape the interviews, will help to retain focus on the specific area of study and provide comparable data between individuals (and institutions).²⁰⁵

In order to provide structure to the research process, an interview guide was employed. This provided key themes for discussion (driven by the common themes arising at the informal stage of data gathering). Each interview was recorded to allow transcription and analysis. The interview guide and more general aspects of the interview process were subject to piloting with individuals outside the main sample sets (i.e. they were not individuals within the case study institutions), but with characteristics that allow direct comparability (i.e. they were individuals who sing in liturgical

²⁰³ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 466.

²⁰⁴ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 467.

²⁰⁵ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 469.

settings). The data gained in these pilot interviews is not included in the data used within this study. The fact that the interview process can itself be a creative process in which knowledge and understanding will be co-created means that careful attention needs to be paid to reflexivity, a consideration discussed separately below.

Data analysis: Initial conversations and Semi-structured interviews

The collection of data has been undertaken in order to obtain an in-depth description of the experience that lay singers have of their activity. In order to do this, the main analytical approach adopted is thematic analysis of the data. Prior to making this decision three methodologies were considered, drawing on summaries provided by Bryman:

- (i) Grounded theory;
- (ii) Analytic induction; and
- (iii) Thematic analysis.

Whilst a grounded theory approach might be adapted to fulfil the requirements of this study, its overarching aim of unifying theory through a process of phased development of a theoretical framework can lead to an inability to reflect the diversity of experiences that are present in the data by seeking to unify it into a single theory.²⁰⁶ Similarly, analytic induction, whilst providing a rigorous process for developing theory, does not readily allow for divergent cases.²⁰⁷ As is acknowledged by Hammersley and Atkinson, the desire within ethnography to provide naturalistic accounts of experience can run counter to approaches, such as analytic induction, which have an underlying acceptance of underlying deterministic laws.²⁰⁸ For these reasons, thematic analysis was adopted in processing the data arising from the empirical research. By identifying themes rather than developing a single theory attention is paid to the full range of experiences encountered in the research process – reflecting the framework for understanding adopted from Swinton and Mowat.²⁰⁹ The resulting production of a series of themes from the empirical study will allow interaction between this data and the themes that arise from the documentary research into the historical, ecclesiological and theological background to the liturgical performance of choral music in the Anglican tradition.

Bryman notes that, whilst being identified in a wide range of research,²¹⁰ thematic analysis has no ‘identifiable heritage’ and is not defined ‘in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques’.²¹¹ This disciplinary pliability is reinforced when looking at Rapley who explores a number of different

²⁰⁶ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, pp. 575-6.

²⁰⁷ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, pp. 571-2.

²⁰⁸ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, pp. 185-8.

²⁰⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, pp. 70-1.

²¹⁰ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 585.

²¹¹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 584.

analytic approaches in comparison with each other.²¹² Whilst considering a number of approaches,²¹³ the process of Content Analysis outlined by Denscombe was used as a template for analysis.²¹⁴ Denscombe's description (in italics) is followed by my own actions:

1. *Choose an appropriate sample of texts or images.* The complete transcripts of the interviews were analysed, with the considerations for sampling as outlined above.
2. *Break the text down into smaller component units.* The recordings and transcripts were reviewed so that there was a familiarity with their overall content. It was broken down into smaller units (normally sentences or short paragraphs sharing a sense of understanding).
3. *Develop relevant categories for analysing the data.* The categories for analysis were generated from the initial group conversations and grouped according to frequency of use into five higher-level themes.
4. *Code the units in line with the categories.* The materials were coded using the first level themes identified in the informal conversations during the observation phase of data-gathering.
5. *Count the frequency with which these units occur.* Occurrences were tabulated and grouped according to frequency.
6. *Analyse the text in terms of the frequency of the units and their relationship with other units.* The material, consolidated and grouped according to the higher-level themes formed the basis for the written-up presentation of data.

The results of this thematic content analysis are presented in Part 2 of this study.

Placing the data in dialogue: Empirical and documentary perspectives

In talking of Mixed Method approaches, Creswell observes that any study that involves the integration of two different types of data must pay particular attention to the process by which these are either integrated or placed in dialogue with each other.²¹⁵ Whilst this study is multimethod (rather than mixed method) in nature, some of Creswell's insights regarding the integration of data are, nonetheless, apposite.²¹⁶ Creswell identifies four ways in which data might be 'mixed': (i) merging; (ii) explanation; (iii) building; and (iv) embedding.²¹⁷ This study seeks to merge the two forms of data; bringing together and comparing the data from each source – the empirical study and the documentary resources of doctrinal theology, ecclesiology and ecclesiastical history.

²¹² Tim Rapley, 'Some Pragmatics of Qualitative Data Analysis' in David Silverman (Editor), *Qualitative Research*, (London: SAGE, 2011), p. 333.

²¹³ For example, Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, pp. 587-8.

²¹⁴ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p. 313.

²¹⁵ Creswell, *Mixed Methods*, pp.6-7.

²¹⁶ Creswell, *Mixed Methods*, p. 3.

²¹⁷ Creswell, *Mixed Methods*, p. 83.

The central interpretive key in this process (which forms Part 3 of the study) is structured around three aspects identified as central to an Anglican theological approach to theological method:

- implicit theological content;
- institutional structures within which this theology is enacted; and
- the historical context in which these aspects of theological practice and understanding have been formed.

In this way a theologically informed approach to the analysis and interpretation of the material provides direction to the musicological task is brought to bear on material that has been generated in an intrinsically spiritual (and intentionally theological) context. Nonetheless, as will be seen from the examination of the data, the emergence of both corporate and individual approaches to theological (or spiritual) interpretation allow for the diversity of theological voices to speak with more clarity.

By this two-stage process (simple thematic analysis of broad themes within the primary data collected in this study, then interpreted within a framework that is founded on a definably Anglican approach to theology) this study seeks to identify extent to which the experiences of those singing within the liturgical life of the cathedrals of the Church of England, and their own theological perceptions within this, correlate to the institutional expectations of their activity. Using Healy's language, this study seeks to identify the 'concrete' reality experienced by practitioners within the church and explore the extent to which the implicit theological understanding and perceptions of those involved reflect the institutional, 'blueprint' patterns of the institutions (and the inherited, historically-conditioned spiritual and theological 'norms' within which these institutions operate). By exploring both the implicit theology of practitioners and the institutional frameworks within which they work in relation to the historical context in which they have been formed (and continue to function) the study seeks to articulate more clearly the triangulation that exists between personal practice, institutional activity and the historically grounded development of an Anglican spiritual and theological sensibility.

Summary of methods

The empirical data included within this study includes data collected in two distinct phases: firstly, in the general observations gathered in the course of initial visits, which included group conversations with those involved in the activity of singing within the liturgy; and, secondly, the information gathered in more in-depth one-to-one interviews. In the first stage, three representative foundations were visited (one historic cathedral, one 'parish-church' cathedral, and one academic foundation) and the group conversations included, in groups of varying sizes, 30 participants. The second phase of research focused on seven participants who were selected to

encompass the range of views and approaches apparent from the observations of the first phase. The first phase of research contributed the general pictures presented in section 2.1, whilst the general themes that arose from the group conversations at this stage fed into the areas covered in the more detailed interviews. Details of these themes, and the nature of the experience that participants at each stage contributed is summarised in Appendices C and D.

3.4. Reflexivity and ethics

My role as researcher

As outlined above, my role does not extend to that of a participant observer embedded within the setting for an extended period of time. Whilst taking place over relatively short periods of time (the longest visit being less than a week) I did not participate fully alongside the singers in the core activity of their singing – this being neither appropriate nor necessary given the methodology adopted. However, I did participate to a lesser degree by attending worship within which the singers are active, and can therefore place myself in the category of ‘non-participating observer with interaction’ identified by Bryman.²¹⁸ The fundamental role of participating in this way is not to generate primary data, but to enable the gathering of data by means of interviewing by creating a common shared experience and starting point for exploration – a justification for participant status that is not often mentioned in literature regarding ethnographic research. This reflects the fact that most of my data was gained through participant interviews, which are complemented by minimal observations.²¹⁹

In the context of interviewing, my own background as both musician and minister provided both an immediate touching point with, and means for divergence from, the experience of those being interviewed – I could speak as a fellow musician whilst also bringing the different perspective of the ordained minister. Whilst raising some potential issues in terms of reflexivity, this double status was of value in enabling me to find both a point of rapport with and easy frame of reference in relation to those being interviewed. However, issues of reflexivity and the wider ethical issues of interviewing needed consideration.

Reflexivity

Whilst reflexivity has been described as a ‘slippery concept’,²²⁰ it is nonetheless an important element in establishing the validity of the data and the extent to which an impartial approach has been taken to the collection and analysis of data. In defining this, Hammersley and Atkinson make it clear that, while not asking researchers to put their personal convictions aside, it should be ‘insist[ed] that as researchers their primary goal must always be to produce knowledge, and that they should try to minimize and distortion of the findings by their political convictions or practical interests’.²²¹ In this respect, it is clear that my institutional role as an ordained minister needs to be recognised alongside my own personal experience of the importance of music in both spiritual and theological terms. In this light, it is clear I did not enter the research process as a disinterested,

²¹⁸ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 437.

²¹⁹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 437.

²²⁰ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 388.

²²¹ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, p. 18.

external observer – but rather as someone for whom the interaction of music, spirituality and theology are of both personal and professional interest. While being transparent about my status, through the information given to participants, the potential of my role as an ordained minister to distort the process of data collection was mitigated by the selection of institutions with which I had no previous institutional role and in aspects such as dress and personal presentation I was careful not to adopt the distinctive markers of an ordained minister (such as clerical dress).

Whilst the institutional matter of my position as an ordained minister was mitigated by undertaking the research in institutions with which I had no direct connection, my dual personality as both musician and theologian offers a more problematic issue in terms of reflexivity. This arises from the natural process by which knowledge can be co-constructed within semi-structured interviews. This is of particular importance as my own overlapping areas of knowledge (in music and theology) offer a mechanism by which a singer might develop new understandings of their musical performances in terms of spirituality or theology which were not available to them prior to the interactions taking place within the context of the research. Of course, in one way this is an important part of the research process – revealing new depths of meaning to existing practical activity. It is clear that this process is open to misinterpretation, and something to which I had to pay conscious attention to both in the conduct of interviews and in their subsequent analysis:

- (a) The key means of balancing the almost inevitable co-construction of knowledge through the process of semi-structured interview with an analytic and interpretive framework is in the design of the process for gathering and analysing the research data.
- (b) An important consideration in the structure of interviews in giving priority to the experience of participants in relation to their musical performance before the exploration of this meaning, and the development of any new insights takes place.

In addition, it was important that my own background was shared with participants so that they are aware of this process by which meaning may be co-constructed in the interview process. As with identifying my status as an ordained minister, this was made clear in the Information Sheet given to participants.

Ethics of interviewing

A number of ethical considerations naturally came into play regarding interviewing individuals, including gaining informed consent, and ensuring the security of recordings of interviews prior to their transcription. Subsequently, it is important to consider the anonymisation of data through the transcription process and establishing a clear protocol for data storage so that any coding that

would allow the identification of individuals (such as consent forms) is stored in ways that it is segregated from the transcriptions. As spirituality is a subset within religious practice, it falls under the classification of being a protected characteristic, which reinforces the need both for consent, and for reinforcing the ability of subjects both to feel comfortable in not answering anything that involves discomfort and a subsequent ability to withdraw consent for the use of identifiable material. This was enabled by the coding of transcriptions so that they can be identified by the use of an anonymised code, and providing an opportunity for participants to receive a copy of any material for review prior to publication.

Anonymity

The issue of anonymity emerged as a potential problem once data was being gathered; as it became apparent that explicitly identifying the institutions that were the focus of the case study, combined with the other information on contexts within which singers have worked, would allow the identification of individual participants. For this reason, the institutions have themselves been anonymised throughout and are solely referred to by the type of institution that they represent.

Ethics approval

Formal ethics approval was gained from the appropriate departmental committee within the University of Durham. In line with the ethics approval, permission was sought from institutional gatekeepers prior to undertaking observations during the informal stage of data-gathering, and individual consent was sought from those participating in one-to-one interviews.

PART 2:

Exploring the experience of singing in the liturgy

Introduction

Having identified the gaps in the study of the spirituality of lay singers in Chapter 1.2, by providing a description of lay singers reflections of their performances in the liturgy, this chapter presents the evidence of a spiritual and theological perspective to their activity that is worthy of further exploration (and that forms the substance of Part 3 of this study). As such, Part 2 presents a summary of the data gained in the empirical phase of the study, representing the 'Experience' phase of the Pastoral Cycle that shapes this study. The summary of the findings of the empirical study that follows is derived from the detailed material gained in the course of seven individual interviews. This is shaped around first-level themes identified in earlier conversations involving 30 practitioners drawn from a variety of choral foundations. In analysing the material from the interviews, these first level themes are grouped within five higher level themes, namely: singing and texts; singing and personal faith; singing as transcendent experience; singing as event; and singing as offering.²²² The data represents the themes identified by a group of 30 participants drawn from across the three broad categories of choral foundation (historic cathedrals, former parish-church cathedrals and academic foundations). The detailed evidence is drawn from the smaller sample of seven participants selected to typify the themes that arose within these earlier conversations that represents experiences gained across the range of settings.

In describing the experiences of lay singers in their liturgical setting, this study builds on existing studies of liturgical experience in other contexts, such as those of Ingalls (into contemporary evangelical worship in North America),²²³ and Jarjour (exploring musical experience within a Syrian Orthodox community).²²⁴ In doing so, this study sits alongside the emerging sub-discipline of Congregational Music Studies, from which is emerging a growing body of literature exploring the lived experience of Christian worship from inter-disciplinary perspectives,²²⁵ generating an evolving theoretical and methodological framework.²²⁶ It also touches on the insights of secular models of understanding music and culture – such as the insights of Turino, who notes the important role that music (and dance) have across cultural divides in the forming of community and the shaping of society.²²⁷ In articulating spiritual and theological narratives of experience, the accounts of the

²²² More detail on this thematic analysis is included in Appendices C and D.

²²³ Monique Ingalls, *Singing in the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community*, (Oxford: OUP, 2018).

²²⁴ Tala Jarjour, *Sense and sadness: Syriac Chant in Aleppo*, (Oxford: OUP, 2018).

²²⁵ For example, Anna E. Nekola and Tom Waner (Editors), *Congregational Music-making and Community in a Mediated Age*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); and Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau and Tom Wagner (Editors), *Christian Congregational Music: Performance Identity and Experience*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

²²⁶ Andrew Mall, Jeffers Engelhardt and Monique Ingalls (Editors), *Studying Congregational Music: Key issues, Methods, and Theoretical Perspectives*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

²²⁷ Victor Turino, *Music as Social Life: the politics of participation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

participants seek to navigate the territory between practice and theory that is the subject of a recent collection of essays on the intersection of musicology, liturgy and theology,²²⁸ creating a narrative that allows us to bridge the gap between music and theology identified by Butt as having creative potential.²²⁹

Whilst this study articulates experiences of lived, or ordinary theology²³⁰ in institutional settings that have not previously been subject to such study, there are parallels with existing studies of other religious traditions and secular music-making. In considering the way that singing texts shapes the experience of participants (4.1), there are parallels with Gill's work reflecting on the way that hymn-texts can shape theological understanding,²³¹ and recent work by Day on the concept of 'liturgical listening' as a way to understand how liturgical soundscapes can shape the experience of worshippers in ways that each far beyond the raw text(s) being used.²³²

Touching on emotional responses to music in worship, the descriptions explicitly move on to consider their spiritual or theological implications (4.2) and the relationships participants understood to exist between their musical performances and personal faith. Whilst there is a well-established field of study into emotional responses to musical performances,²³³ the material covered in this study moves beyond the scope of mainstream work in this area by assuming the potential for spiritual or theological content in the experiences recounted. Similarly, whilst Small's concept of *musicking* is a useful starting point for discussion of the relationships between the different participants within liturgical performance,²³⁴ the assumption of theological content taken in this study moves it beyond the definitions set by Small in his work – expanding the scope of 'those taking part, in any capacity, in musical performance' to encompass, as does Boyce-Tillman,²³⁵ a theological dimension that is not present in Small's work.²³⁶

Before considering liturgical performance as event, perceptions of transcendence within musical performance are explored (4.3), reflecting on the different ways that participants experience

²²⁸ James Hawkey, Ben Quash, and Vernon White (Editors), *God's Song and Music's Meanings@ theology, liturgy, and musicology in dialogue*, (London: Routledge, 2020).

²²⁹ John Butt, 'The malleable meanings of music', in Hawkey, Quash and White, *God's Song and Music's Meanings*, pp. 127-39.

²³⁰ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002).

²³¹ Robin Gill, *Theology Shaped by Society: Sociological Theology (Volume 2)*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

²³² Juliette J. Day, *Hearing our Prayers: An Exploration of Liturgical Listening*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2024).

²³³ For example, Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (Editors), *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010).

²³⁴ Christopher Small, *Musicking*, (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1998).

²³⁵ June Boyce-Tillman, 'Tune Your Music to Your Heart' in Ingalls, Landau and Wagner (Eds), *Christian Congregational Music*, pp. 49-65.

²³⁶ Small, *Musicking*, p. 9.

transcendence within their performances, or understand it to be experienced by others. Here there is a touching point with the different theological approaches to transcendence in music – most relevantly seen in the divergent approaches of Begbie and Brown. As well as some collections that explore a diversity of theological relationships regarding music,²³⁷ Begbie (following the inspiration of Barth) articulates his own clear approach to the theological role of music in which music provides metaphors to expand on the doctrinal claims of revealed religion. This approach is exemplified in his treatment of the way that Christian wisdom, governed by scriptural faith, can be deepened through musical experience and imagery,²³⁸ and a later work addressing the relationship between music and transcendence.²³⁹ In this latter case Begbie confronts the alternative approach to transcendence, much closer to that of Brown,²⁴⁰ that gives music a revelatory capacity, taking an approach closer to that of Balthasar – characterised by Aidan Nichols as ‘musicology...placed at the service of doctrinal vision’.²⁴¹ It will be seen in 4.3, and later in Part 3, that the approach to transcendence described most commonly (either as an individual experience or perceived experience of others at a corporate level), is closer to that of Brown, giving music a capacity to extend our experience aesthetically so that we encounter something of the divine (either analogically or directly). There are touching points here with writers such as Viladesau, who highlights music as ‘the aesthetic dimension of revelation itself’.²⁴² In this, we find the participants articulating something of the understanding that ‘the arts are an ongoing extension of the original creation’,²⁴³ itself reflecting in earlier approaches, such as that of Henry Newman, to the aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of music performed in its liturgical context.²⁴⁴

Reflection on liturgical performance, including contrasting experiences of concert performances, (4.4) provides a touching point between participants’ accounts and the wider field of performance and ritual studies. Recent writing on the influences of different soundscapes in shaping musical experiences draw our attention to the particular contexts in which the musicians at the heart of this study;²⁴⁵ this section focuses on exploring different experiences between liturgical and concert performance, and the effect that performing in more intimate settings has on the performer’s engagement with their own performance. Phelan’s reflections on musical and cultural identity in

²³⁷ Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (Editors), *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

²³⁸ Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2007).

²³⁹ Jeremy Begbie, *Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts*, (London: SCM Press, 2018).

²⁴⁰ David Brown and Gavin Hopps, *The Extravagance of Music*, (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

²⁴¹ Aidan Nichols, *Scattering the seed: A guide to Balthasar’s Early Writing on Philosophy and the Arts*, (London: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 8.

²⁴² Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*, (Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2000), p. 228.

²⁴³ Aidan Nicholas, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics*, (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2007), p. 144.

²⁴⁴ Guy Nicholls, *Unearthly Beauty: The Aesthetic of St John Henry Newman*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007).

²⁴⁵ Georgina Born, *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2015).

Ireland draw attention to the way in which the experience and understanding of singing is shaped by the specificity of the setting in which activity takes place, and the role it has in forging community identity.²⁴⁶ As well as observing the formal category differences (such as those between liturgical and concert performances), attention is drawn to informal ritual differences that differentiate and forges the identity of groups with the rituals and ceremonial shaping the experiences of participants.²⁴⁷ There is also a need to be aware of the cultural context within which experiences are made, and the cultural presuppositions that we bring to any assessment;²⁴⁸ looking beyond surface similarities to underlying structures by which ritual can be best understood, mindful of the particular ways that ritual and performance shape human experience.²⁴⁹ In the context of this study, it is worth noting that the understanding of both the participants and the researcher are shaped by shaped experiences within western-European culture and the specific shared experience of worshipping with the specific ritual context of the worship of Anglican cathedrals. Picking up on such anthropological ideas, the accounts of musical performance as event articulate the way that the implicit ritual differences between liturgical and concert performances have an effect on the experience of performers and the understanding they attribute to their performances. These discussions relating to the secular and sacred contexts of musical performance form part of a wider debate surrounding the performance of sacred music in secular contexts.²⁵⁰

Finally, 4.5 returns to the explicitly theological theme of the consideration of music as gift...

Across these five themes, explored in Part 2, some underlying characteristic patterns can be identified cutting across two or more themes:

- Trends within participants' responses in terms of spirituality and theology, and the degree to which individual and corporate understandings in this area correlate;
- The ways in which the nature of the institutions within which singers perform, and the contexts of their performances, influence their understanding of how their musical performances can be received; and
- The ways that these matters of spirituality/theology and institutional development might correlate to the various phases of the historical development of the wider Anglican theological and spiritual tradition of which the worship of cathedral choirs is a significant component.

²⁴⁶ Helen Phelan, *Singing the Rite to Belong: Music, Ritual, and the New Irish*, (Oxford: OUP, 2017).

²⁴⁷ Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary M Crain, *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media, Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1998).

²⁴⁸ Richard Schechner, *The Future of ritual: writing on culture and performance*, (London: Routledge, 1993)

²⁴⁹ Schechner, *The Future of ritual*, pp. 228-30.

²⁵⁰ Jonathan Arnold, 'Sacred Music in Secular Spaces' in George Corbett (Editor), *Annunciations: Sacred Music for the Twenty-First Century*, (Cambridge: Open Book, 2019), pp. 325-335.

These three areas form the basis of the interpretative keys that will be explored in detail in Part 3, providing a means to approach both the individual and corporate understandings of the musical activity articulated here, and helping elucidate the distinctive patterns of understanding that shape the experience of those involved in the musical life of Anglican Choral foundations with the Church of England.

CHAPTER 4 Excursus of themes within the conversations

4.1 THEME 1: Singing texts

4.1a Psalmody

One starting point for many conversations regarding texts sung within the liturgy was psalmody. With a central place in the daily liturgy, many conversations included reference to the expressive quality of psalm texts and the way that these are deeply embedded in the experience of those singing within the liturgy:

‘[I appreciate] the Psalms, obviously, a lot because I’ve sung them every day for most of your life and you just know how they go.’²⁵¹

‘My favourite texts? Do you know what, I think I would actually possibly say the Psalms, as a general thing. I do really enjoy singing Psalms.’²⁵²

Alongside this familiarity, the ability of music to embellish the text and its meaning was referenced in several conversations, with specific comments about the facility for word-painting and expressive singing emphasising deeper meaning through the performance of both singers and organ accompaniment. A majority of the comments in this respect focused on the way that the psalms provide texts speaking of the full breadth of human experience and emotion and are capable of interpretation in a non-dogmatic way. This was illustrated in a conversation where the participant explained that:

‘...some of the words are very expressive and very... you know, some of them are sort of, some of them are quite venomous and then some of them are sort of milk and honey. [...] the range of emotion there and some people sort of... fail to grasp, okay, well you’re singing it to just one chant, but there’s actually so much you can do in there. And there’s so much you can gain from an organ player doing something expressive and the dynamics you can put into it.’²⁵³

Another participant extended their understanding of the place of this amplification of textual meaning by the use of musical technique to give it an explicit spiritual aspect:

I think that words alone can only [go so far]... I do feel that if you just speak things all the time, there are emotions or there is a kind of spiritualness that’s sometimes not there. I think music can heighten the senses and because composers, I think, try to write music almost like an art form, they are therefore trying to make something as perfect as can be, in their eyes, or to their ears.²⁵⁴

In this way, this participant identified a particular contribution made by music to the spiritual effect, reception and understanding of texts within the liturgy, giving them a deeper significance and

²⁵¹ P01

²⁵² P05

²⁵³ P05

²⁵⁴ P07

highlighting the manner in which music can enable and elicit a depth of human emotion that leads to exploration of spirituality through the senses.

By contrast to this approach, which is open to humanistic and doctrinally open interpretations, where texts are interpreted on the basis of human emotional response, a smaller number of participants commented on the way that the interpretation of texts was a matter of theological interpretation and a form of musical biblical exegesis. One participant described an approach that was firmly grounded in a thorough exegesis of texts, bringing their biblical knowledge to the interpretation of texts, and saying that:

'I'm still very interested in things like Hebrew, particularly, so Psalms, the Coverdale translation of Psalms, how it differs. You know, I look at pronunciations of things in my Hebrew Bible, you know, things like that. [...] Things like the voice of the Lord being the same word as thunder. It's things like that. I sort of know when I'm performing Elgar, I sort of think, you know, "The voice of the..." that kind of thing, I sort of think. You know, I know that their word for voice was the same as thunder and that comes out in the music, I make sure it does.'²⁵⁵

By contrast, another participant perceived a lack of theological interpretation of the texts deployed within the music they sang, commenting that, whilst there were occasions when:

'...we look at different parts of the Bible [and] compare them and look, "Well, in this piece of music that has been written, the words used there, why have they been chosen there and why does it say something different here?" -

there is a greater potential to engage with the bible to deepen understanding of the texts sung within services, commenting that:

[Music and preaching] live in their different compartments, yeah. The biggest thing, I think, maybe, I'm not a big fan of, is the fact that we don't engage with the Bible very much. You know, the only element of engagement with the readings or whatever is a homily and that's what, 10 minutes? You know, you're hearing these readings in evensong, some of which are quite challenging but then they're never explained, they're never preached upon and maybe you'll never actually come round to doing that because, you know, every Sunday, there might be a feast day and that's always preached upon.'²⁵⁶

Both these approaches testify to the importance of psalmody alongside other biblical texts within the routine of daily worship, and the role that music has in providing a depth of interpretation that can go beyond mere text alone. This is a concept encapsulated in Lionel Dakers' book *Beauty beyond words*, the introduction to which sets out the premise that 'music in worship...has one specific objective, that of elevating words and carrying them to a stage further, and a significant

²⁵⁵ P01

²⁵⁶ P02

stage at that'.²⁵⁷ It is also in sympathy with the idea expressed of Herbert Howells' famous cycle of canticle settings that they are 'of spiritual moment rather than liturgical. It is so much more than music-making; it is the experiencing of deep things in the only medium that can do it'.²⁵⁸ The concept of music as commentary on words is even more tightly expressed in Messiaen's conception of music as a commentary, in its own terms, on the liturgical event:

Insofar as I was an organist, I had the duty of commenting on the texts of the proper to the office of the day.²⁵⁹

A number of conversations included reference to the historic nature of the textual content of the liturgy, and the continuity that this represents. The archetypal form of the monastic office, described in the 7th century rule of Benedict and fundamental to the monastic reforms of the 10th and 11th centuries,²⁶⁰ influenced the compilation of the daily offices that were contained in the breviaries and other liturgical books used by secular clergy.²⁶¹ As well as this general link, there is the more specific factor within the Anglican tradition which stems from the widespread presence of monastic cathedrals in England in a way that was not prevalent in continental Europe.²⁶² Monastic influence was apparent in a number of conversations, shaping the way that some participants articulated their own experiences, or sought to understand the underlying meaning of their work. By way of example, one participant recorded their experience of particular contexts with reference to an understanding of an underlying monastic quality:

but quite often there might be one or no one in the choir and you were kind of singing, it felt a bit more monastic in its kind of atmosphere, for the glory of God, rather than for a kind of carrying on the tradition as such.²⁶³

whilst another participant sought to explore their own attitude to the future of the Anglican Choral Tradition by way of reference back to its perceived monastic inheritance:

I don't want us to go back to being monks... but to be honest, I don't know, that might be a way. If we all went back, [and] have a whole new renaissance and start again at the bottom. Because the monks would have had a focused life and a focused belief in God wouldn't they? And maybe if we can redevelop that in some way, but I just think that the pace of life nowadays is not conducive to that way of thinking.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ Lionel Dakers, *Beauty beyond words: enriching worship through music*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000), p.1.

²⁵⁸ Dean Milner-White quoted in Paul Spicer, *Herbert Howells*, (Bridgend: Seren, 2006), p.131

²⁵⁹ Messiaen quoted in Stephen Schloesser, 'The Charm of Impossibilities: Mystic Surrealism as Contemplative Voluptuousness' in Andrew Shenton (Editor), *Messiaen the Theologian*, (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p. 168

²⁶⁰ Gregory W. Woolfenden, *Daily Liturgical Prayer: Origins and Theology*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 201-228

²⁶¹ Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*; George Guiver, *Company of Voices: Daily Prayer and the People of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001); and Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993).

²⁶² Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 35.

²⁶³ P07

²⁶⁴ P04

In this monastic framework (whether implicit or explicit) the foundational liturgical place of the psalms (and biblical canticles) within the round of daily prayer was reflected in many of the conversations and subsequent interviews, with many of those interviewed alluding to the central place of psalmody within the monastic tradition of the Western Church (of which the Anglican tradition of choral worship in cathedrals is derivative). A particularly clear example of this link was provided by the reflections of one participant linking performance context, a monastic framework of understanding, and the place of psalmody, reflecting that

when there's a lack of congregation, when it's a much smaller congregation or even an almost non-existent one, the choir is there maintaining the worship of the church in a monastic way. [...] They also do the Psalms for the day and quite often when there was a very, very limited congregation, in fact sometimes there wasn't even a clergy person. So we would carry out the evensong ourselves and quite often there would be the nice, a plainchant Psalms, quite often. [...] It was just, I suppose, a proper, you felt like a proper community offering something up.²⁶⁵

Given institutional (and indeed liturgical) continuity,²⁶⁶ psalmody provides a touching point within the Anglican Choral Tradition alongside the more general influence transmitted within the historic institutional structures of the historic cathedrals. Within this, psalmody, as a significant and integral part of the performance of the daily offices (in the consolidated form of Choral Evensong), remains at the heart of Anglican choral worship.

As well as providing a vocabulary to articulate the self-understanding of participants, the use of monastic frameworks as an expression of continuity was common in many conversations. This sense of continuity and patterning of life operated at several levels and was reflected in the approach that some participants took to understanding the texts that they regularly sing and the way that the stable framework of the daily services provides a pattern within which both the liturgical seasons could be expressed and the inherent stability of the choral tradition understood. This is well illustrated by one participant, who stated:

I like the way that there is this, almost like regular continual worship of certain text like the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis; there's that always continuing thread at each service. And then either side there's this slightly changing repertoire because of changing season of the readings. It depends where I've been, but most of the time, if it's an obvious feast or something, then there is a great, usually some connection with the readings.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ P07

²⁶⁶ Appendix A summarises the historical development of the various institutions involved in this study.

²⁶⁷ P07

In this description, we see the interaction between both spoken texts (readings) and anthems (repertoire) and the stable 'core' of the psalmody and canticles within the daily services, itself derived from the monastic patterns that underlie the development of the daily offices within the cathedral tradition. This provides a clear example of the way that the liturgical texts that are sung relate to the historically contextual institutional structures within which the singers perform.

We have seen that the relationship between the cathedral's central act of daily prayer and the monastic tradition was explicit in a number of conversations, and linked both to the practical aspect of singing and interpreting psalmody within the daily and the way this links to the monastic concept of offering prayer on behalf of others. Interestingly, monastic imagery featured in conversations relating to Old foundation cathedrals that have never actually been monastic in character. Use of monastic language, rather than the more historically accurate descriptor of the round of daily offices being an aspect of collegial life, may purely be a popular short-hand, but may equally indicate the cross-fertilisation that has occurred between historic cathedrals of new and old foundation or equally be an indicator of the enduring influence of predominantly Benedictine foundations within the English Church of the mediaeval period and their consequent influence on the secular cathedrals of the Old Foundation in an English context. This 'monastic' influence was described from two specific points: the daily recitation of the offices (and within this the centrality of psalmody) and the intention of offering music within worship on behalf of others. Whilst the theme (of offering) will be picked up explicitly later, the centrality of the recitation of psalms as a point of continuity has a direct relevance to the relationship between music and text in the context of the performers participating in this study. A number of participants identified that singing psalmody formed the choir as a distinct body with a Christian community, and (in synthesis with the idea that music was offered on behalf of others in the wider Church) contributed to the definition of its role within the wider ecology of the Church.

4.1b Biblical texts and the beauty of poetry

The understanding of psalms as a source of poetry, a repository of the expression of human emotion, and a means by which to reflect on beauty provides a way to approach the understanding of singers regarding other texts set to music within the context of liturgical worship. In turn, this was related to the way in which texts from Old and New Testaments have been selected within the formal liturgy and more generally by composers, and the nature of non-scriptural texts that seem attractive to composers and performers. These reflections led to the conclusion that the selection of texts set to music generally focuses on prophetic sayings (including the teaching of Jesus'), biblical prayers and poetic passages within both the Old and New Testament – raising a potential

question over the way this might contrast with the texts (more often from Pauline epistles) dominant in doctrinal theological practice.

One of the group conversations exploring the biblical texts most frequently sung in worship (beyond the psalms) included a particularly strong reflection on the importance of Old Testament texts as drama (in its broadest sense), before reflecting further on the areas within the Old Testament that provide the richest resources for composers in setting texts to music. In addition to the psalms, other conversations identified texts such as the Song of Songs, portions of Isaiah, the Johannine/Petrine Epistles and Revelation as portions of scripture that are either frequently set or have, in single or limited musical settings, provided iconic musical works central to the Anglican tradition of choral singing.²⁶⁸ In addition, it was noted that various passages from the Johannine writings (such as 'If ye love me, and 'A new commandment') together with the Lucan canticles (The songs of Zechariah, Mary and Simeon) that are prescribed as liturgical texts within the performance of the Daily Offices have a central place within the choral repertory. The use of texts drawn from the poetic work of the book of Revelation within the canon of liturgical texts (the clearest example being the Sanctus within the eucharistic liturgy) was also noted; indeed this was a source for further reflection about transcendence and beauty in music that are explored elsewhere in this study (section 4.3 and chapter 5). In reflecting on the texts most frequently set to music, the functional requirements of the liturgy together with the selections made freely by composers seemed to point in the same direction – to texts that are poetic in nature (for example, Song of Songs), that were often allegorical or mystical in character (for example, Revelation) or which pointed beyond themselves to the transcendence of God (for example, the Johannine statements about God as love). In this selection of texts (both liturgically dictated and more freely chosen) there is an indication of an underlying spirituality and implicit theology that focuses on the poetic and allegorical or analogical as a way to approach the transcendence of God.²⁶⁹

This link between the texts sung and the musical response of performers was reflected especially clearly in the comments of one participant who reflected on the way that selection of texts combines with music to enhance the experience of worship:

When I performed, if there seems to be that very close connection with say the text of the anthem and the reading, it feels it supports what's going on and strengthens the whole theme for the evening, for the service. You're reiterating text or reiterating a kind of different viewpoint on it. I think it strengthens the worship.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ 'And I saw a new heaven' by Edgar Bainton, 'Set me as a seal' by William Walton, 'The Spirit of the Lord' by Edward Elgar, etc

²⁶⁹ Revisited in chapter 5.

²⁷⁰ P07

The interaction of music and text (and the texts selected for setting to music) was also reflected on by another participant commenting on the types of texts that lent themselves to musical setting:

Well, a lot of musical settings are of Old Testament [texts]. I mean, we've mentioned Revelation but actually, I can think of examples of bits of Revelation in like Bainton, and various other things. But actually, a lot of the [texts] (like, you know, *For lo! I raise up?*) have, I suppose, more drama, anyway, in the Old Testament in terms of actual action.

Pieces I can think of, of settings of things from the epistles often are less satisfactory pieces. I mean, things like, *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels* by Bairstow – but it's sort of quite bitty, isn't it, as a piece? I mean, actually, I always wonder whether it's actually just more difficult to set a lot of those words.

Handel managed it, of course, I mean there's a lot of prophetic stuff in the early part [of *The Messiah*]... but then [...] a lot of other things that are New Testament. It tends to be, perhaps it's arias on shorter bursts of text, though, rather than larger texts.²⁷¹

These comments on the way that poetic and prophetic texts lend themselves to musical treatment more readily than some of the New Testament was followed by some comments on the particular musical challenges that seem to result when setting the more theologically complex passages of the Epistles:

It's just the length and pace of some of the writing – the way that Paul explains something requires all ten verses, not just one of them, whereas with the Psalms, well, a lot of it, it says the same thing twice in the same verse. [As a result,] you certainly don't need huge amounts of text in order to write a piece and you can pick and mix themes that fit together, as a lot of composers have done much more easily.²⁷²

This conversation on the setting of different texts also led to a reflection on non-biblical texts – reflecting not just on texts prescribed in the liturgy but also the writings of spiritual writers:

I know some composers, such as Philip Moore, have written quite a lot of things like his setting of Julian of Norwich, [...] it's more spiritual writings rather than biblical text. I suppose the other things outside the Bible that have been set a huge number of times are things like the ordinary of the Mass, which is only in part biblical, isn't it? Things that need lots of settings because they're regular texts... [...] I'm not a composer but my instinct would be that a lot of Pauline epistles and things like that are just much more difficult to set because it's more about long exegesis rather than sound bites.²⁷³

This link between words and music led to a question on the way that particular texts had an especial resonance for the musician. This combination of text and music contributed to the spiritual experience of musical performance and the recollection of text as a result of its musical setting:

²⁷¹ P01

²⁷² P01

²⁷³ P01

It's the beauty of the language partly, but I think more important is the familiarity of what you were brought up with, what you know and what you spent years praying with, and singing. Music certainly helps me to remember words. I mean, I remember the music more than I... if I was singing a pop song, I'd know the tune but whether I could remember all the words or a song from a show. Probably the knowledge of how the music goes means I could probably tell you huge numbers of words but only because the music's going through my head, not because I remember the words on their own.²⁷⁴

These thoughts on the relationship between music and text led to a theologically-informed aesthetic approach to the experience of worship sitting squarely within the Anglican approach of worship as an expression of 'the beauty of holiness'.²⁷⁵ This was clearly articulated in a comment encapsulating the way music and text combine, together with other aspects of setting and liturgy, to speak of beauty as an attribute of God:

'It [the liturgy] speaks to those of us who are taking part but also to other people in lots of different ways with the music, the light and darkness in the cathedral or in any building, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you're hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry. I mean, in every sort of artistic way, it's speaking of God and the beauty of holiness.'²⁷⁶

As well as directly scriptural liturgical and para-liturgical texts – the discussion of which is summarised above – the place of non-scriptural texts was also a feature of discussion. A number of conversations reflected on the way that liturgical texts set to music (such as collects) are themselves derived from or redolent of scripture. Taking this further a connection between the nature of non-scriptural texts and their parallels in the types of literature from within scripture that are most commonly set to music can be noted. This highlights the poetic and mystical nature of non-scriptural texts that seem attractive to composers and musicians; the way that religious poetry (citing examples such as Blake, Milton and Julian of Norwich) is rich in scriptural allusion, often having strong parallels to the poetic books of the Bible (such as the Song of Songs and the Book of Revelation) that, as has already been mentioned, seem to be richly mined by musicians. Those portions of scripture that are imaginative and poetic in nature often seem to share the same characteristics as non-scriptural texts as sources of fruitful inspiration for musical composition and performance. By contrast, the observation was made regarding the relative paucity of sung texts drawn from the Pauline literature. This affirms the conclusion made above regarding scriptural texts that poetic and mystical texts which are open to imaginative interpretation seem to be more attractive as sung texts; where the creative act of musical interpretation through composition and

²⁷⁴ P01

²⁷⁵ See 5.3.

²⁷⁶ P01

performance further heightens the expressive, imaginative and creative potential that is contained in poetic, allegorical or transcendent images.

Whilst the explorations of the role of psalms within worship was universally positive in its scope, a more ambiguous relationship to the use of other texts in cathedral worship was expressed by some respondents. This was often expressed in a context which reflected on their own spiritual formation having taken place within a different Christian tradition or beyond the context of choral worship. These individuals noted the focus on a different range of texts for biblical study within the traditions in which they received their Christian formation, and an appreciation of the way that this different approach to text shaped their own experience of worship within the cathedral setting. Rather than being complementary, such experiences of the uses of different strands within scripture were identified in two conversations as creating personal dissonances and being a source for difficulty rather than comfort.

One participant in a group conversation reflected on their faith formation in a non-Anglican setting, and clearly articulated a difference between the texts they experienced as expressions of praise and worship, and those texts that were subject to biblical exposition and the expression of doctrine. This approach coloured this individual's experience of worship within a cathedral setting, leading them to note the lack of a central place for bible study and a more aesthetic approach to texts allegorically or as poetic images. As part of this they reflected on the tension they perceived to exist between texts that are sung with a view to creating something of beauty (which may have spiritual or theological significance), and the separate act of the systematic reading of scripture (without explanation or exegesis) within the daily round of worship. They concluded by articulating that here there were two completely different approaches to the use of texts, and that whilst text is used as a basis for articulating something of beauty (and the beauty of God) in musical performance (often drawing on non-biblical as well as biblical texts), there is a contrasting use of specific (and selective) use of biblical texts to form and challenge the development of faith.

This point was elaborated by a participant in another group conversation, who noted that whilst many theologians (Luther and Barth being cited as examples) have written commentaries on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, not many composers have set it to music and that the Song of Songs and the book of Revelation, excerpts of which have provided fruitful material for a range of musical settings that stimulate imagination, are perceived to feature less frequently in the work of systematic theologians.²⁷⁷ The effect of this dissonance, where different strands with scripture are used as

²⁷⁷ It is necessary to note the notable recent exception of Joseph Ratzinger who, in his writings on music and liturgy draws extensively on images and text from Revelation, and Isaiah – linking them to the Sanctus within

sung texts and as texts for preaching and doctrinal formation, is explored in more detail in the reflections on personal belief and spirituality later in this chapter and explored in more depth in Part 3.²⁷⁸ One effect of this approach to the use of texts was the distancing (either wholly or on occasion) of individuals from experiencing their own performances as something of spiritual import to them or to question the nature of such experiences, whilst recognising the spiritual importance to others.

In this view we can see reflected two distinct approaches to the use of text within worship – firstly, text as a source for aesthetic exploration of beauty and secondly, text as source for theological exploration and discernment. Whilst for some this use of text leads to inspiration, there is an equal possibility (heightened by the subtle segregation that occurs within the form of the daily office between the spoken daily lectionary and the sung parts of the liturgy) that the different treatment of text leads to deeply divergent views on the purpose, function and use of text within the liturgical setting – something that will be explored in more depth when discussing the relationship between singing and personal faith for those participating within the choral lives of cathedral churches.

Summary on the use of texts within the liturgy

In reflecting on the use of texts within worship, the dominant response reflected on those texts that are regularly sung within the liturgical framework of daily worship – with a natural dominance on reflecting on the role of psalmody in worship. As well as highlighting the centrality of psalmody to cathedral worship, explicit links were made to the monastic (or quasi-monastic) inheritance subsisting within the cathedral tradition, and the role of the choir in offering worship on behalf of the whole church – itself an historic characteristic of the monastic disciplines inherited by the new foundation cathedrals, and an explicit part of the role of lay vicars within old foundation cathedrals. The expressive nature of psalms as texts was important to almost all respondents, with reflections on exegesis informing musical performance (and music as exegesis) and the subjective potential of psalm texts as they articulate the full range of human emotion and experience – allowing for approaches that are of both humanistic and doctrinal motivations. In exploring non-psalm texts, there were common references to texts that are poetic, mystical or rich in imagery for setting to music within the selection of both liturgical and para-liturgical texts. This led to reflections on the way that the different selections of texts shaped understanding – something crystalizing in the experiences of some singers finding challenges in reconciling theological understanding drawn from certain texts used for exegesis and doctrinal formation with the contrasting, aesthetic approach to

the eucharistic liturgy. For example, Joseph Ratzinger, 'III "In the Presence of the Angels I Will Sing Your Praise": The Regensburg Tradition and the Report of the Liturgy' in Joseph Ratzinger, *Collected Works: Volume 11, Theology of the Liturgy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014, pp. 461-479, also see section 5.2.

²⁷⁸ Especially in 5.2.

the use of texts within sung parts of the liturgy. Characterised variously as texts used to explore beauty and texts for systematic theology, these thoughts will be picked up in more detail in considering the relationship of singing within the liturgy to personal faith in section 4.2. The appropriation of monastic language by some participants is indicative of a conscious grounding of the understanding of present-day practice in the historical context of an ongoing tradition which will be explored in chapter 6.2. In these ways, it can be seen that the ways that the participants responded in discussing texts was reflective of three related narrative influences: spiritual or theological content; and the institutional setting of the liturgical activity of the singers, which is itself conditioned by a wider context within the historically contingent tradition of Anglican spirituality and theology.

4.2 THEME 2: Singing and personal faith

4.2a Relationship of singing to personal faith

The relationship between singing and personal faith is a key area within this study, being covered in each of the group conversations and explored in more depth with all those interviewed. There were a broad range of responses, and a majority of those interviewed claimed (or admitted) a personal theistic, faith of some kind. Whilst the nature of this faith commitment varied, there were some participants whose personal faith was either a questioning belief or spiritual orientation that was ungrounded in dogmatic faith of any tradition. What the relationship between music and religion meant for these participants offers an interesting insight into the bridge between spirituality and religion that is a feature of much recent commentary on religion in contemporary society. Of those participants claiming a Christian faith there were a range of positions from those who had a strong personal faith to those who might best be described as ‘cultural Christians’ (see section 7.1d).

Looking at this spectrum of belief, there were some for whom their personal faith was intimately related to their musical experiences, whilst the relationship between personal faith and musical performance was far more complex for others. The discussions about the strength of faith or belief that participants brought to their work allowed the definition of three broad categories. Firstly, there were those for whom faith and belief was integrated with their musical experiences and for whom their personal faith was approached in the light of their musical experiences. Secondly, some participants had a personal faith, but there was a degree of conflict between their own faith, belief or spiritual practices and their place within the musical life of the cathedral. Finally, there was a third group for whom music has a primacy in the way that they understand their performance within the liturgy; understood either as a personal spiritual experience not necessarily interpreted in a conventional doctrinal framework, or a more corporate understanding where spiritual experience is interposed by others whilst the singer focuses on the technical aspects of performance.

This chapter explores each of these approaches as they arose within the individual conversations that are the main source of empirical data for this study.

4.2 Those with an integrated experience of music and spirituality

It has already been identified that a majority of those participating in the discussions expressed Christian faith as being a part of their identity – and for many this faith was a strong element in their understanding of their musical activity within its liturgical context. As has already been outlined, of these, some found that there was a positive relationship between their personal faith and its practice within the context of their liturgical musical performance, whilst others had a more ambiguous relationship in this regard. Of those making a direct and positive link between personal faith and musical performance, two respondents within the interviews framed clear approaches to musical activity within the context of their own personal faith that repeated themes from the wider conversations:

4.2a The first respondent made a direct link between their own experience of singing within the liturgy and their spiritual association with the monastic tradition which they saw underpinning the ethos of the Anglican choral tradition. They made a link between the offering of music as worship (of which an element of personal faith is generative) and the way that music both ‘heightens the senses’ and elevates the mind and body to experience God at a deeper level:

I think that words alone can only... I do feel that if you just speak things all the time, there are emotions or there is a kind of spiritual-ness that’s sometimes not there. I think music can heighten the senses and because composers, I think, try to write music almost like an art form, they are therefore trying to make something as perfect as can be, in their eyes, or to their ears.²⁷⁹

This participant developed this idea of striving for the best in the offering of worship as a process in which those involved seek perfection (in a spiritual sense), which in turn means that, in seeking to offer perfection in the liturgy (including its music), those involved seek to embody the perfection of Christ in that way that has real theological impact:

And in doing so they’re offering that, ideally the most perfect thing that they can manage to the Glory of God. And of course, some theology, you might be thinking that because Jesus is perfect we should be trying to be like Him and that we’re trying to offer Him the most perfect thing.²⁸⁰

This understanding of the imitation of the perfection or beauty of God in musical performance was a theological perspective of musical performance that was echoed by another participant who went on to offer a more extended reflection on the relationship of musical performance to personal faith.

²⁷⁹ P07

²⁸⁰ P07

4.2b This second account develops the idea of musical activity as an expression of faith by which music is offered and, together with the other aesthetics of the liturgical setting, makes present something of the 'beauty of holiness' that is theological in nature:

I find it very personally uplifting but also, I can see that it has a massive effect on lots of people who come. I mean, you can see that at Christmas. Lots of people come to the cathedral because of the music. And the building – but mostly it's people like high-quality worship. [...] I definitely see my job as a vocation, you know, I am a musician but I'm definitely a more and more committed Christian, and I definitely do this because I'm doing it for God as much as doing it for my own enjoyment or anybody else's enjoyment. [...] ...we're doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they're there or not. [...] I think cathedral liturgy, not just the music but everything about it, is definitely a requirement of us to do the best we can with the time and resources we've got. [...] I definitely think that it is incumbent on us to do the best we can for God. [...] [Music] speaks to those of us who are taking part but also to other people in lots of different ways with the music, the light and darkness in the cathedral or in any building, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you're hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry. I mean, in every sort of artistic way, it's speaking of God and the beauty of holiness.²⁸¹

Here we can see how musical performance can be viewed as both elevating human activity as a way of encountering the perfection of God, and as making present something of the holiness of God in the beauty of worship. As will be discussed in Chapter 3.1, this concept correlates with classic Anglican spirituality as exemplified by Anglican Divines of the 17th century.²⁸²

Whilst both these conversations started from the premise of music as the starting point for spiritual or theological experience, a further element of theological understanding was identified by another participant as prior faith interpreting musical activity; spiritual formation in the Christian tradition becoming a tool by which to understand the theological reality of musical experience.²⁸³ Taken together, these perspectives each speak to a theological dynamic whereby music elevates the human spirit to the presence (perfection) of God and makes the beauty of God known within worship, whilst interpretation of such musical experiences can be formed by a faith that is communicated by tradition. These appear to be complementary aspects of a positive interplay between musical experience and theological tradition in a way that integrates experience and tradition in a positive manner.

²⁸¹ P01

²⁸² See sections 5.1, 5.2 and 7.1b.

²⁸³ P06

4.2c Reconciling experience in different spiritual traditions

The views represented above illustrate that some participants in the conversations described a relationship between musical performance and personal faith that was symbiotic. However, there were others who had a more oppositional relationship to singing music within the liturgy and who, whilst asserting a definite personal faith, described an ambiguity with how this related to their activity as singers in a liturgical context. The nature of these conversations is exemplified by two respondents – both of whom had significant faith experience beyond the Anglican Choral Tradition – and each of whom processed their faith experiences in different ways:

4.2c.i The first respondent had extensive experience as a chorister, but later developed their faith in a more charismatic context. This dual formation provided this respondent with a breadth of religious experience that shaped their affirmation of Christian faith, but resulted in an ambiguity resulting from the way that these positive experiences had not coalesced into a strong present experience of faith and religiosity. Speaking of their positive experiences as a chorister, this participant said that:

in Revelation we're told when we get to heaven we will be in our perfect form and I hope to God that I'd be 11 again, ...if there's choirs of heavenly angels, then sign me up.²⁸⁴

However, at some points in their reflections it seemed as if this experience had been primarily of musical rather than spiritual value. Speaking of their move to worship in a charismatic church as a student, they spoke of the contrast that they felt worshipping in this different context:

I loved the singing, but when I was worshipping at XXX, I was asked, "Don't you miss the singing?" And I said, "Yes, I do, but I get fed by the Word of God in XXX." [...] The thing that frustrates me is in the cathedral we have the Bibles in front of us, but nobody stands up in the pulpit and says, "Right, let's turn to Corinthians 1:16." We don't get fed by the Word. It's tradition, and rote, yeah and I don't know how you find the juxtaposition of how both can work.²⁸⁵

Continuing to talk of the way that they related to music within the Anglican Choral Tradition they went on to make a comparison as to which spiritual practice they felt had seen their faith grow:

Some people may well get an equal feeding from both [charismatic worship/preaching and the cathedral tradition], but I know from my point, I don't get anything particularly from, I like the tradition, you know, [...] I do love the tradition, but it doesn't feed me.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ P04

²⁸⁵ P04

²⁸⁶ P04

However, the ambiguous perception of the spiritual role of music, and its theological nature, was clear in later reflections they made on the meaning of music where they made a clear connection between music in faith:

I can understand people that love choral music because they love choral music – but I can't understand people that love it so much, that don't believe in God.²⁸⁷

This claim, as to the inherently spiritual or theological nature of choral music, was strengthened by a clear theological statement as to the divine origin of musical activity:

I think it was only a couple of weeks ago, I was discussing the fact that you can sing like this, it's not just in your genes; I believe it's a gift from God.²⁸⁸

When talking of the emotional or spiritual aspect of musical performance, this participant spoke of the way that these elements come together to have a profound effect:

I probably would tie the two with each other because I can't say that it always happens. There's two or three pieces that I choke, that I know that I'm not going to get through.[...] There's three or four pieces where I know I'm going to get to a section and that's going to be me, I'm going to be out. But there are other bits where I just hear something fly.²⁸⁹

Whilst admitting to the way that the effect can be inconsistent, ongoing reflection on the emotional and spiritual effect of musical performance linked back to the understanding of music as 'gift':

Sometimes after something I've sung I think, yeah – and it's not me that I'm going, 'well done you'. It's that, I don't... its like voice being a gift from God...²⁹⁰

In these reflections we can see obvious tensions between two approaches to spirituality (the charismatic experience of worship and the formalism of Anglican liturgical worship). This connected with comments on the authenticity of a free response to the action of the Spirit within the charismatic tradition of Christian worship, a freedom that can be constrained by the liturgical structures and the inherent discipline required by choral singing. This was made explicit in comments exploring the conflict between personal expression and the inherent discipline of choral singing:

[If there] is a bit of worship and I'm going to go for it [...] ...there's so much that you're going to over shine it and you're going to ruin the mix – or that's the perception – when actually if you were freely worshipping God, I guess he's looking at the individual and the heart than the intent that's coming through from it. And he would forgive the, you know,

²⁸⁷ P04

²⁸⁸ P04

²⁸⁹ P04

²⁹⁰ P04

slightly exuberant singing. But if we were all doing it, I guess it would be a massive mess. But I don't know.²⁹¹

The result was some unresolved reflections on how the spontaneity of spiritual experience sits within the practice of choral singing, where there is such a strong inter-relationship between the individual singers and a subsuming of their individuality into the corporate expression of musical performance within the liturgy.

In all of these comments there was an unresolved conflict between the felt need for personal spiritual expression in opposition to the discipline and formality of liturgical singing within the cathedral context. In turn, this was balanced by a theological understanding of the nature of music as a gift of God (again countered by a feeling that this potential in personal spiritual terms might be limited by the discipline of singing with others). In recounting their spiritual experiences, this individual traced a parallel trajectory within their experience of both traditions of worship, with an initial spiritual impetus gradually fading until it ceased to be the prime motivation within their spiritual life and an accompanying feeling of personal spirituality being hampered by the need to constrain expression in each context. This was expressed in an illustration where the participant reflected on similar experiences of people they had known from their time worshipping in a charismatic context alongside the feelings they had of cathedral worship:

I get the impression that church for them has also become humdrum and you just repeat. You get to December and the year starts again, and the year starts again and you repeat. [...] And so I think that even Evangelical churches, to some point, get to a stagnation point.²⁹²

As with other participants, a perception of the monastic character of the Anglican Choral Tradition shaped this individual's self-understanding of their experiences. In talking of the monastic inheritance of the cathedral they sang in, the participant reflected on the potential that the stability that they perceived as part of the monastic ideal might have for them – though it proved illusive in their actual experience:

maybe stability isn't a bad thing but if it's stability without stagnation. If you can maintain a growth and that, actually a connection with God, and your stability/stagnation doesn't go to stagnation, but yeah. I don't know.

A final reflection drew together their thoughts by outlining the way that though they were spiritually conflicted, there was a deeper understanding of God being in everything as they sought a reconciliation between the different aspects of their spirituality – including their understanding of the spiritual and theological role of music, as they questioned:

²⁹¹ P04

²⁹² P04

Am I a part of the coal that's in that fire still? I don't know, I guess it's got to be really hasn't it, God's not just in, or is He? No, He is just in the small voice isn't He, or He's in the small, no, He's not – He's in everything.²⁹³

The identification by this participant of the way that particular experiences within distinct spiritual traditions might be different stages in spiritual development, led them to reflect on the need to integrate disparate experiences, with their inherent tension between the routine and stability of liturgical practice with the immediacy and spontaneity of spiritual experience that was a dominant feature of their other spiritual experiences. The ideas of authenticity of experience (and the conflict between personal and corporate singing in worship), together with the place of stability as a controlling feature within the worship of cathedrals is explored in more detail in looking at the continuity of cathedrals as institutions (chapter 6) and the historical context of this institutional development (in section 7.1a). However, it is important to note here that the respondent felt that both their early and ongoing experiences within cathedral choirs had contributed to their spiritual and religious identity they had but, along with contrasting charismatic experiences, this left unfinished business that meant that their spiritual identity (and its relationship to the daily singing in worship) was unresolved.

4.2c.ii A similar ambiguity was represented by another respondent for whom faith traditions outside the Anglican Choral Tradition came prior to their experiences of liturgical choral singing, and were of fundamental importance to their own faith formation. In this case formative faith experience outside the Church of England (within largely non-conformist/evangelical settings) was dominant in spiritual formation, and involvement in the Anglican tradition of worship resulted from an enthusiasm for singing rather than as a component of their personal spirituality. Thus, whilst they held a strong personal faith, their participation as a singer within a cathedral setting was not primarily a spiritual experience:

In terms of singing, I do not feel very Christian when I sing in the cathedral [...] because I'm there to do a job. I can't see past that, which I find really difficult because I want to be at church to worship God but I don't feel like I am. I feel like I'm enabling somebody else's worship rather than my own.²⁹⁴

But the everyday, kind of seems very regimented and uniform. [...] I really love the music. And I enjoy the services, I just don't feel very Christian in them.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ P04

²⁹⁴ P02

²⁹⁵ P02

This led them to reflect on their role within the cathedral setting as the offering of worship on behalf of and for the spiritual benefit of others; an approach that connected with their own experience that ‘listening to music for me is a very different experience to actually singing’.²⁹⁶ These reflections on the purpose and value of their liturgical singing for the spiritual benefit of others, were expressed in terms that might be described as vicarious spiritual participation:

I think it is actually what it can do for other people, maybe. You know, I love the act of singing and I love making music. But it’s also conveying that emotion and making somebody else feel something that I think is really powerful about music in general and also, particularly, sacred music. You know, it’s written for a purpose and some of the poetry and words of the things that we perform are so beautiful.

But it’s different if you’re singing them. I don’t find myself engaging with the words. Sometimes, like, if it’s a reading, I will look back through the words of what we’ve just sung and what we’re going to sing and then actually go, “Oh, actually, this is really lovely, they’re really nice words.” But when you’re singing them, you’re not focusing on the words.²⁹⁷

As well as acknowledging the divide between performing and spiritual participation, this comment also raises the issue of the displacing effect placed on the performer by the technical demands of performance.²⁹⁸

In exploring the idea that their singing was a vicarious offering of worship in which their offering of technical skill overshadowed any spiritual aspect of performance, they reflected on the different way in which they engage with musical performance in the worship outside the context of the Anglican tradition. In these contexts, music fulfilled its purpose by being an emotional preparation for the reception of the preached word:

I would say it’s maybe a mixture because... I guess it depends on... I probably feel when I’m listening to homily, that’s when I feel like I’m practising my faith because I’m listening to what they’re saying, I’m engaging with it and it sparks thoughts in my head or like, “Oh, this is how I could act in an even more Godly way,” or, “that part of the Bible says that and, you know, they evangelise it in this way,” or whatever. And that’s a really interesting way of looking at it.²⁹⁹

By placing music as purely preparatory to revelation through preaching rather than itself being a spiritual experience with the potential for theological revelation, this provided a direct contrast with the more integrated ‘Anglican’ approaches articulated in 4.2b.

²⁹⁶ P02

²⁹⁷ P02

²⁹⁸ See 4.3d for further reflections on the impact of the technical demands of performing.

²⁹⁹ P02

However, in considering the effect of their performances on those listening, this participant articulated a far more conventionally integrated 'Anglican' approach to the theological potential of musical reception. Answering a question about the potential for music to reveal something of the presence of God, this participant replied that:

To other people, yes, in my opinion. To other people ... it's like a halfway house to God. I mean, there are certain pieces of music where you do feel, I mean, you're listening to it like, "God is here," I think. But I only get that when listening to it.³⁰⁰

This approach, adopting a contrasting understanding of the theological potential of musical performances when experienced as listener and compared to their experience when performing, was reiterated in further comments:

I've listened to a spoken service versus a sung service, they're entirely different. And for the congregation and the church alike, I think it [music] just adds another dimension. It is getting closer to God, I think. It's offering, like it is an offering, isn't it? It's probably the highest form of offering, in my opinion. The way to get closest to God is through music.³⁰¹

In reflecting on the distinctive nature of choral worship, this participant articulated an underlying understanding of the purpose and function of music within liturgical worship that was consonant with an Anglican understanding of the aesthetic and theological nature of worship – something that will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5. An important feature to notice in the case of this participant is that this understanding of the corporate meaning of singing within the liturgy was at variance to their own personal experience as a singer within the liturgy. This provides a touching place with Stringer's typology of corporate and individual discourses which can help us to see the way that different patterns of understanding can operate simultaneously at different levels.³⁰²

As well as the spiritual ambiguity present in these accounts, and common to these conversations, was the perception that demands placed on a singer by technical aspects of singing (and especially the discipline of singing chorally) were a distraction from their spiritual participation in the act of worship. In this, these two participants reflected comments made, to a lesser degree, in other conversations that individual singers can be left with a diminished capacity to engage with the music at a spiritual rather than technical level by the demands of corporate musical activity, and this is picked up as a barrier to theological participation by singers when exploring the spiritual and theological potential of musical performance in section 5.1. Likewise, the potential to understand

³⁰⁰ P02

³⁰¹ P02

³⁰² See Chapter 3.

the activity of singers as a vicarious offering of worship for, or on behalf of, others is also treated more fully when considering the institutional influences on understanding in section 6.1.

4.2d Those with a less clearly defined personal religiosity

So far we have explored situations where singers with declared personal Christian faith reflect on their musical performance – firstly from positions located definitely within a Anglican spirituality and then when the personal spirituality of the singer is derived (wholly, or in part) from traditions beyond Anglican choral worship. As well as ambiguities that arise when someone with a defined Christian faith contributes to the work of a choir whilst this is not a part of their own spiritual practice, there was a parallel ambiguity arising when a performer professed no personal faith (or a definite absence of faith in conventional, Christian terms). This was exemplified in a number of conversations, and variations of this position were reflected in two more detailed interviews. These positions, whilst having common features, had distinctive aspects that were representative of some of the wider conversations. In the first case a cultural approach to religion was paired with a personal focus on the technical aspects of performance that precluded personal spiritual participation in the performance (though articulating an understanding of the way in which other people might engage spiritually as listeners, and a possible theological understanding of their musical activity – albeit not personally espoused). The second, contrasting, position was of a performer claiming no personal faith, but reflecting in some depth on the spiritual content of their performances. These accounts provide an outline of these more ‘secular’ approaches to the spirituality of choral music within the liturgy.

4.2d.i The first perspective identified a focus on technical aspects of performance which meant that they could not negotiate the spiritual dimension of their activity. This participant nonetheless articulated spiritual or theological possibilities within their performances in an abstract, third-person manner – often drawing on the concept that their performances were capable of spiritual or theological reception by others. Echoing one of the interviews conducted in the previous section (4.2b.ii), this participant identified that their own focus on the technical demands of performance meant that they themselves were unable to engage with their musical performances in this way:

I am focused on the music. I think at the same time, I appreciate the spirituality of it. I’m here to do a particular job and that is to lead the music and the singing in the best way I possibly can. And that’s sort of my focus, I think rather than necessarily, how spiritual I feel.³⁰³

[Spirituality is] at a secondary level. But definitely the primary focus for me is, ‘Right, I’ve got to get it right and I’ve got to sing it well and deliver it well’.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ P05

³⁰⁴ P05

I think we, as a choir, are so focused on getting the music right and delivering it well, that I think... Well, it may not necessarily be true for others, but I do feel like perhaps I miss out. [...] When you're just sat there in the congregation and you're able to sit and listen, it's a very different experience. Whereas I'm there analysing what I'm doing in sort of minute detail.³⁰⁵

This has parallels to the account in section 4.2b.ii, where the participant who expressed a vicarious aspect to their role as a choral singer. However, unlike that account (where personal spirituality was situated within another Christian tradition) the spiritual reaction of this participant limited by the practical considerations of focussing on performance. As a consequence their engagement with the spiritual content of their performances was at a cultural rather than personal level. This was reflected in their analysis of the spiritual dimension to their performances where they identified the cultural importance of their musical activity for them and its parallel spiritual and theological significance to others, identifying that they felt themselves 'ingrained in the Anglican Church'.³⁰⁶ This understanding also highlighted the way that a number of conversations articulated parallel understandings which often contrasted personal and corporate perspectives whilst asserting the importance of both perspectives to the performer. This again echoes Stringer's distinction between personal and corporate levels of discourse in reflecting on the lived experience of those participating in church contexts. The asserted spiritual importance of their activity to others preserved their own understanding of the spiritual significance of singing within the liturgy – even though that very activity meant that they did not benefit in personal spiritual terms. In this way they described the spiritual effect music can have, and the theological basis it can have as doxology and offering:

[Music] can have that role and that ability to kind of transport people beyond sort of the physical realm...³⁰⁷

There's always something in [singing] of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens.³⁰⁸

In this account we have seen a performer open to the spiritual and theological content of their performance but unable to participate in a spiritual and theological manner due to the very act of performing. In the absence of this personal engagement with their performances in this way, their understanding was projected onto others, highlighting a vicarious element to spiritual participation which is expressed in ways that, as we will see in Chapter 5, are consonant with an Anglican pattern of understanding – demonstrating the

³⁰⁵ P05

³⁰⁶ P05

³⁰⁷ P05

³⁰⁸ P05

value of a cultural understanding that is enacted in the absence of personal spiritual engagement with the individual participant's musical performance. In Chapter 6 we will see how vicarious understandings of the roles of musicians correlate with institutional factors that are historically rooted within the context in which these musicians perform.

4.2d.ii By way of contrast the second position outlined below ascribed deep spiritual meaning to the experience of music in the liturgy from a individual perspective – though without a strong personal commitment to religious practice or a credal faith. This was exemplified by the claim that there is something transcendent (and indeed potentially of the divine) within the experience of performance, in an approach that might best be categorised by the moniker 'spiritual, not religious'.

These issues were elaborated by the respondent's identification that live performance creates a focal point for daily activity, in which the communal activity maintained across time creates a subconscious effect that can lead people to 'feel they are taking part in something more serious'.³⁰⁹ The interviewee was clear that their own engagement with musical performance was non-religious in its motivation, stating that they were 'a secular musician' approaching their work within the choir as 'more to do with the music, [...] than it is to do with the spirituality'.³¹⁰ However, in reflecting on this activity, they opened up a wider perspective where, in certain situations, music 'becomes more personal, more meaningful and it becomes more than just a spectacle'.³¹¹

Whilst articulating their musical activity in explicitly non-religious terms, the interview included a number of comments indicating a profound depth of experience:

[I'm attracted to] the theatrics and the ceremony and the feeling of putting on a show. But it's also more profound than that, it speaks to me in a sort of... it stirs up something in me in a very deep way.³¹²

There is definitely more to it than just the music. When it's combined appropriately with the setting and with the liturgy and with the story that you're trying to tell and so on, all of those things compound and create an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.³¹³

This led to the participant's conclusion that music, alongside other aspects of the liturgical experienced created a situation which could result in a transcendent experience extending

³⁰⁹ P03

³¹⁰ P03

³¹¹ P03

³¹² P03

³¹³ P03

beyond the purely musical. This horizontal transcendence,³¹⁴ operating in the present temporal setting also had elements that incorporated the importance of the practice of musical performance within the liturgy across time:

The people being present and it being real in that sense, and also of course the sound quality can't really be replicated. But I also think it makes one think about the fact that it's happened day after day for centuries and centuries. And that's a special part, I think, which perhaps often subconsciously makes people feel that they're taking part in something more serious, something quite great and something special.³¹⁵

These assertions of the importance of the reality of the musical experience and its transcendent character were generated from a secular, musical perspective. However, the experience of music within the liturgical context also led to a pertinent observation of the nature of the sublime within this interaction. Having articulated these processes in purely secular terms, the participant speculated on the way that these feelings might also be interpreted from a more theologically motivated interpretation of the experience of music (and other arts) within the liturgy:

The feelings are the same. And when you're moved by a piece of art or a piece of music or by a personal or an experience or when you're moved by God, the feelings are the same.³¹⁶

Typically, there was a reticence to see description of performance constrained within the framework of ecclesiastical doctrinal language – a characteristic indicating that the boundary between a non-spiritual self-understanding of participation and the acknowledgement of deeper emotional, spiritual or religious dynamics at play may be more porous than the desire to neatly categorise individual spiritual, religious and doctrinal positions allows. Again, the conversations of this nature included an acknowledgement of both individual and corporate interpretations of musical performance. As a result, different attitudes and resulting understanding (which formed an individual approach) contributed to a broader, corporate understanding of the role of music within the liturgy. The language used was often careful to avoid theological meaning at the individual level – but to note its possibility in interpretation by others at a corporate level.

Despite the espousal of a secular, non-religious approach to understanding musical performance within the liturgy, the acknowledgment that something 'more serious' is

³¹⁴ Ferdia Stone-Davis 'Introduction' to Ferdia Stone-Davis (Editor) *Music and Transcendence*, Farnham: Ashgate 2015), pp. 1-10

³¹⁵ P03

³¹⁶ P03

taking place invites an interesting question regarding what underpins a description such as that given above. There is the possibility that it is just such interactions as this – where people are engaging in something that they can describe as having depth and significance, but resist its categorisation using pre-defined religious or spiritual language – that reveal an approach to the experience of singing within the liturgy for which conventional doctrinal language is seen as inadequate to describe the spiritual experience that takes place within the liturgy. In turn, there is a potential that wider theological and spiritual insights might be present for which the existing corpus of doctrinal, theological narratives is inadequate. Situations such as this, where there seems to be a raw experience that the participant categorises in secular terms due to the inadequacy of doctrinal categories, might benefit from exploration in terms of Schleiermacher's concept of 'feeling' with regard to raw spiritual or theological experience.

Some conclusions

Across these accounts we have seen how participants approach reflection on their experiences within a diversity of spiritual frameworks. In the broader context of this study, these provide us with a number of pointers as to how singers within the liturgy might understand their activity, and the degree to which it might have spiritual or theological significance.

There are those for whom the offering of music has a spiritual and theological reality, which can be understood to have a number of different aspects. Firstly, musical performance can be seen as an attempt in offering perfection to God, with music as an explicit expression of faith. Secondly, musical performance can be means of making present the beauty of holiness which as will be seen in Part 3 is a strong feature within Anglican spirituality. Thirdly, the spiritual impact of musical performance can be developed by interpreting musical performance within Christian tradition and its doctrinal frameworks.

We have also seen the way that the pursuit of high standards of technical performance can present a form of self-denial, leading to singers understanding their activity as offering only the best on behalf of others (whether directly for their benefit as listeners, or as a vicarious offering in their absence). This can be seen both in accounts of those who find spiritual fulfilment beyond the activity of singing within the liturgy and those for whom they find themselves unable to engage with the spirituality and theological potential of their activity on account of the focus on aspects of performance. These perspectives can be seen reflected in the shadows where personal faith/belief and musical practice constitute different and separate phases in an individual's spiritual formation, and where these have not been reconciled. They are also present in the accounts provided by

participants who have a non-specific, nondoctrinal spirituality (forming in itself a distinct 'faith' position?) where the emphasis of any spiritual experience is placed on transcendent reality and the effect of experience rather than theological reality in doctrinal terms. In both these cases a divergence is present that exemplifies Stringer's distinction of individual and corporate frames of discourse.

Together, these approaches raise the possibilities of a lost potential that might arise from a lack of cross-fertilization between musical and spiritual/theological aspects of musicians' experiences. In turn, this might lead to a difficulty in reconciling spiritual experiences from different religious traditions and a lack of spiritual or theological formation with regard to an individual participant's musical activity.

4.3 THEME 3: Singing as a transcendent experience

4.3a Creation, transcendence and beauty in music

In the last section, the role of personal faith, and the relationship between the singer's own beliefs and those held by the Church were explored. This revealed that there was a spectrum of understanding running from those who held strongly to the doctrinal faith of the Church (and saw their singing as an expression of this faith), to those who held personal faith but for whom there was a more ambiguous relationship between this faith and the practice of musical performance. Finally, there were those who did not espouse the doctrinal faith of the Church but nonetheless saw something of significance (either for themselves or for others) in the musical performance in which they engaged. These attitudes lead to consideration of what music might reveal or embody that transcends human experience. Even in those cases where this cannot be equated fully with the faith of the Church (or adequately described using the typical language of church doctrine) this points toward a consideration of the role of music has in revealing God in creation, the beauty of music or its universal appeal, and the idea that – in these ways or others – music transcends human experiences and provides something 'beyond'.

Notably, in both conversations and interviews a range of contributors spoke in depth about the way that music presents an experience that is transcendent in nature. As noted by Stone-Davies, transcendence can be viewed in two distinct ways: horizontally and vertically, and can be interpreted with both theological and non-theological lenses.³¹⁷ Within such a framework, it is clear that many respondents saw music to operate in multiple ways in their consideration of its transcendent qualities. For example, when touching on the way music reveals God in creation one respondent, starting from a theistic starting point, identified that music operates both vertically, 'as a signal for what God has done for us in creation' and horizontally by connecting people within 'a shared experience' to a God who 'is there with whoever is there'.³¹⁸ These comments reflect a theological approach shaped by a natural theology in which music reveals something of the divine in its transcendent qualities. As another respondent stressed, this approach to theological meaning in music led them to conclude that '[it is difficult to] understand people that love music so much but don't believe in God'.³¹⁹ This statement makes clear an understanding by which the transcendent quality of music is seen communicating something of the divine nature through the medium of musical performance – the music itself becoming a means of revelation within the experience of the natural world. However, not all comments regarding transcendence were theologically freighted and some participants reflecting on the way that music provided an

³¹⁷ Stone-Davis, 'Introduction' in *Music and Transcendence*, p. 1.

³¹⁸ P01

³¹⁹ P05

experience that was transformative, yet not necessarily theologically disclosive, in nature. This included one participant who, noted above for their avowedly secular personal spirituality, commented that involvement in a musical performance in the liturgy elicits the same feeling as experiencing God:

‘when you're moved by a piece of art or a piece of music or by a personal or an experience or when you're moved by God, the feelings are the same’.³²⁰

One of the notable features of the interviews regarding their theological transcendent content was twofold, again reflecting Stringer’s account of differing personal and corporate discourses: a diversity of approaches to personal theological or religious affiliation sitting alongside a shared theological narrative that manifests a strong degree of consistency across different participants. In this way, obvious differences between an individual’s personal understanding and purported shared narratives are mediated by invoking a corporate theological understanding of the act of musical performance within the liturgy. In this section, we will explore the material gained from the seven interviews from the perspective of transcendence and the theologically revelatory possibilities of musical performance. This exploration will establish three key means by which theological transcendence can be understood: as analogy to God, as direct experience of God; and the experience of God for others.

4.3b Analogical approaches to God through music

The first three accounts considered here find music functioning as a way of approaching God best understood by way of analogy. In theological terms, this maintains a distance between the individual subject and the divine nature. Whilst not expressed in these terms by those being interviewed, this distance maintains the distinction and otherness of God whilst allowing human experience to be shaped by apprehension of divine essence. This places this approach within a participative understanding of theological experience that, as will be explored in more detail in Part 3, is typical of classic Anglican spirituality and theology.

In the first account, music was placed within a wider context of the aesthetic of worship in which it speaks in multivalent ways to participants and others present. Within this, music was described as contributing, alongside other art-forms, including poetry and architecture, to making real the ‘beauty of holiness’.³²¹ By this account, the liturgical experience of both performer and participant is an irresistible force that takes people beyond the immediate present. This experience of music within the liturgy draws together ‘the past and the future

³²⁰ P03

³²¹ P01

and the present'³²² and, in the context of the uniting of earthy song with that of the heavenly host, heaven and earth are drawn together in an experience of revelatory transcendence such that:

it speaks to those of us who are taking part but also to other people in lots of different ways with the music, the light and darkness in the cathedral, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you're hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry. I mean, in every sort of artistic way, it's speaking of God and the beauty of holiness.³²³

In this view, the beauty found in the languages of words and music unite in the liturgical setting to form a wider aesthetic experience that brings people into an awareness of the beauty of God, becoming 'signals of what God has done for us in creation'.³²⁴ As well as this directly revelatory aspect to the act of worship, musical performance within the liturgy was articulated (in a link with the vicarious approaches referenced elsewhere) as being 'a shared experience, and God is there with whoever is there' in which musical activity is seen as an offering to God 'on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they're there or not'.³²⁵

Relating music and liturgy to other aspects of Christian life, the respondent articulating this pattern of liturgical experience placed elements such as biblical exegesis and doctrinal theology as preparatory to the spiritual experience that occurs during worship. In this way the spiritual and theological approach to musical performance in the liturgy takes its cue from the classical 'Anglican' writers of the early 17th century – an age when the focus on the beauty of holiness in worship was a strong concern of writers in what was to become the 'Anglican' tradition of the Restoration period onwards. Alongside this definably Anglican approach to worship, the idea of offering worship on behalf of the Church and others was a subsidiary theme – linking with the historical foundations of cathedral choirs as singing worship on behalf of the absent members of the foundation (in the case of Old Foundation cathedrals) or on behalf of the wider Church (an explicit role of the monastic inheritance of New Foundation cathedrals). These theological and institutional influences, and the historical context in which they were formed will be examined in more detail in Part 3.

Two further accounts of musical beauty as analogical to the beauty of God

In a way similar to the account of transcendence outlined above, the second respondent articulated an understanding by which singing is a point of unity between heaven and earth. The depth of spiritual experience, and its apprehension of transcendence, led this respondent

³²² P01

³²³ P01

³²⁴ P01

³²⁵ P01

to recall their time as a chorister – concluding that this experience gave them an enduring image of heaven and eliciting the response that ‘if there’s choirs of heavenly angels, then sign me up’.³²⁶ This almost visceral experience of transcendence led this participant to make a straightforward connection between music and theological experience; they articulated an understanding that saw an inherent spirituality in music which had a theological basis – music drawing one into the experience of the transcendent nature of God. This was summarised by the opinion that ‘I can’t understand people that love [music] so much that don’t believe in God’.³²⁷

This participant’s understanding of music as a qualitative expression of the transcendent nature of God was also reflected in their understanding of the perception of beauty in music. In both their own experience of performing, and in their experience of the performances of others, this respondent perceived a pure beauty in some performances that elicited strong emotional or spiritual responses. Having participated in charismatic worship as well as worship in the Anglican Choral Tradition, this respondent could articulate this across a range of musical styles, and could see this apparent both in the performances of individual singers and in specific musical works.

A further account including an analogical approach to music offered a consideration of transcendence that included, as a central aspect, the quality of musical beauty within wider liturgical experience:

There have been moments where... pieces of music have just about brought a tear to my eye in the worship and performance. It’s just something of such beauty [...] you’re not expecting to be kind of caught off guard like that, that can really kind of move you. I think the building and the acoustic can play a huge part too.[...] There’s something that makes you much more connected on a spiritual kind of level.³²⁸

A distinctive attribute of this respondent’s understanding was the consideration of the sublime and the concept of ‘inner singing’ within their reflection. For this respondent, beauty in music can lead to an experience of the sublime for the performer, in which emotions can be overwhelmed by a spiritual experience which might be the subject for subsequent reflection from a position of faith. This deeper level of emotional and spiritual engagement was seen to contribute, in particular instances, to a sensual and extra-sensual overwhelming in which the individual could experience something transcending the barriers of the senses, and provoking a deeply spiritual personal response, saying that:

³²⁶ P04

³²⁷ P04

³²⁸ P07

there are moments where I've sung certain pieces where it's almost like, it's kind of had shivers down the spine. I think it's felt very spiritual as I've performed them. Usually it tends to happen at a point where it's something I know fairly well and I think I know that the moment is coming. However, there's something in that moment, maybe like the Gloria from the St. Paul's service.

Something like that where it's just, I suppose epic and kind of grand and it fills the building and it's just something you get overwhelmed.³²⁹

This interviewee perceived this experience extended to others present, articulating their perception that:

quite a few people get actually overwhelmed because they realise that there's something quite spiritual in it – you see some people, as it were, become more connected in some way, even when they weren't expecting to – and I think that it becomes something quite unique and special to them.³³⁰

In reflecting on the theological nature of music, this participant was reticent to ascribe direct experience of God to musical performance, but reflection led to the description of an experience that was beyond articulation in the form of normal language, and could be seen as both intensely spiritual, and theological in its nature and content:

words alone can only go so far... there are emotions or there is a kind of spirituality that's sometimes not there [in words alone]. I think music can heighten the senses and [musicians] are therefore trying to make something as perfect as can be, in their eyes, or to their ears. And in doing so they're offering the most perfect thing that they can manage to the Glory of God. And of course, some theology, you might be thinking that because Jesus is perfect we should be trying to be like Him and that we're trying to offer Him the most perfect thing.³³¹

In pointing beyond itself (and to an experience beyond the capacity of normal language to convey), this participant illustrates an analogical theological approach which places music as a unique intermediary of theological experience. These accounts of music as analogical experience of God will be contextualised within the exploration of Anglican spiritual and theological tradition in the first three sections of Chapter 5.

³²⁹ P07

³³⁰ P07

³³¹ P07

4.3c Music as direct experience of God

The following accounts illustrate the way that the transcendent effect of musical performance was articulated by some participants in terms of a more direct experience of God. This attitude, where experience of the musical performance was seen as a direct correlate to experience of the divine nature was stated by one participant in terms that

‘when you're moved by a piece of art or a piece of music or by a personal or an experience or when you're moved by God, the feelings are the same’.³³²

The description of the theological potential of musical performance provided by this participant focused on transcendence of musical experience and the potential universality of its effect on those involved. The resulting construction of the meaning of transcendence in musical terms is seen over time; a horizontal construction of transcendence uniting the musical act of the daily performance of music as having an effect on the spiritual meaning – and feeling – of the liturgical space. This was contextualised in terms of both the pattern of daily worship, with each performance being a single event in the context of a much broader pattern of musical performance and creative endeavour, and the justification for live performance of music, with each performance adding new layers to the ‘feel’ of the place in a way that the playing of recorded music could not replicate.

These factors came together to contribute to an understanding of the significance of musical performance which accounts for the special feeling of both the place and, for those present, the performance; and where there is a qualitative difference of liturgical performance in a truly liturgical environment by distinction from a concert performance in a liturgical setting. This was recognised in part by the observation that the smaller the ‘audience’ in a liturgical performance the more intense the performer’s own experience of the music seemed to become as the focus moved from the act of performing for someone else to the purely musical act of engaging in musical performance. This was a feature common to the observations of many of the singers involved in the study and will be the subject of separate treatment in the next section. In this context, the important factor was the articulation of an equivalence between musical and theological experience, and the perception on the part of the performer that this experience became more intense with the movement away from musical performance in terms of performance for a perceived audience.

However, it can be seen that whilst the dominant mode for interpreting the experience of music within the liturgy was described in broadly ‘horizontal’ terms of transcendence, the vertical (and potentially theological) element was not excluded, with the respondent characterising the

³³² P03

transcendence of art (and within the music) as a feeling that in the act of artistic performance – and despite personal questions as to what is meant by the phrase – one is ‘moved by God’.³³³ This led to an unanswered question as to whether, in a manner that echoes Schleiermacher’s concept of ‘feeling’,³³⁴ this experience of transcendence in art (and specifically in liturgical art) is in fact a feeling that is the same as ‘God’?

A second account of music as direct experience of God

Whilst the approach of the participant outlined above was coloured by the participant’s own secular approach to music-making, the account that follows was provided by a singer whose reflections started from a doctrinally grounded personal spirituality. From this starting point, the participant picked up on the spiritual effect of music on those involved, and the dynamic provided by offering music to God. Beginning with the idea that music is offered to God, they saw this offering of music to be a means by which those participating can ‘praise the Lord in a very beautiful way’.³³⁵ This transcendent experience, described as being experienced as ‘spiritual feelings’,³³⁶ was further described in a way that was not unidirectional but, where as well as the music being directed to God, it provided a means by which God can be made manifest to those involved (whether as performer or engaged listener), saying that ‘you can sort of find God in the music’.³³⁷ The participant understood this perception of the divine in music not to be possible only for performers, but also for those participating by listening, describing that

people are not religious at all and never attend church, but they come for an evensong... it’s a nice way maybe to sort of get people into a church and maybe can give them a certain spiritual feeling with a choral evensong.³³⁸

Talking in more detail of the nature of this spiritual experience of God through music, the participant spoke of the way that this experience is universal in nature – connecting with the universal character of God as love, saying that ‘God is there for everyone, God is love and it doesn’t matter who you are, what you do whatsoever – that is God’.³³⁹

Having spoken of the perception that there is something universal about the musical experience that is spiritual and may become theological in its nature, this respondent

³³³ P03

³³⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher (edited by Richard Crouter), *On Religion*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

³³⁵ P06

³³⁶ P06

³³⁷ P06

³³⁸ P06

³³⁹ P06

articulated that 'you can catch something, or you can grab something with music'.³⁴⁰ However, the nature of this feeling that is caught with music is beyond description in easy words:

You can say so many words, you can say, that is it or that's what you need; but maybe with music you can also sort of create your own feelings.³⁴¹

In this, we can see a reflecting and understanding that God is self-expressed in a particular way in music, and that this expression of the divine nature transcends the ability for easy description using words, normal sense-perception or simple language.

Whilst the first account of direct experience resulted in a Schleiermachian equivalence of 'feeling' that equated the experience of music with experience of God, the second account of direct experience led to an articulation of the ineffable nature of the universal nature of musical experience. These ideas of theological content of musical experience will be recapitulated in Part 3 in consideration of the theological content of musical performances (sections 5.4 and 5.5, respectively).

³⁴⁰ P06

³⁴¹ P06

4.3d Two accounts of music as theological experience for others

As well as the experience of the transcendent nature of God experienced through music by performers, there were also two participants who saw the value of their performances and its transcendent qualities as being experienced by others. Both these accounts have common ground in understanding the transcendent capacity of music being of primary importance to non-performers within the context of liturgical performance. Whilst there is common ground in this, each participant places this in a different context in relation to their own experience; the first seeing their own spirituality generated by experiences outside their musical performance, whilst the second sees their own inability to experience transcendence within their performances to be due to the practical, physical and technical demands of performing. Whilst the emphasis of the first participant was placed on the effect music had on others present, the second account included reference to the role of the singer in offering music to God within a wider corporate context, thereby making a connection between earth and heaven that is described further in the section exploring music as offering (section 4.5 and chapter 6).

Transcendence for others, where the faith of the performer is generated beyond the performance context

This first account was given by a participant who expressed the theological narrative in terms of the third person – seeing their work within a wider context, and one where their own personal spirituality was formed elsewhere (within a different tradition of the Church). The transcendent effect of music was perceived by them to affect those participating in the performance as listeners. Here the prime focus was on the aesthetic quality of musical performance, and the effect this has on the listener:

I think it is actually what [music] can do for other people. You know, I love the act of singing and I love making music, but it's also conveying that emotion and making somebody else feel something that I think is really powerful about music in general and, particularly, sacred music. It's written for a purpose and some of the poetry and words of the things that we perform are so beautiful. But it's different if you're singing them. [...] But when you're singing them, you're not focusing on the words.³⁴²

To other people... it's like a halfway house to God. [...] There are certain pieces of music where you do feel, I mean, you're listening to it like, "God is here," I think. But I only get that when listening to it.³⁴³

As with the more personal experiences of transcendence outlined earlier in this section, central to the theological perspective on musical activity is the beauty that is disclosed within the

³⁴² P02

³⁴³ P02

performance. Music is seen to add a spiritual dimension to worship, by which the performance of music that is offered to God draws in the listener and, in turn, draws them closer to God. The dominant image used in describing this was of music as a 'half-way house' to God.³⁴⁴ Here, the role of music is in highlighting the beauty of God, though in this case directed to the affect music has on those involved as non-performing participants more keenly aware of that which is deep within them.

However, an important point in this reflection is that the respondent themselves felt their personal spiritual practice to be more deeply forged (in terms of cognition at least) in the exposition of scripture:

I regularly pray, read the Bible.[...] When I'm listening to homily, that's when I feel like I'm practising my faith because I'm listening to what they're saying, I'm engaging with it and it sparks thoughts in my head.³⁴⁵

Thus, we can see that this participant's personal faith was primarily fed elsewhere than in their musical contribution to the liturgy. However, when considering the spiritual and theological content of the music they performed in the liturgy they observed, in a way that is consonant with the analogical approaches outlined earlier, that the combination of music and poetry combine to present something of deeper beauty. It is this beauty that is offered in worship, a point that was reinforced when they considered the different dynamics of performing in the context of a concert. However, this spiritual aspect (and its theological potential) was something that they were only able to engage with when they were not singing, and therefore they saw their singing as enabling this spiritual participation in others.

This posits a perceived understanding of the corporate and collaborative role of music within the liturgy that involves performer and listener in a collaborative theological venture. In this way, the different personal approach to the spirituality of music is contained within a broader theological pattern of understanding where a different, corporate theological narrative arises; whilst the performer's personal theological narrative is not generated from their musical performance, they see themselves operating within a broader corporate theological system where participatory patterns of understanding can be seen at play.

Technical demands on the performer leaving transcendent experience to others

The final account given here illustrates the way that, whilst perceiving an element of transcendent experience to the reception of musical performance, some singers do not ascribe it theologically

³⁴⁴ P02

³⁴⁵ P02

revelatory qualities in their own experience. This account of transcendence was the most tightly articulated (and shortest), but its significance is as an account provided by a participant whose explicit faith position was strongly agnostic. Despite the expressed doubt within their personal faith, the respondent articulated the view that music held a quality by which it could 'transport people sort of beyond the physical realm'.³⁴⁶ From this notion of implicit spirituality in music the respondent appropriated theological language to describe the way that in performance singers 'do it [sing in the liturgy] because you are there to glorify God'.³⁴⁷ This presence of an explicitly doxological aspect to this individual's understanding was an indication that they felt themselves far from passive, and was reflected in their understanding that

there's always something in it [musical performance] of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens - it's always there.³⁴⁸

Within this theological framework, they explained their own lack of spiritual engagement being a result of the fact that they are 'focused on the music... [having] a particular job and that is to lead the music and the singing in the best way I possibly can... rather than necessarily, how spiritual I feel'.³⁴⁹ Here we can see this participant outline the way in which there is a complexity that results in parallel theological narratives – in this case, their own agnosticism (generated, in part, by the technical demands of performance), an understanding of their performance within a theological framework of the corporate offering of the Church which seeks to 'glorify God', and the potential for spiritual engagement by others in musical performance that can 'transport people... beyond the physical realm'. In this way this account balances multiple personal and corporate understandings when interpreting the activity of singing in its liturgical context.

³⁴⁶ P05

³⁴⁷ P05

³⁴⁸ P05

³⁴⁹ P05

Some conclusions

In some of the accounts above, we could see musical activity as an integral aspect of the expression of the participant's own faith placed music within the wider aesthetic context of worship by which the 'beauty of holiness' is found alongside poetry, the light and darkness of the building, and the beauty of the architectural setting.³⁵⁰ In Chapter 5 we will explore how the notion that God is disclosed in the beauty of music and art has an obvious synergy with the Anglican approaches to theology and spirituality. Such an approach to understanding music sees music as a means of pursuing 'the beauty of holiness' within a participative theological framework. Meanwhile, the idea of beauty within music being offered to God (who is the source of beauty) has its echoes not only within Anglican spirituality but also in recent Roman Catholic theological writings, such as de Lubac (who articulates the concept of gift received through Grace, being returned as gift), and Josef Ratzinger (whose theological approach to liturgy and music, with that of de Lubac, is explored in Chapter 3.1). This overlap between the writings of some Roman Catholic theologians and strands within Anglican theology and practice are indicative of the catholicity, tradition and stress on the inheritance from the patristic era that is a feature of cathedrals within the Church of England that is a part of the inheritance the Anglican tradition they embody.

For other participants describing their own experience of performance with a spiritual or theological perspective, the concept of music was expressed in terms of pure experience of the 'sublime' and the universal nature of musical experience; something indicative of a Romantic or post-Romantic approach that might best be associated with liberal theological approaches. Again, the place that such approaches might have within the context of the developing Anglican tradition of theology and spirituality will be explored in Part 3 when considering the historical, institutional and theological context of the material gathered in the course of this research.

Finally, there were two participants for whom their personal faith was not connected so directly with their musical activity within the cathedral's worshipping life, but who could say that, for others, music was a 'half-way house to God'³⁵¹ (whilst acknowledging that their own focus on the needs of performance meant that they could only engage with music in this way in other settings where they could participate in the role of listener and thereby appreciate the beauty of the music). Even more striking is the way that those individuals who professed no faith (certainly no faith in the doctrinal terms they perceived the Church to mean) but for whom music had a clear role in expressing something beyond mere ordinary experience. This can be seen encapsulated in the statements, from two respondents: firstly, stating that the setting of musical performance within the liturgy

³⁵⁰ For example, P01

³⁵¹ P02

gives deeper meaning by which music 'reaches another level' and by which musical performance becomes something 'greater than the sum of its parts' that, difficult to put into words, is not experienced in the same way in any other setting; and, secondly, identifying that the role of music is to 'transport people beyond the physical realm' in a way that (despite a profession of no faith) reflects the offering of voices to the heavens as being 'to the glory of God'. Here we can see that, no matter the professed faith of the respondent, or the connection they make between that faith and their musical performance in the liturgy, there is a profound understanding of the transcendent quality of music in a way that is freighted with theological significance (and communicated using theological language). This beauty is not just something that is qualified in musical terms, but is something with greater import – drawing not only on a secular understanding of musical beauty, but having strong links to the theological notion of beauty as one of the attributes of God. As will be explored in more detail in chapter 3.1, this provides a link both to participatory theology and to the Anglican focus on the beauty of holiness revealed in worship. Also of note is the way that these accounts necessitate a distinction between the personal understanding of the performers and the broader understanding they have of their activity within the wider corporate context, reflecting the differences between individual and corporate discourses as described by Stringer.

4.4 THEME 4: Singing as event

4.4a Liturgy and secular singing as event

A further area common to all conversations was an exploration of the way in which musical performances might be viewed as an 'event'. Within a diversity of responses there were common themes and shared assumptions operating, indicating a common landscape within which individual pictures were drawn. Naturally, there was a clear difference in perception of the performance dynamic when liturgical performance was contrasted with concert performances. The strongest common theme was the notion that the nature of performance changed depending on the setting, with less intimate, large-scale settings having a very different focus to smaller scale performances, which tended to be more spiritually significant. This latter point related to the ability, within performance, to engage at a personal level, and a number of respondents expanded on this point by contrasting the experience of solo performance with that of choral singing. Finally, the nature of musical performance as a product or commodity that was 'attractive' was open to discussion by some participants; some respondents reaching different conclusions as to the nature and effect of this from a spiritual perspective.

4.4b The affect of singing in small and large-scale settings

In all the group conversations, and in all but one of the individual interviews, participants made strong observations about the nature and scale of performances, and the effect that this had on their own understanding and experience of musical participation. This was commonly associated with the difference between types of performance (i.e. routine liturgical, special liturgical and concert). Across the conversations a pattern emerged regarding the ability of the performers to engage differently with the performance when the explicit aim of performance was liturgical and small in scale. With the one exception (where there were no strong feelings on this matter) participants in both stages of the study identified that small scale performance settings provided a situation in which their own performance became more significant (either for them, or in their perception of the experience of those engaged in participation by listening). A clear correlation appeared for a number of respondents who felt able to engage at a deeper and more spiritually explicit level in performances where there was less of a burden in performing for the benefit of others (whether spiritual or otherwise).

One of the strongest responses in this area was provided by a participant noting that singing in a small setting is 'more meaningful to the performer' where, freed from the demands of a listening audience the performers are able to focus on a higher standard of performance so that what is sung becomes 'more than just a spectacle'.³⁵² In further discussion this participant connected together

³⁵² P03

a number of aspects relating to the performance setting – combining opinions about the physical setting, number of participants and congregants, and the purpose and function of the performance:

I've probably come to enjoy those even more. A compline for only three or four people is more meaningful to me, I think, than the huge nave service with a thousand priests and a big brass band.³⁵³

It's probably I must say as a secular musician, it's more to do with the music, for me, than it is to do with the spirituality. There's probably a better word for it than that. And I think in a small intimate setting the music becomes easier to achieve a much higher standard of performance, I think, if everyone concentrates on it in a different way. And it becomes more personal, more meaningful and it becomes more than just a spectacle in a way, I think.³⁵⁴

it reaches another level in those instances. So, there is definitely more to it than just the music. When it's combined appropriately with the setting and with the liturgy and with the story that you're trying to tell and so on, all of those things compound and create an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.³⁵⁵

When you're moved by a piece of art or a piece of music or by a personal or an experience or when you're moved by God, the feelings are the same.³⁵⁶

Interestingly, this contributor was more ambiguous in terms of their own religious belief, but was comfortable describing the spiritual experience of singing in smaller settings. This was done in terms where, released from the pressure of performance for other [human] listeners, the performer felt better able to become aware of the transcendent or sublime in their own musical activity. This was made possible by the different focus in the smaller-scale, regular opportunities for worship where the performer is better able to 'relax and absorb it'. In this articulation of the dynamics of performance there are parallels with the analysis of contemporary spirituality where the focus is on activities that are 'spiritual but not religious'.³⁵⁷

The connection between small-scale performance settings and an enhanced experience of singing within the liturgy was well-attested in other interviews. Another participant connected this with an understanding of the regular rhythm of musical worship having its origins in monastic tradition of music offered to God rather than for the benefit of others, saying that:

there might be one or no one in the choir [...] it felt a bit more monastic in its kind of atmosphere, for the glory of God.³⁵⁸

³⁵³ P03

³⁵⁴ P03

³⁵⁵ P03

³⁵⁶ P03

³⁵⁷ Sven Erlandson, *Spiritual but Not Religious: A Call to Religious Revolution in America*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2000).

³⁵⁸ P07

They continued, saying that ‘it was more of an intimate kind of feeling’ that was experienced in these situations.³⁵⁹ Such small-scale performances were contrasted with the very different experience of singing in larger-scale settings, even where these were still liturgical in character:

I think sometimes the feeling is though, with the big, large events, is that, especially if it repeats, sometimes some cathedrals have done three or four different performances of the same carol service as it were, and it does feel slightly as if you’re kind of churning out for the mass market.³⁶⁰

This reaction to the scale of performance was reflected in other interviews, with a common theme that smaller scale settings reinforced the essential character of the liturgical framework within which the singers perform:

It doesn’t bother me in the slightest if on a Monday night or whatever day of the week it is hardly anybody’s there because we’re not doing it for the customers anyway.³⁶¹

...that’s sort of the unique thing about it, I think, is that it happens every day and it doesn’t matter whether there are five people or there are 50 or 100 or whatever.³⁶²

Here we can see the smaller scale setting reinforcing an understanding that the daily round of worship is of an offering to God that does not depend on the presence of others. In reflecting on the experience of singing in intimate acts of worship, some reflections articulated a spiritual or theological aspect to the singer’s understanding:

in terms of the scale, I would say the more people there are, the more, I think definitely for me, the more I feel I have to perform, rather than feeling this is a spiritual experience.³⁶³

Whilst this singer used broad spiritual language, the point was reiterated by another singer whose explicitly theological reflection highlighted the doxological aspect of the singer’s activity and the vicarious nature of the worship offered by the institution within which the liturgical performance of music takes place:

we’re doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they’re there or not.³⁶⁴

Undergirding many of these comments regarding the intensity of experience in small-scale liturgical performances was both a practical appreciation of the focus on the music being performed and a connection with a perceived inheritance where the scale, scope and purpose of performances was linked to the institutional inheritance of cathedral foundations. This link to the monastic or quasi-monastic origins of cathedrals as institutions will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.2

³⁵⁹ P07

³⁶⁰ P07

³⁶¹ P01

³⁶² P06

³⁶³ P05

³⁶⁴ P01

4.4c A difference in performance: Concert vs liturgy

One of the undercurrents beneath these conversations regarding the scale of performance was a perceived difference between singing in liturgical and concert settings. Illustrating this were comments, made by a participant who brought a strong personal Christian faith to their singing, speaking of the contrasting experience of singing in liturgical and concert settings and how some large-scale liturgical performances could feel more like concert performances than acts of personal devotion:

It's always there, you see. What I say, it's there more like a, it almost feels like a concert, it's not sort of, you get a different sort of feeling about it.³⁶⁵

They continued, using secular language, to articulate the way participating in smaller scale non-concert settings was a qualitatively different experience, saying:

it's more intimate, I think, maybe sometimes even nicer to sing for only 10 people who are very careful listeners then.³⁶⁶

This distinction between the experience of performing in intimate liturgical settings compared to large-scale services, and the difference in perception that resulted for most participants of this study was amplified when it came to considering the difference between concert and liturgical performances. As with liturgical performances, this difference was recounted both by those with clearly held faith positions and those with less well-defined doctrinal beliefs. Performances in concerts have a clearly contrasting dynamic for performers; the priorities were perceptibly different when conversations discussed concert performance in comparison to liturgical singing.

As the move was made away from understanding the offering of music for, or on behalf of, others in a liturgical context toward concert performances there was a more explicit focus on how the music was received by those listening as a definable audience. This was paralleled with consideration by those involved of the way that there is a perception of an economic aspect necessitating high-quality performances in concert settings that was qualitatively different from the idea of a singer offering of their best within a liturgical performance. Whilst the motivation for the offering of high-quality performance in a liturgical setting had earlier been seen and explored from a range of different perspectives (for example, a personal offering, an offering on behalf of the church, a performance to enable others to worship), the move to a non-liturgical, concert setting saw a far more restricted response from participants with the focus of the performance dynamic shifting consistently to the audience present during the performance.

³⁶⁵ P06

³⁶⁶ P06

For most participants, this resulted in a consequent shift in their own perception and experience in a variety of ways. One participant spoke of a sense that the dominant relationship within concert performance shifts from a complex three-way dynamic relationship between congregation, performer and God to a simpler dynamic within concert performance where the focus becomes a two-way transaction between choir and audience.³⁶⁷ Just as this participant spoke of the way that the focus moves onto the reception of 'sound' by the audience in concert settings,³⁶⁸ another participant spoke of a focus on technical ability in the concert setting which they contrasted to a focus on the offering of something of beauty to God in liturgical performance.³⁶⁹ The emotional, or felt, response to these changes was touched on by another participant who spoke of a more profound experience of performance in liturgical (and especially small-scale, liturgical) settings when contrasted to larger scale liturgical celebrations. This participant spoke of the way that there was a difference between liturgical performance where the music becomes part of the wider theatre of the liturgy, and concert performances which tend to be 'less deeply stirring' and 'less profound' in their effect.³⁷⁰ Another respondent linked these differences to the physical space in which the performance took place, with a sense of presenting to an audience in concert situations where the performers face the audience on staging by contrast to the more immersive and intimate setting of the regular liturgy where the singers are surrounded by the congregation.³⁷¹ Finally, there were comments on the overall way that a move from an intimate spiritual encounter in routine daily worship to a focus on performance standards in larger-scale and concert performances had a direct effect on the way that such performances were understood and experienced from the perspective of the performer:³⁷²

a big devotional concert...it's a big project – it's something you work towards [...] and so, for me, anyway, I don't tend to get anything transcendent or sublime out of that. Not because I'm detached or uninterested, but just because you're focusing on completely different things. And it's more important that everything goes just right. [...] So, there are different pressures and different expectations on the choir and so on. [...] You can't really relax and absorb it in the same way as you can at evensong.³⁷³

Extending the reflections on the centrality of high performance standards, two of the participants in the interviews (whose comments were echoed less strongly by others) reflected on the attractive nature of high-quality musical performance as a means of attracting people to attend both concert and liturgical settings. One of these participants perceived the need for consistently high

³⁶⁷ P01

³⁶⁸ P01

³⁶⁹ P02

³⁷⁰ P03

³⁷¹ P06

³⁷² P07

³⁷³ P03

performance primarily through the lens offering the best to God on behalf of others,³⁷⁴ whilst the second voiced concern that the consistent performance to high standards within a liturgical setting led some to perceive liturgical events as though they were performances for the benefit of those attending.³⁷⁵ Such an approach engaged with the possibility that services might be perceived as little more than free musical performances with their spiritual reality minimised.³⁷⁶ This connects with the way that the work of singers in the liturgy seems to be perceived in the wider Church – that music might be seen as a way by which to attract people through the doors to the ‘real’ business of the church. This concern is certainly borne out by some of the wider literature, as explored when considering existing literature in Chapter 2, and especially in recent church reports where the statistics of those attending services and the attractive nature of choral music at engaging people on the fringes of the Church are made explicit.³⁷⁷ Such concerns on the part of those singing within the context of Anglican cathedrals seem to be borne out in the *Anecdote to Evidence* report which, having commented on numerical growth in those attending cathedral worship, sought evidence only from cathedral deans and those attending services as members of the congregations.³⁷⁸ Whilst noting the importance of music as an attractive element of worship for those attending, there was no engagement in the report with the core community of singers at the heart of the daily liturgical life of the cathedrals.

The underlying current among participants tended to see the official engagement of the wider Church with cathedral worship minimising an important feature of such worship as, in the words of one participant, ‘not only attractive, but affective’; minimising the very act of offering music to God in the broader context of poetic and architectural beauty that was something that was transformative of and in itself.³⁷⁹ In this respect, the engagement with the implicit theology articulated by participants which is the focus of Chapter 5 offers an important corrective to views that focus on music for its attractive rather than theological and affective characteristics by articulating a distinctive theology of music within Anglican worship. As we will then see in Chapters 6 and 7 how this theology arises within the institutional framework of the cathedrals and is historically grounded in the episodic development of Anglican spirituality and theology.

It was apparent for most singers that contrasting liturgical with concert performances of music threw this aspect of the personal effect the liturgical performance of music had into relief. Another

³⁷⁴ P07

³⁷⁵ P05

³⁷⁶ For example, P04, P06

³⁷⁷ Section 2.3a.

³⁷⁸ *From Anecdote to Evidence*, downloaded from [www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from anecdote to evidence - the report.pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from_anecdote_to_evidence_-_the_report.pdf) on 14th March 2023, pp. 21-23.

³⁷⁹ P01

respondent, aware of the ways that choral evensong has developed in the Netherlands (where it is often seen far more as event than worship),³⁸⁰ contrasted this with the way that the regular performance of choral music within Anglican cathedrals is in a context of the routine of daily (or near daily) performance of music to the highest standards, and that an important and distinctive feature of this is the primary focus on music as offering.³⁸¹ As we have already seen, this stress on the routine, and on the offering of music in the context of worship, are an important part of the sense of inherited tradition that was of importance to a majority of respondents; highlighting for many of them that the focus of their work was not in performing for the direct benefit of others, but singing to a high standard on behalf of others and offering something of beauty to God.

4.4d Drawing thoughts together

We can see across the responses summarised in this section that there was a common feeling that small-scale liturgical performance settings present opportunities with a particular dynamic in the engagement of performers with their musical performances. Central to these reflections is an understanding of small-scale, intimate settings for performance making a more direct connection to the monastic spirituality that underlies the regular recitation of the Daily Offices. This feature of Anglican choral worship reflects the institutional and historical developments underpinning the tradition of musical performance within the liturgy which will be explored in more detail in chapters 6 and 7. There was a clear and frequent experience of smaller-scale settings being of especial import to many of those participating, and that this had a key role in identifying the distinctive work of the singers in their liturgical setting. In exploring this, some participants used entirely secular whilst others drew on language that resonates clearly with the inherited tradition (by focusing on the daily nature of their performance within the liturgy, and its perceived ‘monastic’ origins), often also placing their work within a theological framework of beauty offered to the glory of God (no matter whether there are others present to witness this offering). This use of historically grounded language, adopting elements of the history of the tradition and its institutions to articulate the understanding held by the singers is suggestive of a wider influence of the history of the Anglican Choral Tradition and the institutions within which it subsists. Similarly, the theological element of the accounts provided by participants reflected an orientation of performance toward God and a stress on the pure performance of music as a thing of beauty to the glory of God. This framework of understanding grew from the fact that smaller scale performances naturally involve fewer listeners, highlighting a focus on music as an element of worship that is non-congregational in intent, and with its role as an offering for the glory of God brought to the foreground. The contrast of such experiences with that of singing in concerts and larger-scale liturgical settings highlights the

³⁸⁰ See Hanna Rijken, *My Soul Doth Magnify: The Appropriation of Anglican Choral Evensong in the Netherlands*, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2020).

³⁸¹ P06

importance of these features in the routine daily activity of the singers participating in this study. Institutional and theological strands interweave to indicate a distinctive pattern of understanding that is indicative of a common grounding of participants' understanding in the institutional character of the contexts in which they sing (the 'monastic' and vicarious character of the pattern of daily prayer) and a theological rationale that is conducive to a broadly Anglican sensitivity regarding spirituality and theology (where beauty is manifesting in music that is offered to the glory of God). These connections will be explored in more detail in Part 3, and the experiences of the singers participating in this study will be viewed through the lens of their theological implications, institutional influences, and this historical context in which they have arisen.

4.5 THEME 5: Singing as offering

4.5 An offering of a gift received

One motif that recurred in a number of conversations and interviews was understanding music as ‘offering’ – whether this was seen as an offering for the benefit of or on behalf of others, or an offering toward God. Understandings of offering moved progressively from what might be seen as a horizontal human-to-human relationship to a more vertical, transcendent relationship, which led to an understanding by some participants of the offering that was made in performance being conceived as the return of a gift received from God. The dynamic articulated by respondents ranged from music having an almost functional role in enabling others (either emotionally or spiritually) toward an understanding of musical performance as being vicariously offered on behalf of others and on, beyond this, to a dynamic understanding of music as part of a relationship between the performer and God.

The concept of music being the Church’s offering on behalf of others was also articulated in another interview, where the participant reflected that they were ‘perfectly comfortable with it [their musical performance] not aiding anyone else’s worship because [...] we’re doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they’re there or not’.³⁸² Reflecting an Anglican sensibility regarding the beauty of holiness in worship, they went on to reiterate the need for this offering of worship to be of the highest quality:

I think cathedral liturgy, not just the music but everything about it, is definitely a requirement of us to do the best we can with the time and resources we’ve got. [...] I definitely think that it is incumbent on us to do the best we can for God [...] because it speaks to those of us who are taking part but also to other people in lots of different ways with the music, the light and darkness in the cathedral or in any building, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you’re hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry. I mean, in every sort of artistic way, it’s speaking of God and the beauty of holiness.³⁸³

Here, the explicit offering of worship did not depend on the presence of others (though they might apprehend something of beauty in the liturgical act), but was an offering of the best quality directed primarily as an act of devotion toward God. This understanding of the need to offer the best in musical performance by virtue of its character as an offering to God was reflected by another participant who, reiterating the sense of beauty inherent in the liturgical and musical activity, highlighted the impetus that the direction of this activity toward God provides to the performance:

I think music can heighten the senses and because composers, I think, try to write music almost like an art form, they are therefore trying to make something as perfect as can be, in their eyes, or to their ears. And in doing so

³⁸² P01

³⁸³ P01

they're offering that, ideally the most perfect thing that they can manage to the Glory of God. And of course, some theology, you might be thinking that because Jesus is perfect we should be trying to be like Him and that we're trying to offer Him the most perfect thing.³⁸⁴

Both participants cited above saw their musical activity as an integrated part of their personal spiritual life and understood in explicitly theological terms that were described from a consciously Anglican spiritual and theological perspective. It is therefore unsurprising that their accounts reflect the Anglican approach to seeking the beauty of holiness in worship (see section 5.2) and described the offering of worship in terms consonant with the institutional development of cathedral choirs (explored in more detail in chapter 6).³⁸⁵ However, other participants within the study coming with less specifically Anglican worldviews also reflected these perspectives in their own accounts – sometimes providing theological accounts that were at odds with their self-espoused spirituality.

This is exemplified by one participant who, despite not seeing their own singing as part of their personal spirituality, nonetheless gave an account of the extra dimension music adds to worship that was theologically inflected by reference not to its personal effect on them, but on the way that it formed part of the wider offering of the Church, recounting that:

I've listened to a spoken service versus a sung service, they're entirely different. And for the congregation and the church alike, I think [music] just adds another dimension – and it is getting closer to God, I think. It's offering, like it is an offering. It's probably the highest form of offering, in my opinion. The way to get closest to God is through music.³⁸⁶

Here, the participant articulates the way that the offering of music is multivalent – benefitting both those present who are listening within the wider corporate offering of the Church that is directed toward God. In turn, they saw this theological perspective providing a means of increased intimacy with God for those who were not engaged in the act of performance. Reflecting on the way that they themselves did not gain spiritually from their musical performance, they asserted that the theological impact was present 'for others', continuing to say that 'it's the highest offering to God', whilst reflecting that if they were themselves a listener 'it's how I would feel closest to God if I'm listening to it'.³⁸⁷

The motif of offering as a way to understand music within the liturgy, with personal, corporate and vicarious elements colouring some of the varied ways that it was used as an interpretative concept. The interviews provided examples of the personal aspect of offering music such as the statement

³⁸⁴ P07

³⁸⁵ Appendix A.

³⁸⁶ P02

³⁸⁷ P02

made by one participant that ‘there’s always something in it of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens – it’s always there.’³⁸⁸ Taking a more corporate perspective was another participant who described the way that ‘when I’m singing in a church context [...] I feel almost like the whole package is being offered up.’³⁸⁹ Similarly, the motif of the vicarious role of liturgical singers, with its institutional and historical associations, was reflected in comments such as those of a participant who detailed how ‘when I’m in a religious context, in a service, then I’m being part of the choir that is offering up to God in that we’re offering that on behalf of the congregation [...] we’re, on their behalf, offering it up.’³⁹⁰ These examples illustrate the personal, corporate and institutional influences that have been emerging in the course examining the data within this study.

Reflecting further on the nature of the offering the participant quoted above gave an historically freighted account that made links with the institutional origins of the choirs in which they sang, evoking the worship offered by a monastic community as a way to describe activity in the present:

we would carry out the evensong ourselves and quite often there would be the nice, a plain chant Psalms, quite often. And it would just be a very, we’d decide who would do the reading, who would do... and it was just, I suppose, a proper, you felt like a proper community offering something up.³⁹¹

Here, we can see a further example of the way that the characteristic features of the historical foundations of the Anglican Choral Tradition are carried through into the descriptions provided in some of the interviews. Here the invocation of plainchant in a small group gathering to offer music within the context of the daily office clearly derives from the monastic inheritance that is part of the historic foundations of Anglican cathedrals, a feature that will be explored in more detail in Part 3 which looks at institutional and historical perspectives from which to understand the activity of lay singers.

The potential gap between the dynamics at play in understanding the reception of performances that take place within the liturgy illustrates the way in which the comment which opened this section, with a participant stating that they were ‘perfectly comfortable with it [their musical performance] not aiding anyone else’s worship because [...] we’re doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they’re there or not,’³⁹² can be placed alongside the same participant understanding that their music can also have a very different role in attracting people to worship:

³⁸⁸ P05

³⁸⁹ P07

³⁹⁰ P07

³⁹¹ P07

³⁹² P01

Lots of people come to the cathedral because of the music. And the building.
But mostly it's the, yeah, people like taking part in sort of active high-quality
worship.³⁹³

Here we can see two polarities in understanding the musical activity, with a focus on the effect of music on those physically attending services and experiencing musical performances within the liturgy balancing an understanding of that same activity as primarily being an offering to God. A quotation from another participant highlighting the way competing dynamics in performance can be linked together within the setting of choral worship. In discussing the role of music as something that attracts people to attend acts of worship, one participant reiterated the way that this takes place in parallel with the offering of music as worship to God, stating that:

the two are intrinsically linked - we see it, as musicians, we see it as what we're offering to attract people in. Because we're thinking, we're singing, come and listen to us.³⁹⁴

This focus on attracting people to worship through the experience of high-quality musical performance was seen by them to sit alongside a deeper spiritual purpose. However, their perception was that this perspective was not explicit to those attending and was not reflected in wider appreciation of musical performance within this liturgical setting was reflected in the comment that:

we don't actually perceive, because a lot of us aren't practicing enough in our faith [...] because that's not what C of E people would do is it - that's not what we would do?³⁹⁵

They understood that this lack of engagement with the spiritual perspective of performance could lead to an ignorance of the effect that their performance might have, stating that:

we don't know that that isn't actually the effect that we're having on the people.³⁹⁶

In its own way, this echoes the purpose of this study – to describe the spiritual impact of singing in the liturgy and to articulate its theological potential within the institutional and historical context of Anglican theology and spirituality.

Here we find one of the risks of not fully understanding the dynamics at play when considering the performance of music within the cathedral context – that a lack of understanding of the complexity of the performance dynamics may lead to an over-simplification, with a consequent failure to appreciate the spiritual aspects that are present and their theological potential. This risk was articulated in a comment where the participant expressed their concern for the continued spiritual

³⁹³ P01

³⁹⁴ P04

³⁹⁵ P04

³⁹⁶ P04

practice of the daily performance of music within the liturgy in the light of a wider Church preoccupation with attendance levels of congregations:

I do believe that there's enough love for evensong but, as a musician, my worry is that the church will drop it because it doesn't put bums on the seats. But I hope to God that the cathedrals can maintain it because it is a world-beating institution.³⁹⁷

A similar sentiment regarding the continuance of the daily performance of music within the liturgy was made by another participant who asserted that:

it's brilliant to keep tradition going, which we have here for hundreds of years. But I think also it's a great opportunity for young children to have a fantastic opportunity to make music on a very, very high standard. Also, it's important to keep this going, that we can keep going with the worship in this way because those children, hopefully, part of them will carry on what we are doing now.³⁹⁸

These comments reflect an underlying anxiety about the survival of choral worship within the Church of England and are suggestive of a need to articulate the distinctive contribution this makes to the spiritual life of the Church. When linked with the divergent understandings of music sung within worship as an offering to God and music as an attractive aspect of worship to draw others to attend acts of worship, this highlights the need to properly understand the activity of singers within the context of Anglican Choral tradition. Such an understanding needs to reflect not only the spiritual reality and theological potential of such activity, but also to ground this in an understanding of the institutional structures that have shaped this pattern of worship and the historical context within which it arose. This will be the focus of the interpretation presented in Part 3 of this study.

As well as establishing the concept of offering as a way of understanding the work of singers in the liturgy, this section has brought together some of the other trends that might have been observed as the data from the interviews has been outlined throughout this part of the study. We have heard of the importance of performing music of the highest quality, as an offering to God that seeks to reflect the beauty of God in human worship. Within the accounts in this section various themes have arisen cutting across those that have shaped responses seen throughout this part of the study including assertions of the role of the cathedral (or choral foundation) as an institution that communicates a tradition that has distinctive spiritual and theological characteristics – some of which, such as the primary concept of music as offering, can seem to stand out as being countercultural in today's Church of England. There have also been some indications of the ways in which some participants expressed an apprehension that a failure to appreciate and value this tradition focused on offering to God in a Church that they perceive to be focused on the attractive

³⁹⁷ P04

³⁹⁸ P06

qualities of worship (as measured in attendance by a wider congregation). Whilst it is noted above that these qualities are presently in sympathy with each other – the quality of music offered in worship contributing to levels of attendance by non-performers (in a musical sense) – fully understanding the nature of this tradition is necessary if it is to be understood for its spiritual and theological characteristics, and have theological as well as missiological value in the Church. As will be suggested in Part 3, understanding the tradition in its fulness might be made possible by drawing on the insights expressed in these last comments – the spiritual and theological possibilities of this data being understood in the context of institutions that transmit a particular corporate narrative of the place of music within the liturgy that arises out of the historical context in which they were formed and reformed.

Some conclusions

In reflecting on the concept of music as offering in the context of the worship of cathedrals, we have seen once again the theological motif of music as a means of realising the beauty of holiness within a doxological context (which is consonant with a participatory theological narrative) that creates a context in which music can be seen as an offering that is itself a ‘spiritual sacrifice’ and a means of responding to gift from God. In part, this understanding of music as offering was articulated by reference to a perceived monastic (or quasi-monastic) ethos of praying and worshipping for the world, connecting both to the monastic origins of some cathedrals and the role of vicars choral in offering worship on behalf of others in non-monastic cathedrals. Participants touched on the concept of the body of singers as a body that worships on behalf of the wider body, connecting with wider sociological interpretations of vicarious religion as well as more historically grounded influences on self-understanding articulated above. Whilst many articulated the idea of music as offering in a context that minimised the need for others to be present, there were also comments relating to the idea that music can be a means of engaging others in the act of worship through the quality of music experienced within worship. Alongside a tacet acceptance by many participants of the offering of music through a projected corporate understanding of the place of music, a minority of participants articulated an ‘attractive’ understanding of music. This led to some comments alluding to a fear that the tradition of choral worship might be endangered by misunderstanding within the wider Church – where the quality of offering of music to God that is expressed as an inherent part of the Anglican approach to worship may be interpreted by others predominantly in the context of attracting a wider congregation to join the worshipping community of the Church.

Conclusion: Singing in its institutional situation and historical context

Taking their cue from the themes identified during the broad-based conversations that took place in the preliminary phase of research, each of the themes examined above take as its starting point an element of the experience of musical performance within the liturgy, namely: singing of texts; singing and personal faith; singing as a transcendent experience; singing as event; and singing as offering.

As each of these themes have been explored, a number of cross-cutting themes emerged that may help to explain why, despite the varying positions of personal faith asserted by the participants, there were significant degrees of commonality in the response that were given (albeit in some cases these similarities were given in the third person narratives which distanced them from the participants themselves – giving a perceived ‘corporate’ understanding alongside their own individual experiences). Whilst this is apparent in the emergence of motifs, such as the idea of ‘the beauty of holiness’ that occur across a number of themes, it is most notable in comparing the responses regarding personal faith with those of transcendent experience.

In these, and other, responses given by the various participants there are some clues as to the origin of these cross-cutting currents that might be a factor in creating such a ‘corporate’ response – the institutional setting within which the singers work and the historical context in which those institutions have arisen. The similarity between the personal positions adopted by those espousing an explicitly ‘Anglican’ personal spirituality and the corporate pattern of understanding that was provided by other participants provides a significant clue as to the fundamental nature of these institutional and historical factors within the Anglican setting in which these musical performances take place.

Reflections on the institutional context within which performances took place were notable both for their relative brevity and for their pervasive nature. This means that this is one of the briefest themes to explore but a theme that, ironically, by its very brevity suggests something of importance, as the brevity in explicit terms may indicate the way that institutional factors shape participants underlying assumptions. Every conversation (and each of the subsequent in-depth interviews) included reference to the institutional context within which the musical activity was taking place.

Part 2 has provided evidence from lay singers of a variety of personal approaches to understanding the spiritual aspects of their liturgical activity. However, whilst variety of personal engagement is

evident, participants also provided a coherent and consistent corporate account of their activity can be discerned. These more corporate accounts of understanding were inflected with meaning that reflects the institutional context of their work and the historical context within which their musical performances have originated. In the light of this, in Part 3, the data gained from the empirical study will be examined first of all for its implicit theological content – establishing the relationship between personal and corporate theologies of their activity. This will be followed by an examination of the way that accounts indicated underlying institutional influences and the way that both of these factors arise from the historical contexts within which the Anglican tradition of choral worship in cathedrals arose.

PART 3:

**Interpreting the factors that may
influence the understanding singers
have of their activity within the liturgy**

Introduction: Reflections from the individual interviews

Reflecting the structure of the pastoral cycle, Part 3 takes the experiences recounted in Part 2 and reflects on them through the lenses of theology, institution and ecclesiastical history. In this way, the thesis that a variety of personal spiritual and theological patterns of experience can be resolved into a more coherent corporate pattern of understanding will be tested. In Chapter 5, it will be seen that, whilst some participants' personal theology correlates strongly with classic Anglican approaches, the explicit and implicit theological narratives of other participants was located in other patterns of theological understanding. However, it will be clear that where there was a difference between personal spiritual or theological approaches and a participant's perception of the place their activity had in either the experience of others or in the doxological life of the Church then the corporate understanding that they articulate correlates closely with classic Anglican theological themes. Building on this, Chapter 6 then explores the role that institutional structures have on both individual and corporate understanding of the activity of lay singers. Finally, Chapter 7 grounds both these theological and institutional insights in the historical development of the Anglican tradition – illustrating that the corporate pattern of spiritual experience and theological understanding articulated by the participants correlates with the development of Anglican tradition of worship within the Church of England.

On the basis of the broad themes identified in the course of the initial conversations with groups of participants, more detailed one-to-one interviews led to a consideration of the ways in which these themes might be best understood within the context of the Anglican setting of worship in which the musical performances took place. Described in Part 2, there were five broad themes that emerged in these interviews, and cutting across these themes were three potential sources that could be seen to influence how the participants understanding was potentially shaped by spiritual and theological, institutional and historical factors. Part 3 focuses on these factors and the ways they can be seen to correlate with the reflections offered by the participants in the interviews. This is indicative of underlying influences that shape the shared understanding of the activity of those involved in singing within choral foundations of the Church of England, highlighting particular patterns of understanding that are characteristic of a distinctive Anglican sensitivity within the Church of England.

Spiritual or theological responses

As might perhaps be expected, the individual spiritual responses to the experience of singing within the liturgy provided the greatest variety of approaches with the range of material gathered through the interviews; as one participant described it, '[music] speaks to those of us who are taking part in

lots of different ways'.³⁹⁹ In this way that data collected within the empirical evidence affirmed the multivalent way that music can speak to performer and listener alike. In the reflections on the transcendent capacity of music Part 2 identified three patterns of understanding:

1. An approach that focuses on the beauty of music (and other arts) by which those involved can apprehend something of the worship of heaven within that offered on earth and enter into the experience of being in the divine presence.
2. A direct experience of 'feeling' that can be interpreted in theological terms – though it might not be seen primarily from this perspective by the performer, but nonetheless is seen by them to have spiritual and potentially theological significance.
3. A framework where the transcendent qualities of musical performance are not directly experienced by the performers.

In Chapter 5, the specifically theological and revelatory capacity that music has to speak of God will be explored, relating this to the ways in which the participants attributed spiritual meaning to the performances which they took part in within the daily liturgical life of the cathedral choir. These theological approaches will develop the basic ideas of transcendence in ways that could be categorised into one of the following five categories:

1. Participation in God through music;
2. The image of worship in heaven;
3. Theologies of music within creation;
4. Direct spiritual or theological experience; and
5. Ineffability in musical experience.

The first three of these categories have a close relationship to the first approach that is identified above within the evidence of the participants in this study. The fourth category has a direct relationship with the second pattern understanding, whilst the final category helps to explore further some trends that, whilst present, did not emerge as explicit patterns within the evidence but is nonetheless helpful in understanding some of the theological implications that were present in the narratives they presented. The way that these theological approaches relate to what might be a definably Anglican theological method will be explored, in order to see the extent to which the theological and spiritual attitudes recounted in their reflections might be seen as consonant with an Anglican approach to a music within the liturgy.

Whilst this section seeks to place the accounts presented in Part 2 into the context of an Anglican approach to a spirituality and theology of music, there are some challenges that must be

³⁹⁹ P01

acknowledged. By the very nature of the Church of England's doctrinal formulations and its plurality of theological approaches, any attempt to create a single Anglican approach to a theology and spirituality of music is fraught with some difficulty and will necessarily be constructive in nature. Thus, the provisional conclusions reached in this section, need to be further contextualised in terms of the institutional structures and historical development of such an Anglican sensibility within the wider Church of England – factors that will be explored in the following dedicated sections.

Institutional influences

In the first level themes identified in Part 2, a number of factors indicated institutional influences in shaping participants' understanding and interpreting their role. These included references to the importance of music within the daily routine, the role of musicians in offering worship on behalf of others (including understanding the choir as a sufficient worshipping community), and explicit comments referring to the Anglican choral tradition and its inheritance from its monastic and collegiate past. In the substantive material from the individual interviews explored in more detail later in Part 2 such institutional markers arose, including:

- the vicarious role of the choir offering worship on behalf of the wider Church and community;
- reference to monastic ideals as a means of understanding the practice of the regular singing of the daily offices; and
- the charism of the choir as a body offering music to the glory of God.

Each of these ways of describing the choir's activity has a basis in its institutional inheritance. In Chapter 6 the institutional factors that may affect the self-understanding of singers in their role within the liturgical setting will be explored in more detail. The focus of this will be directed at exploring the historical development of cathedral choirs as institutions; specifically looking at the vicarious nature of the role of the choir and its origins as a body that maintained a pattern of worship on behalf of a largely absent corporate body (inherited by Old Foundation cathedrals), and the pattern of claustral life that was typical of the monastic cathedrals (inherited by New Foundation cathedrals). It will be seen that these institutional factors, grounded in the historic development of cathedrals and their choirs as institutions, have a close association with the descriptions within the research material.

Historical developments

Both the spiritual and theological patterns of understanding accounted in Chapter 5 and the accounts of the origins and subsequent development of the institutional structures within which the musical activity at the heart of this study that are traced in Chapter 6 are historically contingent; arising from particular circumstances in the ongoing development of an Anglican approach to worship, doctrine and spirituality within the broader currents of the Church of England.

In Chapter 7 the episodic development of the Church of England will be traced, identifying some of the historic developments that shaped the Anglican tradition of spirituality within the Church of England – especially as it relates to the development of cathedrals and their worship. The theological patterns of understanding and institutional influences identified in the earlier sections of Part 3 will be placed within this framework, and the correlation between the self-understanding of the participants in this study will be seen to have a direct relationship with the historic development of the Anglican tradition. This will help to articulate their patterns of understanding as part of a coherent pattern of spiritual and theological understanding that is expressed within an institutional setting, with both of these elements arising in the historically conditioned setting of the Church of England.

CHAPTER 5 Spirituality and Theology

This chapter sets out to articulate the explicit and implicit theological patterns of understanding that underpin the descriptions participants gave of their activity of singing within liturgical settings. In doing so, it establishes the theological basis on which the spiritual experiences described by participants might be understood and how this relates to the Anglican tradition of spirituality and theology. The variety of personal understandings will be traced in the course of the first five sections of this chapter, whilst the final section notes the way that beyond personal approaches, there was a similarity of approach when participants articulated a more corporate understanding of their activity – either in terms of its effect on others present or in their perceptions of the broader ecclesiastical context of their activity.

Implicit theology revealed in pragmatic spirituality

In this chapter the material gained in the one-to-one interviews will be explored from the perspective of its theological content. Whilst there were some participants who articulated clear theological accounts of their experience, often revealing such theological content is possible by a consideration of the expressed spirituality and implicit theology of the participants in the study – following the insights offered by Martyn Percy as to the potential for implicit theology to help understand underlying theological narratives.⁴⁰⁰ Whilst in Part 2 the themes were recounted purely in terms of the themes as they arose in the interviews, in Part 3 a more theologically systematic approach will be taken placing the expressed theology of the participants (which is often implicit) and placing it within conventional doctrinal frameworks. In chapter 7 the resulting theological themes will be located (together with the institutional influences explored in chapter 6) within the historical development of Anglican spirituality and theology. From time to time a distinction will be drawn between spirituality and theology; where this is the case spirituality refers to a broad outlook for those sensibilities that are best described as taking individuals beyond their individual material experience, whilst in speaking of theology there is an implication that experience is being recounted in the light of its relationship to concepts of the Divine other. It should be noted that sometimes in the practice of the Anglican spiritual and theological tradition (as with others) these distinctions can have a tendency to collapse and merge together.

Classic Anglican theological and spiritual foundations

From its first articulation for apologetic purposes by John Jewel,⁴⁰¹ Anglican theology is characterised by an appeal to patristic roots, evident in the foundational work by Richard Hooker

⁴⁰⁰ Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

⁴⁰¹ John Jewel, *The Apology of the Church of England*, downloaded from <http://anglicanhistory.org/jewel/> on 14th September 2012.

that followed Jewel.⁴⁰² This inherently historically grounded approach to theology manifested in a conservative approach to ecclesiology (seeing the retention of liturgy and episcopacy) whilst seeking to justify a Reformed theology within the context of a recovery of patristic roots. These ideals are subsequently seen reflected in the practices of those such as Lancelot Andrewes,⁴⁰³ who laid the foundations for what was to become a distinctly 'Anglican' approach to theology and spirituality in subsequent periods. Among recent writers who operate within the Anglican tradition (for example, Avis, Mursell and Dominiak within their respective sub-disciplines),⁴⁰⁴ there is an identifiable core of writers from within the earlier Anglican tradition of theology and spirituality (that might best be termed the Classic Anglican tradition); chronologically these writers from the formative decades of the Anglican tradition include: Jewel, Hooker, Andrews, Herbert, and Donne – of whom Hooker, Herbert and Donne are used as exemplars and dialogue partners in this study.

A complementary aspect of Anglican spirituality that has a strong resonance in the reflections of participants in this study was with the poetry that is characteristic of the Caroline period which, again foundational to classic 'Anglican' spirituality includes within its material:

- (i) an aesthetic appreciation of beauty in worship, specifically including music which leads to a participative understanding of musical activity that draws participants into an experience of the divine;
- (ii) a mystical engagement in worship of the manifestation of the beauty of heaven on earth; and
- (iii) a sympathy with the patristic notions of the metaphysics of music .

These strands have direct parallels in many of the theological motifs identified in the evidence collected in the empirical phase of this study and are covered in the first three sections of this chapter, covering the concepts of:

- Participation in God through music (Hooker);
- Mystical union of earth with heaven (Herbert and Donne); and
- Patristic roots of understanding music within creation.

⁴⁰² Raymond Chapman (Editor), *Law and Revelation: Richard Hooker and his writings*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2009).

also see Paul Avis, *In Search of Authority: Anglican Theological Method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); and Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*, (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

⁴⁰³ F. E. Brightman (translator), *The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes*, (London: Methuen, 1903).

⁴⁰⁴ Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church*, (London: SPCK, 2000); Avis, *In Search of Authority*; Gordon Mursell, *English Spirituality: From Earliest Times to 1700*, (London: SPCK, 2008); Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*.

Wider theological approaches

Whilst each of these themes can clearly be related to approaches within Anglican understandings of theology and spirituality, there were some discussions that ranged beyond these parameters. To encompass these theological narratives, two additional theological themes are included within this chapter:

- Direct theological experience through music, including a more Romantic conception of the relationship between musical and theological experience; and
- Discussions around the ineffability of music drawing on both theologically rooted images and more secular understandings.

A further point that became apparent in several discussions was the way that in reflecting on the theological or spiritual dimension of their performances, many of the participants (and especially those whose own spirituality was less securely on Anglican foundations) expressed views that operated at two levels: individual and corporate.

Affinity with Roman Catholic theological resources

Finally, and perhaps reflecting the concept that Anglican worship, and particularly that of cathedrals, provides a repository for a 'catholic' spirituality and theology within the Church of England, it is notable that there were also a number of responses best reflected using theological resources that draw on contemporary Roman Catholic writing as much as recent Anglican thinking. It should be noted that the Roman Catholic writers most readily associated were those who were significantly influenced by the *ressourcement* theology of the 20th century – a theological movement within the Roman Catholic church that, like Anglican theology, sought to root contemporary theological understanding clearly in the theological source material of the patristic era. This reflects methodological similarities between *nouvelle theologie* within the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican theological tradition in terms of return to patristic sources of theology; processes reflected in the theological writings of Roman Catholic theologians such as Balthasar and Ratzinger who we will encounter in what follows.

5.1 Participation in God through music

In speaking to participants about the spiritual effect that musical performance has on the individual – whether as performer or listener – there were a number of responses that can be best placed within a broadly participatory theological account, comments that are suggestive of such an approach including those that describe music as ‘a half-way house to God’,⁴⁰⁵ and the assertion that ‘[music has] the ability to transport people beyond the physical realm’.⁴⁰⁶ A participatory approach to theology is identified by Mursell as a fundamental part of an Anglican approach to spirituality. In his multi-volume work on English spirituality, Mursell identifies Hooker and Andrewes as enacting a participatory understanding within their developing spirituality that was grounded on patristic foundations.⁴⁰⁷ More recently, there have been two significant works that contribute to an ongoing participatory strand within contemporary Anglican theological discourse: Dominiak’s in-depth study of the participatory foundations of Hooker’s theology,⁴⁰⁸ and a broad study of participation written by the Cambridge academic Andrew Davison.⁴⁰⁹

Echoing the dual approaches (horizontal and vertical) to transcendence articulated by Stone-Davis (4.2), by contrast to the sociological (instrumental) use of the term participation that was seen in the making of meaning when participants were reflecting on their performances as events (4.4), the metaphysical approach described here has direct theological meaning. The processes involved in a participatory theology are outlined by Davison, who describes the manner in which creation is an ongoing unfolding that asymmetrically discloses God, but does not change God:

To say ‘the world participates in God’ both relates the world to God and stresses that God is utterly distinct from all that exists as creation.⁴¹⁰

From this starting point, Davison explores the implications of a participatory theology through the application of the Aristotelian categories of causation (Efficient, Material, Formal and Final) within a Christian theological framework whereby the origin of each of these causes (and the end to which humanity is drawn by them) is God ‘who is prior in every way’.⁴¹¹ In the following exploration of causation, Davison outlines the ways in which humanity can, by analogous experience (as we are created, not creator), encounter something of the divine.⁴¹² This difference between divine and human causation is fundamental to a theology of participation. In saying that we participate in God, we are not claiming that our experience or our role in causation is of the same nature as God

⁴⁰⁵ P02

⁴⁰⁶ P05

⁴⁰⁷ Gordon Mursell, ‘Participation in God: Hooker, Andrewes, and the Patristic Tradition’ in Mursell, *English Spirituality*, pp. 314-325.

⁴⁰⁸ Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*.

⁴⁰⁹ Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2020).

⁴¹⁰ Davison, *Participation in God*, pp. 28-9.

⁴¹¹ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 42-44.

⁴¹² Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 53-4.

– but rather that it is analogous to God. Simon Oliver outlines the distinction between primary and secondary causation, describing the understanding that ‘God’s causal action and [our] causal actions are *not of the same kind*. ...to put it another way, God’s causal action and creaturely causal action are not univocal (i.e., different degrees of the same kind of causal power). Rather, we are to think of both God *and* me as causes..., but in totally different ways’.⁴¹³ The power to apprehend God in our own actions lies in this difference between primary and secondary causation; as Oliver explains, [our] causal power is related by analogy to God who is the found and source of all causation’.⁴¹⁴ If, as Davison states, God is ‘prior in every way’,⁴¹⁵ then we (as creatures) cannot achieve full knowledge of God (comprehension) by human means alone, though by our participation in creation (that comes from God) we can apprehend something of Divine glory. It holds, therefore, that music alone cannot carry us all the way to knowing the fullness of God. However, through music we are brought to the threshold of heaven by participation in a song that echoes the Divine music of creation – themes that will be explored more in 5.2 and 5.3. Further, in a participatory framework these experiences depend on musical performance (as a creative act) in response to the gifted nature of music as an overflowing of abundant grace. This connects with the descriptions provided in 4.5 of music as gift whilst also reflecting the attention paid by many participants to the role of beauty in their accounts of musical experiences within the liturgy (4.1 and 4.3). In dealing with the concept of beauty within a participatory approach, Davison outlines the way that a love of beauty draws us closer to God (who is always beautiful),⁴¹⁶ and that in we find something of the beauty of God in the beauty we ourselves experience, that ‘we should learn to apprehend all of reality, and all our experience, in relation to God’.⁴¹⁷ Davison describes this, following Aquinas, in the following terms:

1. ‘Beauty comes to each thing by participation: as a shining forth from God’;⁴¹⁸
2. ‘What lies beyond this world beckons us on’;⁴¹⁹
3. “‘Harmony in things’ in terms of their relation to God, [is] the cause of harmony’;⁴²⁰ and
4. The importance of the ‘particularity of things’, and ‘the importance of modus (mode of being) in participating in beauty’.⁴²¹

Before exploring the ways in which participatory understandings were revealed in the interviews, we will first of all look at how Hooker approached the matter of music within the liturgy within the

⁴¹³ Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: T&T Clark, 2017), pp. 75-6.

⁴¹⁴ Oliver, *Creation*, p. 87.

⁴¹⁵ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 44.

⁴¹⁶ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 327.

⁴¹⁷ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 341.

⁴¹⁸ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 344.

⁴¹⁹ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 345.

⁴²⁰ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 345.

⁴²¹ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 346.

broader participatory theological framework of his *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. In reflecting on the way that participatory understanding, rooted in scholastic patterns of theological meaning, may be implicit in the accounts of the participants of this study, it is interesting to reflect on how this reflects the retention of the earlier cultural context within which the choral tradition was formed,⁴²² and whether this pattern of understanding reveals a deep-running stream within the Anglican tradition of reservoir for a ‘catholic’ spirituality within the Church of England (see 7.1a).

Hooker: Anglican foundations of participation

Notwithstanding MacCulloch’s point that Hooker’s voice did not dominate in his own time,⁴²³ Hooker has, with some justification, become what Avis describes as ‘the prime architect of what later became Anglican ecclesiology’.⁴²⁴ Highlighting Hooker’s role as a controversialist at a time when the identity of the Church of England was still much contested, Avis points out that his writings have been subject to appropriation by different groups during the formation of Anglican identity, with ‘theological protagonists attempting to wrest Hooker to their own ends’.⁴²⁵ It is important then, to read Hooker both on his own terms and in the light of the way that he has been co-opted in the subsequent development of the Anglican tradition.

In his defence of the liturgical forms adopted in *The Book of Common Prayer*, Hooker is explicit in his defence of ‘the singing and reading of the psalms side by side’ and the singing of canticles within the daily office.⁴²⁶ It is in passages such as this that we can see Hooker’s work is so conducive to the later developments that took place in the decades between his death and the interruption of the Commonwealth – foundations that would in turn be the starting point for the development of a distinctly articulated Anglican approach to worship (and music within the liturgy) following the Restoration. As well as a general defence of these features (and others, such as the wearing of surplices that were to be central to the Anglican tradition as it developed),⁴²⁷ Hooker offers a specific defence of the place of music within worship and makes a number of points that help to put in place the foundations of a theological understanding of music as it is performed in the liturgy. Hooker speaks of the way that music has ‘pleasing effects ...in that very part of man which is most divine’, later in the same passage commenting on the role that music has in ‘the raising up of men’s

⁴²² Nancy van Deusen, *The Cultural Context of Mediaeval Music. Music, Devotion, Emotion, Intellection*, (New York: Routledge-Praeger, 2011).

⁴²³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, Review of ‘Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology. Sacraments and Salvation in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker (Drew University Studies in Liturgy, 9.)’ by Bryan D. Spinks in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (APRIL 2001), published by Oxford University Press, pp. 425-427.

⁴²⁴ Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 94.

⁴²⁵ Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 96.

⁴²⁶ Richard Hooker, ‘Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity’, Book V, para xxvii, quoted in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 120-121.

⁴²⁷ Hooker, ‘Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity’, Book V, para xxvii, in Chapman, (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, p. 122-123.

hearts and the softening of their affections towards God'.⁴²⁸ This provides an implicit acknowledgement of a participatory approach, by which music acts as a vehicle for divine grace to act on human nature in such a way that human devotion might lead to an encounter that is theological in nature. The means by which this participation in the divine is brought about is made clearer in Hooker's description of

'[the] admirable facility which music hath to express and represent to the mind, more inwardly than any other sensible mean, the very standing, rising, and falling, the very steps and inflections every way, the turns and varieties of all passions, whereunto the mind is subject'.⁴²⁹

In this we find Hooker articulating a view that music has an especial means of speaking to the human heart (and mind) in a way that is particular, and that moves beyond the mere reasoned experience of word and thought. This is reinforced by his assertion that 'the very harmony of sounds being framed in due sort, and carried from the ear to the spiritual faculties of our souls'.⁴³⁰ Here we find Hooker examining and defending the notion that music has a particular means by which it enables the human heart and soul to experience God that mirrors Avis' assertion that in his theological approach Hooker directs himself toward the human participation in God, where '[Hooker's] goal is the mystical participation of the Christian in the life and grace of God'.⁴³¹ In the context of this broader goal, we can see that Hooker gives music (in the context of the liturgy) a particular place in the human engagement with the theological nature of God such that music offers an experiential bridge between earthly and heavenly experiences and that, by awakening the spiritual senses of the person, apprehension of the divine within human experience.

Participation in practice

The practical effect of this, given the presumption that God is the ultimate cause of everything, is that in all human experience there will be an apprehension of the Divine nature, and that our apprehension of the Divine is enabled by our own orientation toward this possibility in our activities. Thus a participatory spirituality involves both the acknowledgement that God can be apprehended in the causality of creation when human perception is directed toward God. These twin notions are encapsulated in comments made by a number of participant's; several speaking of the way that musical performance within the liturgy has the potential to allow those participating to apprehend something of God:

'when you are moved by a piece of art or a piece of music...you are moved by God',⁴³²
'the way to get closest to God is through music',⁴³³ and

⁴²⁸ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁴²⁹ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁴³⁰ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁴³¹ Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 101.

⁴³² P03

⁴³³ P02

‘music speaks to those of us taking part, but also to other people...speaking of God and the beauty of holiness’.⁴³⁴

These statements, that reflect the perception that musical performance can provide an apprehension of the Divine nature, were balanced by others that reflect the balancing emphasis within participatory theological approaches of participation being a two-way process, by which the human subject orients its activity toward the Divine object. This was reflected in a number of comments that reflect the way in which performers might understand human apprehension to be enabled by the orientation of human activity in a God-ward direction; whilst connecting with the view of music within creation that is explored in the next chapter, such perceptions by performers also correlate with an understanding that through music we can be drawn to God – thereby echoing the idea that God is the final cause of musical performance (i.e. that toward which the human endeavour of singing is directed):

‘you [sing] for the glory of God’;⁴³⁵

and

‘there’s always something in it [the performance] of glorifying God and offering that praise, and of offering your voice to the heavens – it’s always there’.⁴³⁶

In these statements we can see an understanding of the way that singers understand their activity within the liturgy to be an offering of music toward God, and that this is understood in participatory terms as a reciprocal relationship by which the human experience reached in a God-ward direction results in an apprehension of the Divine through the beauty of music. Further, this process was understood in both individual and corporate terms – something that will be returned to in section 5.6.

Participating in beauty

In exploring the notion of participation in the context of Divine beauty, Davison cites Aquinas as saying that ‘the beauty of a creature is nothing other than the likeness of divine beauty participated in things’.⁴³⁷ This apprehension of beauty in music was commented on by a number of participants within this study, with the idea that music discloses the beauty of God being a repeated motif across a number of participants, with this understanding being encapsulated in the idea of music ‘speaking of God and the beauty of holiness’.⁴³⁸ In discussing the idea of beauty, a number of participants spoke of the way that there is an inherent beauty in the combination of music and words that are sung within the liturgical setting. This can be seen in one comment, linked to the understanding of

⁴³⁴ P01

⁴³⁵ P07

⁴³⁶ P05

⁴³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Exposition of ‘On the Divine Names’*, Ch. 4, Lec. 5 from ‘The Pocket Aquinas: Selections from the Writings of St Thomas’ translated by Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), quoted in Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 343.

⁴³⁸ P01

music as ‘a half way house to God’, that when thinking of liturgical music, ‘it’s written for a purpose and some of the poetry and words of the things that we perform are so beautiful’.⁴³⁹ Another participant spoke of the way that music combined with other elements in a way that drew together ‘theatrics and the ceremony’,⁴⁴⁰ and a further interview included a reflection on the way that music interacted with the architecture, literature and other elements of the wider liturgical setting to point beyond itself to a beauty that was the focus of worship and that could catch both the performer and less active attendee by surprise by its spiritual intensity.⁴⁴¹ This tendency of music (often in combination with other elements that contribute to the overall setting of the liturgy) to convey a deep beauty in a way that typically arises at unexpected moments was summarised by a third participant who described how:

‘often unprepared...[there is] such beauty or something – you’re not expecting to be caught off guard like that, but it can really move you.’⁴⁴²

In the outline traced by these comments, we can see a pattern by which the beauty of music is seen to be a means by which something of the beauty of God can become a real part of the experience of performance within the liturgy. In a real way, we can see a working out of Hooker’s understanding that music results in ‘pleasing effects ...in that very part of man which is most divine’,⁴⁴³ which in turn lead to ‘the raising up of men’s hearts and the softening of their affections towards God’.⁴⁴⁴

Barriers to participation

As outlined above, there was broad evidence of a participatory foundation to the understanding that many of the participants in this study had regarding the spiritual effect of their musical performances within the liturgy. (Indeed, in only one case was there no evidence of a participatory understanding, and in this case the interviewee adopted a more direct understanding of the way that music was revelatory of God – see Section 5.4). In the comments recorded so far in this section we can discern a positive engagement with the reciprocal dynamic that is inherent to a participatory theological framework of understanding the spiritual effect of singing. Whilst all the comments above have been placed within a positive context, where the experience of singing is itself something that enables theological participation, there are other dynamics at play which support a participatory analysis of the spiritual experience of singers – albeit by looking at the barriers to this experience that were expressed in the course of a number of the interviews. There were a number

⁴³⁹ P02

⁴⁴⁰ P03

⁴⁴¹ P01

⁴⁴² P07

⁴⁴³ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁴⁴⁴ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

of instances where participants marked out their inability to engage with the spiritual effect of their performances as a consequence of the practical and technical demands of choral singing.

Breaking through the barriers

Reflecting on the way that their focus on performance meant that they rarely found the opportunity to focus on their musical performances as a spiritual activity, one interviewee commented that

I am focused on the music, but I think at the same time, I appreciate the spirituality of it. I'm here to do a particular job and that is to lead the music and the singing in the best way I possibly can and that's sort of my focus, I think rather than necessarily, how spiritual I feel...I've got to get it right and I've got to sing it well and deliver it well.⁴⁴⁵

This same potentially negative link between the focus on technique as an inhibiting factor to engagement with the raw spirituality of musical performance led another participant to say that '[singers] can get flummoxed in our technique, to the detriment of [spiritual] expression'.⁴⁴⁶ This same sentiment was reflected more poetically by another participant who said that

'it's like the angels cascading up to Heaven, and you can perfectly imagine it when listening to it – but for me, I can't – I'm too close to things when I'm singing'.⁴⁴⁷

Whilst in one case these barriers were so absolute that the individual performer felt that they were only able to engage with music in a participatory manner when they were not in the role of performer, a number of those interviewed saw that, whilst others (not active as singers) might benefit in a theologically participatory manner from their performances, their own engagement at the deepest level was often conditional on the relatively rare combination of circumstances where a performance of the highest quality coincided with a personal capacity for reflective response. Thus, whilst beauty was more generally perceived in regular performances, it was only on rare occasions that this became a participatory experience of notable spiritual intensity – described by one participant as

'often unprepared...[there is] such beauty or something – you're not expecting to be caught off guard like that, but it can really move you.'⁴⁴⁸

In this idea of being 'caught off guard' (as with the idea of music as gift, recounted in 4.5) there is an acknowledgement of the process of performance as a creative one that is not fully within the performer's control; an observation revealing the way performers can discover something of the creator through their activity extending beyond any purely human motivation. Here, we can see how the creative, human act of singing becomes a means by which something unexpected, speaking more deeply, is realised; how through the act of a creature something of the creator is glimpsed.

⁴⁴⁵ P05

⁴⁴⁶ P04

⁴⁴⁷ P02

⁴⁴⁸ P07

This ability of human music to reveal something of the divine, the relationship between *musica instrumentalis* and *musica mundana*, will be explored more fully in 5.3.

The matter of focus on performance (and especially the corporate demands of delivering a high standard of musical performance) also resulted in a number of comments on the way that in smaller settings the dynamic changed and could lead to a more intense engagement with the music and its spiritual potential. In this area, there is a direct inter-relationship between the issues of congregation size that were explored in an institutional context in section 4.4. A number of participants reported that they found their own personal engagement to be deeper in nature when the context of performance was smaller in scale. Thus, we find it reported variously that in such situations the intensity of experience is increased by the more intimate context of such performances:

‘there might be one or no-one sitting in the Quire, and you were singing – it felt a bit more monastic in atmosphere...it was a more intimate feeling’⁴⁴⁹
‘a Compline for only three or four people is more meaningful to me’⁴⁵⁰

In reflecting on this dynamic, this last participant developed a coherent explanation as to how the more personal engagement in smaller settings led to a greater personal engagement and the development of an experience that was of greater intensity, with potentially spiritual experience. Thus, this participant explained that ‘in a small intimate setting the music becomes easier to achieve a much higher standard of performance...it becomes more personal, more meaningful...more than just a spectacle’,⁴⁵¹ before expanding on the significance of this by saying that in such situations

‘there is definitely more to it than just the music...which, when it’s combined with the setting and the liturgy and with the story that you’re trying to tell...’

before concluding that

‘all of those things compound and create an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts’.⁴⁵²

Again, this experience of something that is ‘greater than its parts’ speaks (in a similar way to those moments of being caught ‘off guard’ mentioned above) of the way that musical performance may be more than a purely human creative act, but rather an act by which those involved (whether as performers or auditors) apprehend something of the creator through the creative act of musical performance. With a concluding reflection that ‘being moved by art or a piece of music in this way’ is an experience where the performer can ‘be moved by God’,⁴⁵³ we can see that the intense focus on musical performance that was a negative influence for some of those quoted above in some

⁴⁴⁹ P07

⁴⁵⁰ P03

⁴⁵¹ P03

⁴⁵² P03

⁴⁵³ P03

settings becomes the point by which an intense engagement with (and beyond) the music, without the distraction of performance to a large group of listeners (or non-active participants), something that has the potential to be theologically disclosive – a passing moment in which God is known to the performer.

From the above summary, it is possible to discern a number of ways in which the conversations with those who sing within the liturgy of the cathedrals of the Church of England can be understood to be participatory in their underlying pattern of understanding – that the performance of music within the liturgy provides a means by which, as Avis formulates it, the singer can be a part of ‘the mystical participation of the Christian in the life and grace of God’.⁴⁵⁴ In exploring the comments of the participants in this study, we have seen how music can be viewed as a means to bridge the gap between ordinary human experience and the experience of the divine in heaven, how it can make present something of the beauty of God, and how there are practical barriers that can interrupt (or indeed negate) this experience which, on those occasions when they can be overcome, result in momentary, intimate spiritual experiences that can lead to an experience of God. Within the broad context of a participatory theological understanding, there are two particular images that arose within the conversations and have a resonance within the Anglican tradition of spirituality:

- firstly, the idea that earthly worship is a participation in the worship of heaven (participation directed toward the final cause); and
- secondly, the idea that the beauty of creation is revealed in the pattern and beauty of music (reflecting the perfection of the silent music of heaven, and the inner beauty of the creator – participation in efficient/formal terms))

In the next two chapters, each of these aspects of a participatory understanding of the musical activity at the heart of this study will be examined in more focus (Sections 5.2 and 5.3) before exploring aspects of understanding that focus on a more direct experience of God (Section 5.4) and the difficulty that can be encountered in having meaningful discussion about any experience of music that might be seen as transcendent or potentially revelatory (Section 5.5).

⁴⁵⁴ Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 101.

5.2 The image of worship in heaven

A second theme that was evident across the whole range of the responses by those participating within the study was that the worship offered by musicians within the liturgical context of the cathedral was an image of the worship of heaven. Some comments of a more general nature, such as expressing the idea that '[music] is a halfway house to God'⁴⁵⁵ or that '[music has] an ability to transport people beyond the physical realm',⁴⁵⁶ led on to the idea that in the offering of human voices there was a dynamic that related this earthly activity to the worship of heaven – that 'in glorifying God and offering that praise' and in 'offering your voice to the heavens' a real connection is made with the experience of worship in heaven.⁴⁵⁷ This was reflected in the comments of another participant who conceived the act of worship as 'in every sort of artistic way, speaking of God and the beauty of holiness',⁴⁵⁸ a point that was expanded to see a unity between the worship (and music) of the saints of earth and heaven, with comment that in worship 'our voices join with the saints who have gone before and the angels who are around us'.⁴⁵⁹ The idea that our earthly worship is an imperfect reflection of the perfection of worship in heaven was evident in the comments of another participant who, reflecting on their earlier experiences as a chorister joked that 'if there's choirs of heavenly angels, then sign me up'⁴⁶⁰ before making the theological point that 'in heaven we will be in our perfect form',⁴⁶¹ and that our earthly singing reflects this vision of a future (and perfected) worship.

Each of these comments draws on an understanding that in the music that is performed within the wider context of our earthly worship there is something that aspires toward a more perfect form of worship, and draws us toward what is variously articulated as 'the house of God', a place 'beyond the physical realm', 'the beauty of holiness', 'the heavens' and the song of the 'heavenly angels'. This idea, common in patristic writing and central to the theology of worship in the Eastern orthodox Church,⁴⁶² is one that has been central to an Anglican understanding of worship since at least the time of Lancelot Andrews. The typological description of song within worship as an intimation of heavenly worship has a strong resonance with the Anglican tradition that is epitomised in the poetry of Herbert and Donne and built on the philosophical foundations that can be found in Hooker's writing. This theme is an important strand within Anglican spirituality, and can be seen reflected in subsequent Anglican practice and writing. In line with the Anglican

⁴⁵⁵ P02

⁴⁵⁶ P05

⁴⁵⁷ P05

⁴⁵⁸ P01

⁴⁵⁹ P01

⁴⁶⁰ P04

⁴⁶¹ P04

⁴⁶² Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London: Penguin, 2015), pp. 257-258.

approach to theological method that was outlined in the introduction to this chapter, in this section we will look at the ways in which the experiences of those taking part in this study can be seen to reflect themes within classic Anglican spirituality (especially as expressed by Anglican writers of the formative period of the 17th century) and in the light of both patristic interpretations of the place of music within worship and contemporary approaches that look to sympathetic interpretations both within Anglican and Roman Catholic theological discourse.

George Herbert: A musical poet seeking a vision of heavenly worship

George Herbert is well-known (in part thanks to the work of his first biographer, Isaac Newton) for his love of music – a love that is reflected in the frequent use of musical imagery within his poetry, as well as poems that celebrate directly the theologically disclosive qualities of music. An easy starting point for approaching Herbert's engagement with musical imagery is in the obvious doxological nature of music in poems such as Antiphon I, which talks of the worship of earth reaching to heaven and drawing the human heart heavenward – whilst, in a parallel movement, the offering of song increases the human capacity to offer praise:

*The heav'ns are not too high,
His praise may thither fly:
The earth is not so low,
His praises there may grow.*⁴⁶³

This understanding of music as something that is offered within worship to God was reflected by participants referring both to the offering of music within the wider context of the Church's worship and the way that the performances that this involves draw those who are a part of the worship into something of the experience of heaven and, in theological terms, into the divine presence. Thus one participant spoke of the way that 'there is always something in [liturgical singing] of glorifying God and offering that praise – offering your voice to the heavens',⁴⁶⁴ whilst another participant identified that music (alongside other elements of the liturgy and its setting) 'speaks to those of us who are taking part and to others taking part...in every sort of artistic way; speaking of God and the beauty of holiness'.⁴⁶⁵ In both these comments we can see that the offering of music within worship is seen as a reciprocal activity where the offering of music in the direction of God results in a theological disclosure of something of the heaven (if not of the Divine nature). Even those participants who did not understand their own faith or spirituality in explicitly Anglican terms either understood this pattern of experience as one they themselves participated in, or one that they understood as a shared corporate understanding of their work. Thus one participant, who saw their

⁴⁶³ George Herbert, 'Antiphon (1)' in George Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, (London: Everyman's Library, 1995), p. 51.

⁴⁶⁴ P04

⁴⁶⁵ P01

own spirituality from a 'secular' viewpoint understood music (again together with other elements of the liturgical event) combining to create an experience that was 'more profound...where there is definitely more to it than just the music'.⁴⁶⁶ This experience within the liturgy, and the feelings arising from it, was later categorised by this participant as one where experience of art or God was synonymous:

'when you're moved by a piece of art or a piece of music or by a personal experience, or you're moved by God – the feelings are the same. These are words that work well to describe or communicate one experience'.⁴⁶⁷

In this we can see a musician with a secular approach expressing an understanding where the performance in which they take part has a special significance that can be described equivocally in either secular or theological terms. Whilst this understanding will itself be explored in more depth in Section 7.1d, the important thing to note in the context of an Anglican understanding of music revealing something of the worship of heaven is the characterisation of musical performance within the liturgy by this participant as something that is 'sublime'. Thus, this participant uses secular language or reaching beyond the present situation to something greater or deeper in a way that has a direct parallel in the more theologically freighted language of Herbert, who describes the same dynamic of music offered within the liturgy providing a means to 'know the way to heaven's door'.⁴⁶⁸

Another example of a musician who shows the power of this way of understanding the purpose of music within the context of Anglican worship is provided by the comments of one participant who themselves had a personal spirituality that was fed by different spiritual practices, but who had a clear understanding of the spiritual framework within which their musical performances in the liturgy were contextualised. This corporate understanding of spiritual or theological engagement with music within the liturgy is explored explicitly in section 5.6, but the responses of this participant are relevant here in the way that they reflect a classic Anglican understanding of the place of music within the dynamic of liturgical worship. This participant articulated a very strong position that was based on an understanding of the way that their musical performance enabled the spiritual participation of others in the liturgical act. Thus, whilst they did not engage spiritually with the musical performances in which they took part, they had a very strong understanding of music as 'a halfway house to God' and that performance of music is 'like an offering – probably the highest form of offering;...the way to get closest to God is through music'.⁴⁶⁹ In another reflection, this participant described the way that, when freed of the practical and technical demands of

⁴⁶⁶ P03

⁴⁶⁷ P03

⁴⁶⁸ Herbert, 'Church-music' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 63.

⁴⁶⁹ P02

performing, music became for them a spiritual experience which, as Herbert puts it one might 'the heav'n espy'.⁴⁷⁰

'[Music] is the highest offering to God, and if I'm listening to it...it's how I would feel closest to God'.⁴⁷¹

Elsewhere, we find that human skill in music can be a means of offering of the best to God, positing that 'wherefore with my utmost art I will sing thee'.⁴⁷² The theological import of such human activity is made plain in the poem 'Church-music', which identifies the music thus offered to God as a vehicle by which humanity can 'know the way to heaven's door';⁴⁷³ and it is in being drawn into the experience of heaven that it is possible to apprehend (though never comprehend) the presence of God. The idea that in the offering of music something of the beauty of the worship of heaven becomes known to us was extended by one participant who reflected that in seeking the perfection of Christ in their worship those performing music should seek perfection in their performance:

In [their singing] they're offering ideally the most perfect thing that they can manage to the glory of God...because Jesus is perfect, we should be trying to be like him – and that we're trying to offer the most perfect thing.⁴⁷⁴

We have seen that Herbert provides a key source for reflecting on a classic Anglican understanding of the spiritual nature of music within worship, and we have seen how this understanding is reflected in the personal experiences of a number of participants and (at a corporate level) understood to be a guiding narrative by other participants who identify their own spirituality according to other narratives. Elsewhere within Herbert's poetry there are parallel, non-musical images that help to further elucidate and corroborate the theological import of his understanding of the way that music might provide a means to apprehending theological truth. One such image is provided by the references to glasswork as a liminal object. This is reflected in poems, such as 'Painted glass', but becomes explicit as an image in 'The Elixir' where Herbert talks of the tendency that the eye has to rest on the glass which, if looked at in a different way has a quality that discloses something of heaven and, thereby, something of the presence of God:

*A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heav'n espy.*⁴⁷⁵

Applied to music, a similar effect could be posited to that already noted above; that it is possible in the beauty that is beholden by the human eye (or experienced in the performing and hearing of human music) that something of the greater beauty of heaven can be discerned – a beauty that is

⁴⁷⁰ Herbert, 'The Elixir' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 180.

⁴⁷¹ P02

⁴⁷² Herbert, 'Praise (2)' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p.143.

⁴⁷³ Herbert, 'Church-music' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 63.

⁴⁷⁴ P07

⁴⁷⁵ Herbert, 'The Elixir' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 180.

shaped by the God who creates, and is disclosed in, creation (linking back to the participatory understanding of the theological potential of music covered in section 5.1).

The spiritual effect of music on Herbert is evident not only in the imagery he uses in his poetry but in the descriptions of his own spiritual practices. Isaak Walton (who was also to write a biography of John Donne) is clear, in his biography of Herbert, of the personal value that Herbert found in music. Not only does he refer to Herbert's own practice of instrumental playing (both privately and in 'appointed private music meeting[s]')⁴⁷⁶ and composition of 'many divine hymns and anthems',⁴⁷⁷ but also to his spiritual experiences of music which included attending evensong at Salisbury Cathedral at least twice a week. In describing this experience, Walton reports that Herbert described 'that this time spent in private prayer and cathedral music elevated his soul, and was his heaven on earth'.⁴⁷⁸ These descriptions of Herbert's own personal musical performances and his liturgical experience of music allow us to have some confidence in elucidating a theological understanding to music that is coherent across his writings, and helps to inform us of the way in which an influential figure within the Anglican tradition approaches the need to understand music from a theological perspective.

Herbert has here been taken as an exemplar of a distinct spirituality within the Church of England that would become considered as archetypally Anglican, and that came to form a distinct element of what might be considered a classic Anglican theology of worship. The particular link between Anglican spirituality and music is particularly clear in the case of Herbert – who was himself a proficient musician for whom, on the account of contemporary writers, music was an important part of spiritual life. By way of conclusion at this point, we can see that, for Herbert, music is an activity by which it is possible to offer human skills and gifts as a form of worship to God that both raises the human heart toward heaven and discloses heaven here on earth. This is an image that sits congruently with the opinions expressed by a number of those participating in this study – for whom music was an activity that (whether for them personally, or for those involved as listeners in the liturgical context) offers an insight into an experience beyond the ordinary – that might be described, as it was by one participant as something that 'speaks to those of us who are taking part and to others taking part...in every sort of artistic way; speaking of God and the beauty of holiness'.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Isaak Walton, 'The Life of Mr. George Herbert' in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 372.

⁴⁷⁷ Walton, 'The Life of Mr. George Herbert', p. 371.

⁴⁷⁸ Walton, 'The Life of Mr. George Herbert', p. 372.

⁴⁷⁹ P01

John Donne: Music at the boundary of heaven and earth

Of course, George Herbert was not the only writer during the formative period of the Church of England, and it is worthwhile making a comparison with John Donne – a preacher and poet who was twenty years older than Herbert, but died only a couple of years before him. A brief comparison between the poetry of Herbert and that of John Donne reveals a very different level of musical imagery present with their respective bodies of poetry – the more frequent use of musical imagery in his poetry perhaps being a confirmation of Herbert's own distinctly musical spirituality. However, the way that music is used in the work of both writers is indicative of an underlying approach to theology within which music can be seen to have a place. Whilst lacking the rich musical imagery of Herbert, Donne nonetheless expresses a sensibility within his writing that is conducive to the same broad theological approach to understanding music within worship. Within Donne's poetry, music tends to be associated with heaven (a distinct consequence of Donne's overall theological concern with the 'spiritual alchemy' that surrounds death and the Christian doctrine of resurrection),⁴⁸⁰ offering an image of that which lies beyond our own earthly experience. Obvious examples of this among Donne's poetry include the opening lines of Holy Sonnet VII:

*At the round earth's imagined corners, blow
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death,...*⁴⁸¹

whilst a similar relationship can be seen in another of his poems dealing with sickness, the possibility of death, and reflection on what lies beyond the experiences of earthly life:

*Since I am coming to that holy room
Where, with Thy choir of saints for evermore,
I shall be made thy music as I come
I tune the instrument here at the door,
And what I must do then, think here before.*⁴⁸²

In an image that has a direct correlation to Herbert's image of music as 'heaven's door', Donne uses music both as an image of a human activity that represents the threshold between heaven and earth, and of music as something that itself transcends the boundary between earthly and heavenly experience. As we saw when looking at Herbert's poetry above, this reflects understandings that were present in a number of the interviews with participants in this study, including reflections that:

'[music] is a halfway house to God'⁴⁸³;
'in every sort of artistic way, [music] speaks of God and the beauty of holiness',⁴⁸⁴
'[music has] an ability to transport people beyond the physical realm'⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁰ Neil Rhodes, 'Introduction' to John Donne, *Selected Prose*, (London: Penguin, 2015), p. xxvii.

⁴⁸¹ John Donne, 'Holy Sonnet VII, in John Donne, edited by Ilona Bell, *Selected Poems*, (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 180.

⁴⁸² Donne, 'Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness', in Donne, *Selected Poems*, p. 195.

⁴⁸³ P02

⁴⁸⁴ P01

⁴⁸⁵ P05

‘the way to get closest to God is through music’.⁴⁸⁶

Donne’s use of music as an image within his poetry is a manifestation of music as an important element within an Anglican spirituality, and is in sympathy with Herbert’s treatment of music as something that draws human thought and experience beyond the earthly to the contemplation of the heavenly. We can see that the poetry of both these figures in the early development of the Anglican approach to spirituality and a theology of worship are consonant with many of the views expressed by participants in this study in reflecting on their own activity within this liturgical tradition in the present day.

Donne’s poetry also betrays an underlying platonic approach which becomes clear in one of the passages that has (in slightly modified form) become well established within the Anglican tradition, both as a prayer and text set to music:

*Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of Heaven: to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitations of thy Majesty and Glory, world without end. Amen.*⁴⁸⁷

Here we can see made plain a view where music offers an image to understand, and experience, something that is beyond the capacity of empirical reason alone. In the course of the interviews, this view was echoed in the way that one participant described the experience of music within the liturgy as something ‘more profound...where there is definitely more to it than just the music’,⁴⁸⁸ and the comment of another participant that ‘[music] is the highest offering to God, and if I’m listening to it...it’s how I would feel closest to God’.⁴⁸⁹

A still more explicit statement of platonic intent in Donne’s musical schema can be found in the poem ‘Upon the translation of the Psalms’ where Donne explicitly outlines the neo-platonic understanding of the relationship between the music of ‘the three choirs; heavens, earth and spheres’;⁴⁹⁰ where he outlines the silent music of the heavens that ‘no man hear’ but which is present in the ‘spheres...[which] have no tongue’ and becomes audible and fully known in the song of the choirs on earth.⁴⁹¹ In a statement that raises *musica mundana* beyond that of many commentators (and certainly challenges the Thomist and Augustinian reticence about earthly

⁴⁸⁶ P02

⁴⁸⁷ John Donne (1572 - 1631), adapted by Eric Milner-White from A Sermon Preached at White-hall, February 29, 1628, in Eric Milner-White, *After the Third Collect*, (London: Mowbray, 1966), p. 76.

⁴⁸⁸ P03

⁴⁸⁹ P02

⁴⁹⁰ John Donne, ‘Upon the translation of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke, His Sister’, in Donne, *Selected Poems*, p. 192.

⁴⁹¹ Donne, ‘Upon the translation of the Psalms’, in Donne, *Selected Poems*, p. 192.

music), Donne offers us an understanding whereby this song of the earthly choirs is itself a form of perfection that becomes the model for the song of the angels who 'learn by what the Church does here'.⁴⁹² Again, there are resonances with the comments made by participants in this study, and a particularly strong association can be made between the idea that, in the liturgical setting, singers are 'trying to offer the most perfect thing'⁴⁹³ and Donne's re-assertion of the Platonic concept of the music of the spheres whereby human song reveals something of the perfect form that is hidden within the created order. This is a theme that will be returned to in section 5.3, which will give consideration to the theme of music as revealing something of the inherent beauty of creation. Meanwhile, in Donne we can see, as in the musical imagery of Herbert, an approach that is consonant with the participatory narrative that lies behind Hooker's statement that, through music it is possible to apprehend something of God 'more inwardly than any other sensible mean'.⁴⁹⁴

As we have seen in other comments of some of the participants already referred to above, these ideas of music as something that draws the performer or listener toward the experience of heaven were reflected in the range of accounts provided by participants in this study of their own experience and their understanding of the place that their activity as singers has within the Anglican Choral Tradition. In Herbert and Donne, we find a consistent and coherent pattern within which the theological nature of music can be placed; for both Donne and Herbert there is an objective 'truth' that is theological in nature but beyond purely rational human experience, but which can be apprehended through the capacity that music has (alongside other means by which aesthetic beauty can be apprehended) to extend human experience toward the worship of heaven and the presence of the divine:

- In the imagery used by Herbert, just as the human eye that looks on beauty (in whatever form) might find that 'on it may stay his eye', so the heart and mind might move beyond this first apprehension and be led to a position where they might then 'the heav'n espy' – thereby perceiving the true theological value of such beauty.⁴⁹⁵
- Similarly, for Donne, human song is a signpost toward the singing of the heavens that leads us toward an unearthly experience of such as that that is found in the divine presence following resurrection; indeed, in re-expressing the neo-Platonic categories of music that would have been known to Augustine, Donne places a particular value on the earthly, human song as being an audible expression of that perfect music that remains unsung except within the human and earthly experience of *musica mundana*. Thus, as well as being the means by which man can apprehend theological truth, human music has a distinctive

⁴⁹² Donne, 'Upon the translation of the Psalms', in Donne, *Selected Poems*, p. 192.

⁴⁹³ P07

⁴⁹⁴ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman, pp. 129.

⁴⁹⁵ Herbert, 'The Elixir', in Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, p. 180.

role in expressing the perfection of music in a way that makes manifest the silent music of the heavens pointing toward the heavenly Temple in which is heard 'the one equal [perfect] music'.⁴⁹⁶

Having established the way that the participants in this study articulated views that were in sympathy with the thought of classic Anglican theology, we will now explore the ways in which this theme of the worship of heaven and earth unified in one single act of worship (of which music is an inherent part) finds resonances in patristic literature and sympathetic accounts in contemporary Roman Catholic Theology.

Patristic resonances

A theme that recurs throughout the tradition from the patristic period onwards is the concept that in our earthly song our voices are united with the voices of heaven, and that in this unity we share in a single worship that unites heaven and earth. Again, this is an image that leads naturally to a participatory outlook to the resulting theological engagement – in this case giving a more explicit analogy by which to enable participatory engagement by the listener or performer. Given a fresh voice by Joesph Ratzinger,⁴⁹⁷ this approach draws on a distinctive patristic theology of worship. The rich doxological nature of the texts that are present within the biblical book Revelation have led to this (alongside texts from the psalms and other writings/prophesy of the Old Testament) being a particularly rich source of imagery and texts.⁴⁹⁸ Among these, particular liturgical expression has been given to the *Sanctus*, a biblical text derived from Isaiah 6.3 and Revelation 4.8 and included from the earliest centuries within the formulae of the eucharistic rituals of the Church. Observing that 'from very early we can find explicit liturgical awareness of the union of human and angelic voices',⁴⁹⁹ Stapert cites the writings of Clement of Rome and Tertullian (of Alexandria):

Clement: 'Think of the vast company of angels...'crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts all creation is full of his glory'." In the same way ought we ourselves, gathered together in a conscious unity, to cry to Him as it were with a single voice if we are to obtain a share of his glorious promises...'.⁵⁰⁰

Tertullian: 'the attending host of angels cease not to say: "Holy, holy, holy!" Therefore, we, too...become familiar even while here on earth with that heavenly cry of praise to God and the duty of our future glory.'⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁶ Donne, adapted by Milner-White in *After the Third Collect*, p. 76.

⁴⁹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, 'III "In the Presence of the Angels I Will Sing Your Praise": The Regensburg Tradition and the Report of the Liturgy' in Joseph Ratzinger, *Collected Works: Volume 11, Theology of the Liturgy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014, pp. 461-479.

⁴⁹⁸ See Section 4.1b.

⁴⁹⁹ Calvin R. Stapert, *A New Song in an Old World*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 39.

⁵⁰⁰ Clement of Rome, 'The First Epistle to the Corinthians XXXIV', pp. 36-37, cited in Stapert, *A New Song in an Old World*, p. 38.

⁵⁰¹ Tertullian, 'On Prayer III', p. 161, cited in Stapert, *A New Song in an Old World*, p. 39.

Given the resonances of the motif of the Sanctus as the song of the heavenly host, it is not perhaps surprising to find that the decoration of many churches that sit within the Anglican tradition feature this, and other biblical texts that focus on the praise of God and the unity of worship between heaven and earth. One example of such decoration can be found in the choir stalls in Durham Cathedral, which was a focal point for those who were instrumental in the development of the Anglican tradition during the periods on both sides of the Commonwealth in the 17th century, and illustrate the Anglican sensibility of worship illustrated in biblical quotation (see photograph on page 114):

Laudemus viros gloriosos *We sing the praises of glorious men*

Homines pulchritudinis studium habentes *Men have the study of beauty*

Laudate Dominum in chordis et organo *Praise the Lord on stringed instruments and pipe*

Laudate Dominum tympano et choro *Praise the Lord on the strings and drums*

Psallite peuri sapienter *The children sing with wisdom*

The quotations seen here, taken from Ecclesiasticus and Psalm 150 have an obvious focus on the offering of music in worship in imitation or unity with that of heaven and the pursuit of God through beauty. In this way we can see a textual affirmation of an Anglican theology of worship that is consonant both with that outlined above in terms of the unity of earthly and heavenly worship through music, whilst also providing a touching point with the theological pursuit of ‘the beauty of holiness’ that will be outlined in Chapter 5.3.

Illustration: The choir stalls of Durham Cathedral



Modern Roman Catholic thought in sympathy with classic Anglican spirituality

Within modern Catholic theology, an example of the treatment of this same image of the Sanctus as a particular expression of a wider theological framework is developed in an essay by Joseph Ratzinger which picks up on the image provided by the Sanctus within a wider discussion of the relationship between human and angelic song.⁵⁰² As a starting place, Ratzinger places the musical activity within the liturgy into the broader context of the liturgy itself, stating that the individual liturgical event (and hence musical performance) 'is entering into the liturgy of the heavens that has always been taking place' and drawing on the image of the eternal worship of heaven that is expressed most strikingly in the various accounts of the worship of heaven within the Apocalypse of John/Book of Revelation.⁵⁰³ Whilst much of his essay is directed at specific issues within the recent reform of the Roman Catholic liturgy, Ratzinger also addresses broader musical and theological issues. In a passage that reads equally as an account that could sit within the Anglican theological tradition, he cites part of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy when it says that:

⁵⁰² Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels".

⁵⁰³ Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p. 462.

In the earthly liturgy we share a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we travel as pilgrims.⁵⁰⁴

In exploring the way that music is a means by which the human activity of worship can be understood as a participation in the eternal worship of heaven, Ratzinger returns to the same images drawn from the book of Revelation that were used by both Clement and Tertullian by exploring the significance of the liturgical text of the *Sanctus*. Drawn from the book of Revelation and incorporated into the central eucharistic prayer of the Church since the earliest centuries, this text is given a central place in the worship of the Church such that 'in the entire liturgical tradition of the East and the West, the Preface always closes with a reference to the heavenly liturgy and invites the assembled congregation to join in the acclamation of the heavenly choirs'.⁵⁰⁵ Ratzinger observes that the idea that our singing expresses the unity of the song of heaven with that sung on earth reflects the Christian claim that 'Christ...connects heaven and earth with each other',⁵⁰⁶ whilst also noting the particular charism that the choir has in 'draw[ing the congregation] into cosmic praise and into the open expanse of heaven and earth more powerfully than its own stammering'.⁵⁰⁷ Thus, the idea of the choir singing vicariously on behalf of others (explored in section 6.1) is given theological foundation as a means of bringing about human participation in the presence of God.

The image of worship that is present in Revelation (which is a strong biblical source for what might be given the shorthand designation of 'Sanctus theology') was vividly drawn on in one interview, where the participant, reflected on their earlier experience as a chorister. Articulating the idea that heaven sees us perfected and that 'in heaven we will be in our perfect form',⁵⁰⁸ they continued to reflect on the way that they felt this had been anticipated by their childhood experiences as a chorister (now reflected in their aspirations in choral singing), and reflected that 'if there's choirs of heavenly angels, then sign me up'.⁵⁰⁹ As well, as reflecting the personal importance of singing to their childhood spirituality and continuing activity within the choir, this statement draws a parallel between the singing that is undertaken by singers in cathedral choirs and the perfection of human song in the song of heaven that this anticipates – in this way it is a direct parallel to the theology expressed in turn by Clement, Tertullian and Ratzinger.

This idea – that in music there is an essential unity between the worship of heaven and earth that our earthly song anticipates and enacts – was touched upon by one participant who identified that

⁵⁰⁴ Cited in Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p.470.

⁵⁰⁵ Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p.474.

⁵⁰⁶ Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p.475.

⁵⁰⁷ Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p.475.

⁵⁰⁸ P04

⁵⁰⁹ P04

music in worship and ‘an ability to transport people beyond the physical realm’.⁵¹⁰ This comment, that music has the power to mediate between experience in the present and another kind of experience that (in a roughly articulated way) is beyond the specific situation of the performance, was developed in more detail in another interview. This interviewee saw that music (in combination with other factors such as architecture, lighting and literature) reveals something of God, articulating this by saying that ‘in every sort of artistic way, it’s speaking of God and the beauty of holiness’.⁵¹¹ In speaking of the specific way that this was embodied in musical performance, they spoke of ‘our voices joining with the saints who have gone before and the angels who are around us’.⁵¹² In this linking of song in the present context with both the trans-temporal unity that this represents with the saints and the transcendent unity that is perceived with the worship of heaven, this offers a very specific and full connection with the theological accounts of Clement, Tertullian and Ratzinger.

The duality of interaction by which human music in worship both reflects and is seen to enact our participation in the heavenly worship which we have noted here, is also a strong feature of Anglican theological writing and poetry, and is, as we have noted, a central element of the texts of the eucharistic canon within the liturgy. In a very real way this offers a means to understand how musically the words of the Lord’s Prayer are enacted whereby heaven becomes known ‘on earth as it is in heaven’ by placing the musician at the location of this interaction between the heavenly and earthly dimensions of worship. Many of the extra liturgical texts that are set to music come from the poetic texts within both the Old and New Testaments and have varying allusions to this same porosity of the boundary of heaven and earth where the text is indicative of the process that might be taking place within the musical performance of the text. Examples within the core repertoire of many cathedrals including Bainton’s ‘And I saw a new heaven’, drawing on texts from Revelation), Ireland’s ‘Greater love’ (combining texts from the Song of Songs with passages for various epistles), whilst there is a rich seam of music throughout the centuries drawing on texts from the Song of Songs and poetry of the psalms.

Whilst noting the theological appropriateness of these images of music unifying worship in earth and heaven, it is important to note that an over-literal reading of this imagery was possible – and had the effect of distancing the accounts of some musicians from the imagery drawn on within the historic narratives cited above. Thus one interviewee, whilst asserting strongly the way that music spoke of a beauty that transcended the boundaries of time and place questioned the use of the

⁵¹⁰ P05

⁵¹¹ P01

⁵¹² P01

image of heavenly worship and earthly worship to describe this. This difficulty they identified lay in 'the idea of the heavenly Host being up there and us down here',⁵¹³ and they articulated the problem that the implied physical understanding of the concepts of heaven and earth as separate places sat at odds with the empirical observations of time and space. Their own interpretation – whilst faithful to the theological narrative of music uniting heavenly and earthly worship focused on musical acts that make God present (or reveal his already present nature) among those involved in musical and liturgical activity, rather than unifying whatever is conceptually described as 'heaven' and 'earth'.⁵¹⁴ These comments – made by a theologically informed participant – reveals a process by which historically received understandings of the theological role of music can be creatively reshaped to continue speaking to a modern generation with its very different metaphysical and cosmological assumptions.

Conclusions

In this section we have examined the way in which responses of the participants in the study reflected the idea that musical performance within the liturgy makes present an image of the worship of heaven within the earthly context of performance. We have seen how this approach can be grounded in classic Anglican spirituality by looking at theological parallels within the poetry of George Herbert and John Donne. Further placing this understanding within the broad context of Anglican spirituality we have seen how this idea of music as part of an image of the heavenly worship (and especially how this can be seen in adoption of texts such as that of the Sanctus for understanding the unifying effect the liturgy has between the worship of heaven and earth). We can see the consonance of this with the Anglican spiritual tradition by the reflection of these patristic ideas within inscriptions on characteristically 'Anglican' furnishings of the formative period of the late 17th century. Finally, we have seen how the theological proximity of the Anglican theological and spiritual tradition to its closest streams of thought within the wider western Church are found in parallel ways of understanding that are enumerated in the writings of Vatican II and can be seen developed in the subsequent writings of Josef Ratzinger. In all of this we see how the descriptions provided by the participants in this study provide a rich account that is symbiotic with both classic Anglican spiritual and theological patterns of understanding. Further, the way that these understandings are consonant with both patristic ideas and sympathetic accounts within contemporary Roman Catholic reflect the wider trends within Anglican theology with respect to these sources of tradition and ongoing reflection.

⁵¹³ P01

⁵¹⁴ P01

5.3 Theologies of music within creation

The patristic inspiration: theologies of music within creation

As was touched upon in the last section, an Anglican approach to a spirituality and theology of music touches upon ideas that are present both in the patristic Christian writers and non-Christian (and largely Platonic or neo-Platonic) philosophical understandings of the role of music within the created order. This is both systemically motivated by the Anglican appeal to the teaching and practices of the patristic Church and consonant with the broad spirituality that seeks beauty in worship – both as a means to anticipate the worship of heaven (illustrated by both Herbert and Donne), and as an echo of the intrinsic beauty of created order (something that was noted as present in their writings, but will be explored in more detail in this section).

The way that experiences of lay singers can be understood within the frameworks that are found deep within the Anglican traditions of spirituality and theology invites us to reflect on the ways in which their contemporary experiences can best be understood within such historically grounded patterns of understanding. Van Duesen raises the question as to how we can understand music better in its mediaeval context.⁵¹⁵ Starting such a task with Augustine's approach, illustrated in *de Musica*,⁵¹⁶ we can see the importance of music in revealing the creator in the created cosmos – an imprint of the divine that, by intellection reveals something of the Divine nature. In a recent expression of a participative Christian doctrine of creation, Simon Oliver touches on two themes arising in the reflections in this study: gift,⁵¹⁷ and analogy.⁵¹⁸ Oliver describes the way that 'creation exists 'analogically' by virtue of its relation to God',⁵¹⁹ and central to this is 'to understand that God's causal action and [our] causal action are *not of the same kind*'.⁵²⁰ The power of this analogical relationship between the actions created and creator is explained in saying that '[our] causal power is related by analogy to God who is the fount and source of all creation'.⁵²¹ Detailed implications of a participatory approach to musical experience are found in Boethius' influential 6th century treatise *De Institutione Musica*, with its threefold categorisation of music as *musica mundana*, *musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis*:

⁵¹⁵ Nancy van Deusen, *The Cultural Context of Mediaeval Music. Music, Devotion, Emotion, Intellection*, (New York: Routledge-Praeger, 2011) and Nancy van Deusen, *Music and Theology at the Early University: The Case of Robert Grosseteste and Anonymous IV*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, (New York: Brill, 1995).

⁵¹⁶ Augustine, translated by Robert Catesby Tariaferro, *de Musica*, <https://archive.org/details/augustine-on-music-de-musica/mode/2up> on 19th August 2024.

⁵¹⁷ 4.5 and Oliver, *Creation*, p. 59.

⁵¹⁸ 4.3b and Oliver, *Creation*, p. 72.

⁵¹⁹ Oliver, *Creation*, p. 72.

⁵²⁰ Oliver, *Creation*, p. 75.

⁵²¹ Oliver, *Creation*, p. 87.

...we ought to say how many types of music we know to have been recognised by its devotees. Of these there are three. The first indeed is cosmic; the second is human; the third is that which is produced by instruments.⁵²²

The following discussion of the way that harmony is found within the created order through at these three levels highlights an outworking of the Platonic and Pythagorean concept of music that extends far beyond the purely physical attributes of sound, and offers an outworking of the Platonic idea that in creation ‘the body of the universe was generated visible; but soul is invisible, participating of a rational energy and harmony, and subsisting as the best of generated natures, through its artificer, who is the best of intelligible and perpetual beings’.⁵²³ In Boethius’ scheme the silent music of creation finds expression in the human harmony of body and soul and physical expression in the performance of music as sound. Within a participatory framework, as described in 5.1, we can see the potential that this pattern of understanding music at three levels to provide the means by which ‘in the order and harmony of the Universe, we [must] perceive God the governor of it all’.⁵²⁴ In the light of this, the mediaeval writer Jacques of Liège extends Boethius’ treatment of *musica mundane* with an explicit restatement of its metaphysical implications, stating that whilst ‘Boethius applies *musica mundana* only to natural. Mobile and sensible things...the things which I have said pertain to this type of music are metaphysical things, transcendent things, separate from motion and sensible matter, even according to their being’.⁵²⁵

The role of music as a means to explicate and elucidate theological meaning in this way allows us to see that music can be a means of philosophical and theological encounter and exploration. In the light of this, the repeated statements by participants that many meaningful performances were experienced in liturgical contexts that were small in scale might reflect the way that any idea of music as entertainment is minimised or removed by such a context – allowing music to speak in these different ways with the temptation to see it as entertainment minimised. The manner of engagement by musicians in these situations, which is identified by a number of participants to be qualitatively different,⁵²⁶ suggests that with the burden of performing music for others they are enabled to engage with their own musical activity in a way that can ‘transport people beyond the

⁵²² Boethius (translated by James Garceau, Kevin Long, Susan Burnham, Michael Waldstein and Thomas McGovern SJ), *De Institutione Musica*, downloaded from <https://www.thewayofbeauty.org> on 22nd July 2024.

⁵²³ Plato, ‘Timaeus’ in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: A sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1993), p. 6.

⁵²⁴ Athanasius, ‘The Harmony of All Things’ in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: A sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1993), p. 49.

⁵²⁵ Jacques de Liège, ‘Speculum musicae’ in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: A sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1993), p. 136.

⁵²⁶ 4.4

physical realm'.⁵²⁷ 'offering...the most perfect thing that they can manage to the Glory of God'.⁵²⁸ Highlighting the manner in which these experiences relate to earlier patterns of understanding musical activity, these concerns of metaphysical potential and the implications of encountering the perfection of the creator through performance relate directly to van Deusen's description of mediaeval concerns in these areas:

The act of creation is legitimized by the fact that God does it. People do it too, because they are made in God's image. [...] The finished work is good; it gives witness to the power of the creator. Its perfection proceeds out of its intrinsic properties. A work of art is the outer, visible expression of an invisible mental landscape. It has an autonomous existence, and, when finished, very quickly becomes separated from its creator.⁵²⁹

In the context of this study, this opens the possibility of musical performances within the liturgy being a concrete expression (*musica instrumentalis*) which shapes the spiritual experience of those involved (*musica humana*), providing through the act of creation (or co-creation) in musical performance a source for reflection on the unseen created order; at each level disclosing something of the creator through the analogous treatment of primary and secondary causes. The Boethian and Augustinian pre-eminence given to the 'musician' as the one who 'applies himself completely to reason and speculation...and the application of reason to musical matters' (rather than to an individual who performs *musica instrumentalis*).⁵³⁰ This has a significance in understanding the frequently mentioned challenges encountered by performers in reflecting on their own performances; perhaps reflecting a residual presence of this earlier pattern of theological understanding in the perceptions of the participants of this study in interpreting their own experiences in spiritual and theological terms.⁵³¹ Such experiences may validate the cautions present in Augustine's writing, that the emotional nature of music, its practical demands, and its pleasurable qualities can also be a distraction that draw us away from intellection of the divine toward purely human pleasure.⁵³²

Augustine's thought is incorporated into the work of Thomas Aquinas, who integrated earlier philosophical theology of the patristic and early mediaeval writers with the Aristotelian and Islamic texts then available.⁵³³ His method, seen in his Commentary on Boethius' "De Trinitate",⁵³⁴ outlines

⁵²⁷ PO5

⁵²⁸ PO7

⁵²⁹ van Deusen, p. 155.

⁵³⁰ Boethius, *De Institutione Musica*, I.34.

⁵³¹ See 4.3d

⁵³² Augustine (translated by Carolyn Hammond), *Confessions Vol. II Books 9–13*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 2016), 10.33.50.

⁵³³ For example, his citations from Aristotle (p. 9) and Ibn Sina (p.10) in Thomas Aquinas, 'Commentary on Boethius' "De Trinitate" (Chapter 2)', in Aquinas (translated by Timothy McDermott), *Selected Philosophical Writings*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-50.

⁵³⁴ Aquinas, 'Commentary on Boethius' "De Trinitate"'.

a threefold framework for understanding knowledge as either physics (natural science), mathematics, or metaphysics (theology).⁵³⁵ Acknowledging that theology lies beyond our temporal experience, Aquinas asserts that ‘other sciences, like music and ethics, [theology] needs if it is to be done well’.⁵³⁶ Mathematics, which derives pattern and meaning through disciplined reflection on the physical world,⁵³⁷ provides the starting point for a process of intellection which allows contemplation of the purely abstract that lies beyond temporal experience (and can only be described analogically with human experience in the material world). Aquinas is careful to avoid a purely natural theology, asserting that God is revealed through these processes by Grace.⁵³⁸ In addressing the performance of music within worship, Aquinas highlights the potential difficulty of ‘the soul [being] distracted from the meaning...when [music] is sung merely to arouse pleasure’.⁵³⁹ From this it can be seen that practical music can be a means to praise God, whilst the mathematical study of musical pattern can be a source for deeper reflection on the metaphysical reality that lies beyond sensory experience and, by Grace, reveals something of the divine nature.

The essential characteristic of this approach to the theological meaning of music is that in performance (*musica instrumentalis*) the music of the cosmos (*musica mundana*) becomes concrete in human experience and reveals to us something of the *Imago Dei* (by means of inner *musica humana*) that is a key component of human existence, revealing God’s image within us and to us. This gives music a role in theological experience that is far beyond that of entertainment or emotional engagement (both approaches that are common). This is a point sketched out by den Deusen, who highlights the way that our understanding of music is shaped by our own cultural experiences by comparison to the focus on music as material for exploration and investigation in the mediaeval period, citing the example of the mediaeval bishop, theologian and natural philosopher, Robert Grosseteste:

Music, however, for Grosseteste, was far more than relaxing entertainment [...]. Music was crucial to his understanding of the most revolutionary, demanding concepts of his time.⁵⁴⁰

Taken together we can see here an approach to a spirituality and theology of music that pays attention to the way that music is a thing of beauty that can draw the performer and listener into the beauty of the created order – but with a caution that this beauty can become a distraction that draws attention to itself rather than pointing beyond itself to the greater beauty of God. As we saw

⁵³⁵ Aquinas, ‘Commentary on Boethius’ “De Trinitate”, pp.8-9.

⁵³⁶ Aquinas, ‘Commentary on Boethius’ “De Trinitate”, p. 12.

⁵³⁷ Aquinas, ‘Commentary on Boethius’ “De Trinitate”, p. 7.

⁵³⁸ Aquinas, ‘Commentary on Boethius’ “De Trinitate” (Chapter 2), p. 50.

⁵³⁹ Aquinas, ‘Commentary on Boethius’ “De Trinitate”, pp.123-4.

⁵⁴⁰ van Deusen, p. xi.

in considering Donne's writing, an Anglican sensitivity tends toward a positive approach to the spiritual effect of music – seeing music (and worship more generally) as a means of encountering something of the reality of heavenly worship and revealing the inherent beauty in creation.

One respondent made clear associations between the performance and experience of music in the liturgy, together with other aesthetics (including the building, poetry and art) as being a key component of the experience of worship, saying that 'in every sort of artistic way, [music and other arts] speak of God and the beauty of holiness'.⁵⁴¹ From this starting point of an aesthetic appreciation of music that echoes the patristic ideas of the beauty of God imprinted within creation, this respondent was clear that this theological aspect of performance within the liturgy was something that was open to experience by both those performing and those participating by listening, and that '[music] speaks to those of us who are taking part in lots of different ways'.⁵⁴² In reflecting on the theological nature of musical performance, they stated that music, as in other activities (including activities beyond the liturgical setting), provides a means of theological disclosure that was grounded in a way where 'you've...got signals of what God has done for us in creation and in sound and word'.⁵⁴³ Another participant described a similar drawing together of aesthetic experiences as a bringing together of 'the theatrics and the ceremony' in a way that results in an activity that is 'profound' and 'stirs up something' – where music and setting combine to create an experience of deep meaning.⁵⁴⁴ These sentiments, echoing the theological approach articulated by Augustine, where music has an emotional effect that heightens spiritual experience and draws those involved in musical performance (either as performers or listeners) into contemplating the beauty of God, recurred in a number of conversations within the study, with typical comments including:

There are certain pieces of music where you do feel, I mean, you're listening to it like, "God is here," I think – but I only get that when listening to it.⁵⁴⁵

The way to get closest to God is through music. [...] it's the highest offering to God and if I'm listening to it, it is, yeah, it's the high... I don't know, it's how I would feel closest to God if I'm listening to it.⁵⁴⁶

[Music] speaks to absolutely everyone on a very profound level.⁵⁴⁷

Another insight into the capacity that music has to deepen experience of texts was offered by another participant who, once again echoing Augustine's account of the power of music to impact

⁵⁴¹ P01

⁵⁴² P01

⁵⁴³ P01

⁵⁴⁴ P03

⁵⁴⁵ P02

⁵⁴⁶ P02

⁵⁴⁷ P03

on the emotions, described the way that they understood that within the liturgy ‘music can heighten the senses’.⁵⁴⁸ Reflecting Hooker’s articulation of the potential that music has for ‘raising up of men’s hearts and the softening of their affections towards God’,⁵⁴⁹ for this participant music had a capacity to bring new meaning and depth to texts within the liturgy that would otherwise be absent, and that even the simplest of texts or compositions – so long as carefully crafted, and performed to the glory of God – have the capacity to be ‘so beautiful’ that they have a value that exceeds expectation.⁵⁵⁰ In part, the respondent identified this with the venture of seeking, through music, to experience something of the perfection of Christ – borrowing a phrase from the liturgy, that in offering ‘our spiritual sacrifice’ we ‘strive to be like Him and to offer Him the most perfect thing’.⁵⁵¹ Here the response moves somewhat beyond the straightforward accounts of Augustine to anticipate both the way that music provides a means to apprehend beauty (and thereby the divine beauty), and the way that in seeking the perfection of God there is a parallel impetus to seek perfection within musical performance (that will be explored in a more detail in section 5.4). The important feature of this discussion was the way in which music combines with words to bring deeper meaning and an appreciation of God that moves beyond the immediate sensory experience to an encounter of something of the beauty of God that is found in creation – and leads to a striving toward the perfection that lies beyond the immediate experience of that beauty. This suggests a consideration of the concept that in musical performance the singer (and listener) might participate in something of the divine nature by their apprehension of the beauty that is present in musical performance and is derived from the divine beauty.

Several of the participants alluded to the difficulty that could be experienced in participating spiritually in musical performance (and by implication performance being spiritually informed) when being simultaneously involved in that performance. This arose from the fact of the practical demands of performance compromising the ability to reflect on the spiritual experience of singing in the liturgy. Thus, one participant spoke of the way that they were better able to participate spiritually when they were listening rather than singing:

I do feel like perhaps I miss out on sort of, when you’re just sat there in the congregation and you’re able to sit and listen, it’s a very different experience of it.⁵⁵²

The balance between musical performance as a spiritual activity that is experienced at an individual level and the demand placed on the singers to perform and pay attention to issues of balance and ensemble that are a natural part of choral singing. This was expressed by one participant as a

⁵⁴⁸ P07

⁵⁴⁹ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁵⁵⁰ P07

⁵⁵¹ P07

⁵⁵² P05

balancing act between ‘freely worshipping God’ and constraining ones performances so that the performer is not ‘going to ruin the mix’.⁵⁵³ The same participant continued by reflecting that ‘we do get flummoxed in our technique, to the detriment of expression’.⁵⁵⁴ This conflict between the technical demands of singing and the need to perform within the context of the singing of other members of the choir was noted by others – often noting that the demands of musical technique became a distraction from experiencing the performance in a more deeply spiritual way:

...you get overwhelmed with it, and I think you have to be careful as a singer though that you don’t let that overtake you. I suppose if you’re in the congregation you can let yourself completely go with something like that – but I think there’s a danger when you are performing, if you completely go in that kind of very spiritual, you could be, yes, losing the finesse of your actual control of the voice to some extent.⁵⁵⁵

Similar conflicting sentiments between performance and spiritual experience were apparent in another observation which reflected that, whilst being ‘focused on the music’ (and therefore distracted from a broader appreciation of its spiritual impact on them), they ‘appreciate the spirituality of it’.⁵⁵⁶ However, they also suggested the primacy of musical performance within this relationship as they felt they were ‘[there] to do a particular job and that is to lead the music and the singing in the best way I possibly can’ with the result that their ‘primary focus was...to sing it well and deliver it well’ – leading to their own spiritual experience being at ‘a secondary level’.⁵⁵⁷

Participation in the beauty of God through music

Next, we return to the ideas of participatory theology, that were explored in the context of Hooker’s writing in section 5.1, in order to see how a participatory framework of understanding can help understand better the experiences of music revealing the beauty of God in creation through the musical performances that are the subject of this study. An extension of the idea that something of God is disclosed within the aesthetic beauty of music within worship is the idea that this takes place as a result of those involved participating in a beauty that flows from the Godhead; that in the beauty experienced in music there is an apprehension of the perfect beauty of the Godhead that is disclosed within the relative beauty of creation. (In Thomistic terms this might be best described as the beauty of creation being analogous to the greater beauty of God). This raw experience of participating in something of beauty was reflected by a number of participants, one of whom described such experiences as times when ‘often unprepared...[there is] such beauty or

⁵⁵³ P04

⁵⁵⁴ P04

⁵⁵⁵ P07

⁵⁵⁶ P05

⁵⁵⁷ P05

something – you’re not expecting to be caught off guard like that, but it can really move you.’⁵⁵⁸ This reflection incorporated not only the participant’s own experience but also accounts that had been shared with them by others – both of those who had similar experiences as singers, and those who had parallel experiences whilst listening to music. Again, the idea of people being caught off guard by beauty was recounted by another participant who reflected on the perceived experiences of those who may come ‘not necessarily to worship’, but ‘who are overwhelmed because they actually realise that there’s something quite spiritual in it’.⁵⁵⁹

These statements, together with other frequent mentions of seeking beauty through music that were encountered in the course of conversation, indicate the presence of an understanding of musical activity that is open to a participatory interpretation and an implicit natural theology by which the beauty of God can be encountered in the beauty of creation (which here includes the beauty of music within creation) – even by those who do not expect this encounter. Here is an echo of Richard Hooker’s explanation, touched on in section 5.1, that music has the power to instantiate ‘pleasing effects ...in that very part of man which is most divine’.⁵⁶⁰ This provides a key link to the participatory themes that undergird Hooker’s writing, and might help us to find a foundation within the Anglican theological tradition for a participatory understanding of music. Within such an understanding there will be, in the human sphere, an inherent element of a natural theology which, as Dominiak outlines, is found in Hooker’s understanding of the relation between the transcendentals within angelic order which are directed toward ‘the inherent principles of being (esse), goodness (bonum), and... beauty (pulcrum)’.⁵⁶¹

It was clear in conversation that a majority of those interviewed saw the potential for beauty in music to be a touching point for transcendent, spiritual experiences that can affect performer or listener – or both. Whilst the understanding that ‘[music] speaks to those of us who are taking part in lots of different ways’ affirmed the multivalent way that music can speak to performer and listener alike,⁵⁶² and are in sympathy with the observations of the participant whose comments opened this section,⁵⁶³ there were others who saw the ability to participate (in theological terms) limited to either the performer or listener – often for pragmatic reasons.

⁵⁵⁸ P07

⁵⁵⁹ P07

⁵⁶⁰ Hooker, Book V, para 37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁵⁶¹ Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*, p. 53.

⁵⁶² P01

⁵⁶³ P07

The challenge of participating whilst performing

One difficulty identified by several participants (and referred to in the previous section) was the difficulty in their own spiritual participation within the liturgy, given the necessity for concentration on the technical demands of singing. Described by one singer as their 'primary focus', it was clear that this focus on performing and interpreting music within a choral context led to personal spirituality being placed at 'a secondary level', with the result that by being 'focused on getting the music right...you do miss out', and that others present who do not have the same practical demands may have 'a very different experience' that leads them to spiritual engagement in a different way.⁵⁶⁴ This was taken a stage further by another interviewee who expressed their singing within the liturgy in terms of being 'there to do a job' in such a way that, whilst they find themselves unable to worship as they want, but they 'feel like they are enabling somebody else's worship rather than their own'.⁵⁶⁵ This view highlights the fact that participation is not only possible for the performer (though they will participate in a particular and distinctive way) and music offers 'a half-way house to God' in the perception of the listener.⁵⁶⁶

Similarly, in reflecting on personal spiritual experience through music, one respondent drew a link between personal singing technique and the performing relationship with other singers and a failure to be able to participate fully in the spiritual and theological elements present in a performance, stating

'[singers] can get flummoxed in our technique, to the detriment of [spiritual] expression'.⁵⁶⁷

This indication that the personal spiritual and theological engagement of the singer might be constrained by the demands of performance, and others may be better placed to gain in terms of the spiritual experience of participating in musical performances in ways other than direct performance. This point was made again by another interviewee who reflected on the way that their own spiritual experiences were potentially minimised by their focus on technical aspects of performance,⁵⁶⁸ whilst a third participant contrasted experience of different choral foundations in which they had sung. In one foundation they felt that the focus was on the musical content of the performance which encouraged the singers to 'work hard' with the result that 'the overall level [of the standard of performance] through time really increased', but with the effect that 'it was more difficult to feel as if you could personally worship at the same time',⁵⁶⁹ whilst they also had experience of another setting which 'felt a bit more monastic in its atmosphere' and where music

⁵⁶⁴ P05

⁵⁶⁵ P02

⁵⁶⁶ P02

⁵⁶⁷ P04

⁵⁶⁸ P05

⁵⁶⁹ P07

was ‘sung for the glory of God’, with the result that they were able to participate in a different way with a more personal engagement in the spiritual (and theological) aspect of the performance.

A further participant saw that the experience they had as a performer singing in a liturgical setting was distinctive, and that, whilst musical performance has the capacity to ‘speak to everyone on a very profound level’, their own ability to participate spiritually (and theologically) increased as the nature of the performance changed. Thus, in reflecting that they ‘don’t tend to get anything transcendent or sublime out of [concert performances]...because you’re focusing on completely different things’, they observed that there is a qualitatively different ability to ‘relax and absorb’ in the context of evensong.⁵⁷⁰ Reflecting further on this, the interviewee explored the way in which in smaller more intimate liturgical settings the musical performance ‘becomes more personal and more meaningful’.

Despite these practical challenges, it was clear that all those interviewed saw the potential for spiritual (and theological) experience by the way that musical performance participates in the beauty that is an attribute of God. The practical challenges that were implicit in many of the conversations can be seen to reflect something of the patristic understanding that perfection of music is in the silent, heavenly music of creation (*musica mundana*) which is reflected in the inner music of the human mind (*musica humana*) which can only become known to the human ear in the physical act of music-making (*musica instrumentalis*). However, there was a widely acknowledged potential for such musical performances to offer something of the human experience of the divine by the way that they allowed human participation in something of the divine beauty that is reflected in music. Taking this further, in his recent work on participation Davison outlines a participatory vision which sees the world as ‘a gift from God, bearing some trace of his likeness, such that nothing exists, or is had, that is not given and received’.⁵⁷¹ Such an account is inherently reciprocal in nature, and further exploration of the material gained in the interviews indicates that this element is present too within the accounts provided by many singers.

The reciprocal nature of performance: a gift received and given

The reciprocity of the experience of singing within the liturgy was drawn out very clearly by one participant in the study, who identified their understanding that musical capability was a gift, elucidating this point by saying ‘it’s not in your genes; I believe it’s a gift from God’.⁵⁷² They later went on to link this idea that their voice and the performances in which they engaged within the

⁵⁷⁰ P03

⁵⁷¹ Davison, *Participation in God*, p. 376.

⁵⁷² P04

liturgy were a response to that gift by which they experienced something that was beyond their own capability to produce, explaining that

‘there are other bits where I just hear something fly...and its not [to] me that I am going, ‘well done you’– it’s that, you know, I don’t know...it’s a gift from God’⁵⁷³

Whilst such experiences were clearly something of an exceptional experience, they were recounted by a number of participants – one example of a similar experience recounting occasions where ‘its felt very spiritual [in performance]’ and ‘certain pieces where...[I’ve] had shivers down the spine’.⁵⁷⁴ Again, Davison offers some insight into the participative process that might underpin these experiences with his reiteration of the pattern by the way in which a participative approach to theology sees any activity originating from God, taking place through seeking to imitate the perfection of God and seeking its fulfilment in God (Summarised as being ‘from’, ‘through’ and ‘to’ God). In musical terms, this can be seen in a pattern of understanding whereby music is seen as a gift from God by means of which those involved in its performance and reception are involved in a process of co-creation by which God becomes more deeply known and which in turn is offered in praise to God (and thereby draws the participant more fully into the presence of God – who is the ultimate end of all activity. It is clear that the experiences recounted by many of those interviewed fitted this pattern of understanding – albeit with varied nuances in their description and interpretation.

This action of activity from, through and to God – which mirrors the concept of efficient, formal and final causes within Aristotelian philosophy – requires not only that those involved see their activity as in some way originating in God, but also that the ultimate aim of their performance is a return to God.⁵⁷⁵ This idea – that music is both received from God, and offered to God, was reflected in the way in which many participants saw their music as just such an offering. The reality of such an understanding was reflected in comments such as those made by one interviewee, who described that within the music sung by the choir ‘there’s always something in it of glorifying God and offering that praise, and of offering your voice to the heavens – it’s always there.’⁵⁷⁶ Similarly, another participant spoke of the way in which, within their singing in the liturgy, they understood that ‘you [sing] for the glory of God’.⁵⁷⁷

This understanding of singing to the glory of God was mentioned by most contributors (with varying emphases on the personal offering of musical performance to God and the corporate and vicarious

⁵⁷³ P04

⁵⁷⁴ P07

⁵⁷⁵ 4.5

⁵⁷⁶ P05

⁵⁷⁷ P07

offering of praise to God through music on behalf of the wider Church) and was articulated in more depth by some. One such reflection drew out the multi-layered way in which this offering took place – with the offering made by the choir taking place not just on their own behalf but on behalf of the (sometimes absent) congregation.⁵⁷⁸ In reflecting on the difference that took place when the performance was directed toward its offering to God rather than directed toward communicating meaning to others present, this contributor reflected on the practical ways by which in secular performance they focused phrase-by-phrase and line-by-line on the meaning of the text and how to articulate this to those listening, whilst in performance to God the meaning is present in a different way.⁵⁷⁹ Thus, the focus on offering a performance in a different, participative way has a direct effect on the performance, and the impact of this change in performance dynamic can be seen reflected in the various comments about the way that performances changed in effect, and often increased in meaning to the performer when they took place in more intimate liturgical contexts (rather than larger liturgical events or more secular concert performances).

There was a further implication of the idea that musical performance might be a reciprocal experience of giving and receiving from God present in the varying understandings as to who might participate in this process. Whilst one approach was indicated by the statement that this activity is undertaken by the choir as a result of the performance using their musical gifts that is distinctive from those who might be considered members of the wider Church/congregation,⁵⁸⁰ a second view (encountered in a range of conversations and held by a number of those interviewed) was that the capacity of the singers to engage in this deeper spiritual activity was compromised by the necessity to focus on the practical and mechanical aspects of performing to the required standard. Thus it was that one interviewee saw that the prime spiritual value of their performance was encountered vicariously by those who listened,⁵⁸¹ and a number of those interviewed noted either that their capacity to engage with their performance from a spiritual perspective was limited by the demands of performing,⁵⁸² or that there was an element of risk involved in such moments of deep spiritual engagement that did occur that risked the balance between the demands of singing within a group and individual engagement with the performance.⁵⁸³ Another aspect of this same issue is the matter, already covered, of those performing being able to engage in a deeper, more intimate and personal way when their singing is within smaller scale liturgical settings.

⁵⁷⁸ P07

⁵⁷⁹ P07

⁵⁸⁰ P07

⁵⁸¹ P02

⁵⁸² P02/P04/P05

⁵⁸³ P04

On the one hand, this opens the possibility that in the reciprocal offering and receiving that takes place within the musical activity of the singers there is a distinctive reception of theological experience or knowledge that is specific to this activity and that remains inaccessible to others (whether present or not), whilst on the other it widens the circle of participation to include not just those involved in the practical activity of performing, but those involved no less actively in the act of listening and engaging with this as a spiritual act. This leads to a challenge in facilitating reflection on such a process of theological participation when the various people involved in this process are so potentially disparate as are those potentially attending a liturgical event in a cathedral – where the congregation is often transient in nature. Reflecting on this process led some of those interviewed to reflect on the lack of reflection on their activity – perhaps best summarised by one interviewee who observed that rather than ‘some kind of theological connection [of the choir] with the deans and canons’ arising incidentally, there might better be opportunities for ‘something more formal where both groups can meet up and discuss music’.⁵⁸⁴

In describing the experiences of lay singers in the liturgy, Part 2 described diverse individual accounts of personal meaning, and a similar variety of responses to the transcendence that may be found in musical experience. Alongside understandings that music allowed an encounter that can best be understood as being participative, in which understanding of God can be approached by way of analogy through musical experience,⁵⁸⁵ there were also descriptions of direct theological encounter,⁵⁸⁶ and accounts which spoke of musical performance as having spiritual benefit for others, either for reasons of personal spirituality or due to the technical demands of performance that were placed on the performer.⁵⁸⁷ Despite these differences of individual experience, a participative theological account has allowed the identification of a framework incorporating the experiences of lay singers in the following ways:

1. Singers, generally self-identifying as ‘Anglican’ in their spirituality, for whom a participative account correlates directly with their own analogical understanding of music within the liturgy; and
2. Singers who provided diverse accounts of their own spiritual experience of singing within the liturgy but also expressed a corporate understanding that was participative in nature.

There were a number of ways in which the corporate narrative was articulated within this second category: understanding their musical performances within the wider context of the worship of the whole Church, or in the way that their music was experienced spiritually by others. As well as making sense of both the individual experiences of some, and the overarching corporate

⁵⁸⁴ p07

⁵⁸⁵ 4.3a and 4.3b

⁵⁸⁶ 4.3c

⁵⁸⁷ 4.3d

understanding that was expressed across the accounts of all the lay singers, such a participative theological account also incorporates the experiences of those lay singers who found the technical demands of singing minimised their own spiritual experience whilst performing by acknowledging that the practical demands of performing (*musica instrumentalis*) can distract from engagement in terms of intellection (*musica mundana*). It is notable that there was a commonality of understanding within this framework, that was present the corporate level in all accounts despite the significant variety that was present within accounts at an individual level). Where a participative understanding of music within creation was not present in the personal experience and understanding of a performer, it was expressed in either vicarious or corporate terms by all the participants in the detailed conversations). We can conclude from this that, whilst some singers feel they are participating directly in a creative (or co-creative) act in their musical performance, even those who did not see this in their own experience understood their activity to have a place within this conceptual framework at a corporate level: for some singers their performances their performances were moments of spiritual transcendence and encounter in which it was possible (albeit often only fleetingly) to discover something of the presence of God through the likeness of music at all three levels, whilst for others this sense of spiritual experience was not felt by them but understood to be a part of the reason for their performance in its corporate, ecclesial context – with its spiritual content either experienced by others or offered vicariously on behalf of the Church.

In relation to facilitating theological reflection on the act of performing and listening, there is a further corollary that results from the way that beauty and spiritual experience are encountered in the reception of the musical performances in ways that prove difficult to find the language to describe. In ways that echo the 20th-century French Roman Catholic composer Olivier Messiaen's statement that 'the arts, especially music... allow us to penetrate domains that are not unreal, but beyond reality',⁵⁸⁸ there was a sense in which the particularity of spiritual experience within liturgical performance of music can be difficult to mediate in non-musical language so that others can benefit from them, with a strong sense that the fact that many of these spiritual experiences (when they do arise for performers) are singular moments that do not bear repetition and might prove incapable of further theological interpretation? Here, alongside the possibility of abandoning any attempt at meaningful interpretation (as will be covered when dealing with more sceptical frameworks of understanding in section 5.5) we find a useful summary in returning to the words of Olivier Messiaen:

'Music possesses a power that is superior to the image and the word because it is immaterial and appeals more to the intellect and to

⁵⁸⁸ Olivier Messiaen, 'Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel', (Portland Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1994), p. 233, quoted in Sander Van Maas *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough Toward the Beyond*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 233.

thought than the other arts'⁵⁸⁹ speaking of a beauty that reflects the
'God [who] is the creator and whatever he has created is beautiful'.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Messiaen, *Music and Color*, p. 29.

⁵⁹⁰ Messiaen, *Music and Color*, p. 211.

5.4 Romantic ideas, moving beyond participation to direct theological experience

Echoes of Schleiermacher and a 'feeling' of being moved by God through music

A further aspect of the idea that performers might participate in God through their musical performance was touched upon by one participant who saw the experience of God in music as something direct. Starting from an understanding that music and experience of God were intimately linked, they reflected on the raw nature of this experience that takes the singer 'beyond ourselves to experience something of God'.⁵⁹¹ This concept – of music providing a vehicle by which one can come into a direct experience with God – draws on a different vein of Christian theology from those which have been brought to bear so far (each of which depended upon techniques such as analogy or an indirect experience – such as through the beauty of creation, rather than a direct experience of the creator – in order to apprehend something of God), and elicits a more romantic response to the theological role of music – one that is exemplified in the systematic theology of the 19th-century German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Schleiermacher sought to unify what, within a Kantian framework, he saw as the falsely separated realms of empirical knowledge and ethics – described by Gunton as 'the Newtonian world of determined nature, and the ethical world of decision and moral reason'.⁵⁹² Schleiermacher's sense of the inadequacy of both positive (or revealed) religion and natural religion, leads him to construct a philosophical theology that is 'concerned with what could be known about God through experience'.⁵⁹³ The resulting theological approach has been characterised as 'grounded in religious consciousness, and thus as broadly empirical', and is achieved by 'both in the *Speeches* and in the *Christian Faith* [distinguishing the fundamental religious consciousness from speculation or thinking on the one hand, and from ethics or doing on the other hand]'.⁵⁹⁴ The process by which this was achieved is described in Schleiermacher's most significant systematic work, *The Christian Faith*,⁵⁹⁵ whilst a number of his other works offer specific treatments of the theological nature of art,⁵⁹⁶ and the specific role of music within religious experience.⁵⁹⁷ The foundation of Schleiermacher's philosophical theology as set out in *On Christian Faith*, hinges on three approaches in understanding

⁵⁹¹ P04

⁵⁹² Colin Gunton, *Revelation and Reason*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 148.

⁵⁹³ Danielle Anne Lynch, *God in Sound and Silence: Music as Theology*, (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018), p. 3.

⁵⁹⁴ Robert Merrihew Adams, 'Faith and religious knowledge' in Jacqueline Marina, *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 35, 36.

⁵⁹⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, translated H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), downloaded from <https://archive.org/details/christianfaith0000schl/mode/2up> on 8th July 2024.

⁵⁹⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher (edited by Richard Crouter), *On Religion*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

⁵⁹⁷ Most notably Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on the Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890).

human understanding and activity: Feeling, Knowing and Doing.⁵⁹⁸ Characterising the first two of these three as states of ‘abiding-in-self’ and the third as ‘passing-beyond-self’,⁵⁹⁹ Schleiermacher highlights his understanding that it is only ‘feeling’ that is entirely an ‘abiding-in-self’ and therefore ‘stands in antithesis to the other two – Knowing and Doing’.⁶⁰⁰ In the discussion that follows within *The Christian Faith*, the idea of piety subsisting entirely within the fields of ‘knowing’ or ‘doing’ is tested. With respect to knowing, Schleiermacher outlines the way that if this were the case then ‘the most perfect master of master of Christian Dogmatics would always be likewise the most pious Christian’.⁶⁰¹ The natural conclusion from this, that ‘he who things the religious propositions most clearly and completely, individually and in their connexions, must likewise be the most pious man’,⁶⁰² leaves piety adrift from practical outworking and without foundation in the self-consciousness of the individual. Here we find a rejection of the pure rational thought as a ground for theological experience. In considering the alternative view that piety can subsist with the actions of ‘doing’ Schleiermacher outlines the argument that ‘if...piety consists of Doing, it is manifest that the Doing which constitutes it cannot be defined by its content’ and that ‘an action (a Doing) will only be pious in so far as the determination of self-consciousness, the feeling which had become affective and has passed into a motive impulse is a pious one’.⁶⁰³ In this way, just as ‘knowing’ was found insufficient as a foundation for theological experience, so ‘doing’ alone is deficient by leaving actions as empty rituals devoid of deeper meaning. In concluding that neither knowing nor doing are sufficient measures of piety, Schleiermacher returns to the importance of ‘feeling’, writing that:

‘there are both a Knowing and a Doing which pertain to piety, but neither of these constitutes the essence of piety: they only pertain to it inasmuch as the stirred up Feeling sometimes come to rest in a thinking which fixes it, sometimes discharges itself in an action which expresses it’.⁶⁰⁴

This summarises the importance Schleiermacher places on ‘feeling’ as a fundamental element of religious experience, and of its importance in developing a theological schema that moves beyond the limits of both rationalism and ritualistic, revealed religion by developing a method of philosophical theology. Klemm outlines that Schleiermacher’s ‘philosophical theology is thus necessarily above both the historical religions and natural religion, respectively’ and thereby seeking to ‘ascend beyond the critical reflection of *dianoia* [discursive thinking] to dialectic, where

⁵⁹⁸ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 8.

⁵⁹⁹ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁰ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 8.

⁶⁰¹ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 9.

⁶⁰² Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 10.

⁶⁰³ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 10.

⁶⁰⁴ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, p. 10-11.

they can comprehend...dialectical knowledge of the absolute (the “good”)[neosis – intuitive apprehension]’.⁶⁰⁵

From this, it is clear that feeling is not mere emotionalism, but something that extends religious experience further beyond that which is possible by natural or revealed religion alone. The difficulty interpreting Schleiermacher’s notion of ‘feeling’ is exemplified by Behrens the challenges presented by the fluctuations in the grammatical form used by Schleiermacher in describing it variously as a ‘feeling of absolute dependence’ or an ‘absolute feeling of dependence’.⁶⁰⁶ Behrens discusses Schleiermacher’s use of language to enunciate the way that religious experience ‘feeling’ may provide a proof for the existence of God.⁶⁰⁷ This lack in the ability of words to communicate theological thought sufficiently in Schleiermacher’s own writing puts into sharp contrast the capacity that he elsewhere identifies that music has to communicate the ‘holy and infinite’, writing that ‘there is also a music among the saints that becomes speech without words, the most definite, most understandable expression of what is innermost’.⁶⁰⁸

In the light of this, at the heart of Schleiermacher’s understanding of the role of music within religious experience is the idea that true religious experience is neither rational or ethical in its basis, but ‘springs necessarily and by itself from the interior of every better soul, [having] its own province of the mind in which it reigns sovereign’.⁶⁰⁹ Within this context, he places artists (and thereby musicians) among those who are ‘mediators of what would otherwise remain eternally separated’.⁶¹⁰ This position is summarised by Lynch, who outlines that

Schleiermacher proposes that music is a better way to communicate religious feeling than through words. Following Schleiermacher’s thought that music cannot be grasped by definite speech, but is an interchange of sounds and feelings’⁶¹¹

Schleiermacher’s view of artists (and musicians) as ‘mediators’ of the eternal met an almost exact parallel in the language of one participant who described the various artistic elements of the liturgical celebration as aesthetic experiences that bring together ‘the theatrics and the ceremony’ in a way that results in an activity that is ‘profound’ and ‘stirs up something’, with all the elements come together to ‘create an experience that is greater than its parts’.⁶¹² A similar sentiment was

⁶⁰⁵ David Klemm ‘Culture, arts, and religion’ in in Jacqueline Marina, *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 260-1.

⁶⁰⁶ Georg Behrens, ‘Feeling of Absolute Dependence or Absolute Feeling of Dependence? (What Schleiermacher Really Said and Why It Matters)’ in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec 1998), pp. 471-481.

⁶⁰⁷ Behrens, ‘Feeling of Absolute Dependence or Absolute Feeling of Dependence?’, p. 481.

⁶⁰⁸ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 75.

⁶⁰⁹ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 17.

⁶¹⁰ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p.6-7.

⁶¹¹ Lynch, *God in Sound and Silence*, pp. 5-6.

⁶¹² P03

portrayed by another participant who, speaking of the context within which they perform within the liturgy spoke of the way that ‘the light and darkness in the cathedral or in any building, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you’re hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry – in every sort of artistic way, it’s speaking of God and the beauty of holiness’.⁶¹³ Here we can hear echoes of the way that music, deployed within worship, provides an example of Schleiermacher’s concept of ‘feeling; as religious experience that extends beyond the mere act of performance (‘doing’) or rational thought (‘knowing’).

In ways that continued to echo Schleiermacher’s use of the term within his systematic theology, the first participant referred to in the last paragraph spoke of the way that art and music resulted in a ‘feeling’ that was the same as ‘when you’re moved by God’.⁶¹⁴ Whilst this participant was more reticent in ascribing theological value than this simple statement to the resulting experience, they were clear that – without being able to put it into words – what they were describing ‘reached another level’ and was ‘definitely more than just the music’.⁶¹⁵ However, again echoing Schleiermacher in articulating that although they felt ‘a definite connection’, there was ‘a struggle to find the right words’,⁶¹⁶ a difficulty that might be seen to mirror the tendency in Schleiermacher’s thought that gives primacy to experience over its description – summarised by Gunton as:

‘religious experience [being] the highest form of theological statement; a description of God as mediated by that experience seen...as an intermediate form of theological knowledge. Finally, the lowest form of theological knowledge would be a description of the world as filtered throughout [the] experiential knowledge of God’⁶¹⁷

In what follows, we will explore the ways that the musical (artistic) experience of singing within the liturgy provided a spiritual experience that could be understood in direct relation to an experience of God. In this we will explore music as providing universal experience that is difficult to describe, and which is personal in nature.

Music as a universal experience

One of the features of Schleiermacher’s theological approach – and one of its points of criticism from others – is the universalising tendency that is present within it; as Begbie notes in his critique of Schleiermacher, Schleiermacher views music as being ‘religiously significant...because it offers access to a universal plane of experience’.⁶¹⁸ This feature of musical reception, and the ability of

⁶¹³ P01

⁶¹⁴ P03

⁶¹⁵ P03

⁶¹⁶ P03

⁶¹⁷ Gunton, *Revelation and Reason*, p. 148-9

⁶¹⁸ Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2007), p. 148.

music to impact on people with a wide range of motivations, was commented on directly in a couple of interviews, and alluded to in others:⁶¹⁹

‘[choral singing] is almost uniquely ours, but it’s more universal, it speaks to absolutely everyone on a very profound level’⁶²⁰

‘quite a few people [not necessarily there to worship] get overwhelmed because they actually realise there is something quite spiritual in it’⁶²¹

The potential to see a universal nature to musical experience is both its main strength and its main area open to criticism. Just as the utterly transcendent experience of the divine through music that was described in these conversations might be seen to provide a unique way of accessing something of theological import it also brings with it two significant sources for stumbling: the inaccessibility of these experiences in terms of their discursive investigation, and their singular sense of isolation from the received doctrines of Christian faith.

Echoing one of Schleiermacher’s comments that those who engage in activities that manifest the ‘feeling’ – and thereby act as ‘mediators between limited man and infinite humanity’ continue to do so even when this activity is not witnessed by others, commenting that ‘they would do it even if no one were there’,⁶²² more than one participant clearly associated such experiences with those more intimate liturgical occasions where the focus was on singing sacred music in a small-scale liturgical setting (contrasting this to the different pressures of performance in large-scale settings, or settings – such as concerts – where there is a pressure of other motivations, such as financial). This leads to a reflection on the way that ‘different pressures and different expectations on the choir’ affect the way that the musical performance can be experienced and interpreted,⁶²³ and raises the possibility of the purity of the intent behind the performance being an element that in some way controls to outcome of the performance. This can perhaps be refined down to point to an understanding whereby the purity of the intent behind the performance becomes a controlling factor in the resulting experience of that performance; that when the sole purpose of the musical activity is to create a worthy musical performance within the liturgical offering of worship this results in a deeper and more sublime experience of the ‘feeling’ that can be interpreted in spiritual or theological terms.

The search for perfection within the music

In turn, this element of seeking a purity of intent can be related to the seeking of perfection in performance that was mentioned by many participants. Many of the participants spoke of the

⁶¹⁹ P04 and P06

⁶²⁰ P03

⁶²¹ P07

⁶²² Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 7.

⁶²³ P03

importance of offering the best they could, sometimes referencing this as seeking perfection in musical performance. This raised the question as to whether the perfection that was sought was purely musical in nature, or whether it had a deeper spiritual (and potentially theological significance). The motivations for the maintenance of high standards within performance were complex in conversation – with individuals often holding what seemed at first sight opposing views, one example of this being provided in an interviewee commenting on the pursuit of musical excellence getting in the way of spiritual participation, whilst also highlighting the need to pursue perfection in order to attain spiritual satisfaction.⁶²⁴ This points to the idea of perfection (or at least excellence in performance) as an area for focus – especially within a romantic framework of understanding music as potentially revelatory in nature.

In this respect, it is important to note that whilst musical perfection – and musical beauty – were important characteristics for many participants, there was an important distinction made by all participants between purely secular performances and those which had an objectively spiritual motivation. This arose in two areas of discussion: the differences between concert and service performance, and the effect of singing services when there are a smaller number of non-active participants present (characterised by weekday evensongs on a wet winter evening!). Typical of the comments made was that of one participant who expressed the feeling that the larger the liturgical gathering became, the more their own musical activity became more focused on ‘performance’, and seeking perfection in that performance for purely musical reasons that were focused on the reception by those others present rather than from any spiritual motivation – a dynamic that they saw reaching its apogee in concert performances.⁶²⁵ As we have already seen, this can be placed directly within Schleiermacher’s concept of the artist as primary mediator in a religious context.

Whilst there was a minority viewpoint that musical performance in the liturgy was of primary spiritual value for the non-active participant rather than the singer, a more typical approach among those interviewed was to see an increasing personal intensity to the spiritual experience of performance as both the focus became more clearly spiritual in intent (i.e. service over concert) and more focused on the group performing rather than non-active participants. This was encapsulated by another participant who spoke of smaller settings being more meaningful for the performer, noting in smaller and more intimate liturgical performances there was a greater focus on a high standard of musical performance that was ‘more than just a spectacle’ for those listening.⁶²⁶ This seeking of musical beauty through a high performance standard in such an

⁶²⁴ P07

⁶²⁵ P06

⁶²⁶ P03

intimate setting was seen to allow the performer to 'relax and absorb' something of the transcendence of music in a way that was only possible in the context of the regular routine singing in a liturgical context.

The overall complexity of this area of understanding was brought into relief by one interviewee who identified the importance both of the large-scale occasions which primarily draw those listening into an encounter with something of the sublime or spiritual – where those listening 'get overwhelmed because they actually realise that there's something quite spiritual in it [the musical performance]' – whilst suggesting that a different relationship and interaction is made possible in other situations when the performance dynamic changes to place the focus on the performer.⁶²⁷ This same interviewee also drew a distinction between performances where the focus was on performing for others and when the focus moved to become more personal – it was in these latter cases that the analysis interpretation offered by Schleiermacher, of the artist/performer becoming mediator of religious experience, became more relevant. In these latter cases they reported that there was a greater propensity to find occasions or individual pieces of music that presented 'moments where they had shivers down the spine,...where it's felt very spiritual as they've performed'.⁶²⁸ Again, this can be seen relating directly to Schleiermacher's account of the artist as the primary mediator of religious experience – and once again we encounter the difficulty (reiterated by Gunton) of mediating this experience to others in verbalised language such that experience becomes the singular most authentic way of articulating spiritual or religious encounter. This dominant role given to experience in performance has a natural tendency to promote the idea that the purest experience will be derived from the purest performance – and that therefore the pursuit of perfection in performance is a corollary to enabling the most perfect means of spiritual or religious encounter.

Just this issue – the search for perfection within performance – was presented within the same conversation regarding the affective nature of spiritual experiences during performance. Whilst a number of participants in the study touched on this area, this conversation substantively located the topic of perfection within the realm of theological understanding, asserting that in a situation where music is performed 'to the glory of God' there is a tendency to seek to reflect the perfection of Christ in the musical performance, which becomes offering, commenting that:

'because Jesus is perfect we should be trying to be like Him and that we're trying to offer Him the most perfect thing.'⁶²⁹

⁶²⁷ P07

⁶²⁸ P07

⁶²⁹ P07

However, the difficulties that are presented when seeking perfection in performance were clear for some participants – and, as has been outlined elsewhere,⁶³⁰ present something of a dichotomy, with that search for perfection itself becoming a barrier to spiritual or theological experience. Another interviewee drew a parallel between the pursuit of perfection in their singing and the biblical concept contained in Revelation that our earthly worship imitates the perfect worship of heaven.⁶³¹ Whilst more directly relevant to the understanding of singing as an intimation of the heavenly worship (see section 5.2), this comment highlights the way in which the search for a personal spiritual or religious experience through music can be a powerful driving force in the pursuit of excellence in performance.

The constraints of corporate singing to personal spiritual experience

The very personal nature of such religious experiences as those posited by Schleiermacher present a potential difficulty in such a corporate setting as that of the choral performance of music – where individual endeavour is, of necessity, balanced by the need to craft a corporate approach to performance and the difficulty in navigating both the spiritual and more straightforwardly musical motivations for seeking perfection in performance in the context of the communal nature of choral worship. Agreeing that in musical performance there is an element by which we move ‘beyond ourselves to experience something of God’, one participant expressed a frustration that they often felt constrained in letting this happen by the need to align their personal musical performance with the demands of blending with others and taking a common approach to performance in choral music.⁶³² This articulated clearly a sense in which the corporate nature of choral singing may constrain individual spiritual experiences, with a balance needing to be struck between ‘freely worshipping God [through music]’ and avoiding the point where this means an individual is going to ‘ruin the mix’ in a choral context’.⁶³³ In this we find a limiting factor in the approach to revelation through the arts that is posited by Schleiermacher – that any such revelation is constrained by the very human element by which it is mediated. Whilst some motivations toward the pursuit of perfection might have been motivated by striving for the perfection of God through music, here we find a conflict present between the musical need for the corporate and the spiritual expression that is possible only for the individual.

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It can be seen that a majority of those interviewed provided accounts of their musical experience within the liturgy that indicated some concept of spiritual or religious content. Both the patristic understandings of music embodying creation and the unity by which earthly worship in the present

⁶³⁰ See 4.3d

⁶³¹ P04

⁶³² P04

⁶³³ P04

manifests the unity of that worship with the eternal worship of heaven, together with the Romantic ideal of the experience of the artist or performer providing a unique and privileged insight into religious experience are suggestive of a broad understanding that something of significance occurs in the performance of music within liturgical contexts. Whilst the difficulty of mediating these experiences will be approached in the following pages, it is necessary to note before proceeding further that there is something significant even in the transitory or partial nature of these oft-fleeting experiences within the pattern of the daily singing of the liturgy. These experiences can be understood through the lens of Schleiermacher's understanding that experiences of 'doing' and 'knowing' are deepened by the act of 'feeling'. Far from being pure emotionalism, this aspect of 'feeling' (or intuition) that may be present in the performances of music in the liturgy provide, by Schleiermacher's assessment a way of accessing more deeply authentic religious experiences. As a side-note, it might be proposed that a similar process can be discerned in the dynamics of evangelical/charismatic forms of worship – and interesting touching point with another worshipping tradition that has, like cathedral worship, been a point of growth within the Church of England in recent years. It must also be noted that there were a minority of those involved in the study for whom such experiences were not a reality – with the most frequent explanation being that their focus on the technical demands of performance meant that they lacked the capacity to engage in such a spiritual manner in their own performances (Indeed, one participant concluded that their performances were of no spiritual benefit to them, but were rather performed entirely for the spiritual benefit of others).⁶³⁴ It is clear that, even for those who can clearly articulate a spiritual or theological aspect to their performances – which is manifested in particular spiritual experiences – these experiences are not a regular feature of a majority of performance occasions.

Similarly, it needs to be noted that the partial nature of such experiences is suggestive that they only provide an imperfect reflection of the fulness of spiritual or theological experience that might be possible, and therefore can have a tendency toward the pursuit of a perfection within performance that is, in practice, unattainable. If a theological gloss were provided to this difficulty, it might be founded on one of the following understandings (drawn from different theological traditions):

- (i) The dependence on grace (rather than our own ability through nature) for the revelation of God [A 'Catholic' position cf. Aquinas et al]
- (ii) A recognition of the unique self-disclosure of God in Christ [A 'Reformed' position as articulated by Barth]

However, the 'Romantic' approach to religious experience expounded by Schleiermacher, and which might be seen to motivate this striving toward perfection of experience, has a number of

⁶³⁴ P02

insights valuable in accounting for the wider experiences of singers within the liturgy; the relevant passage of *On Religion* contains a number of allusions that directly parallel the experiences recounted by those participating in this study, speaking as it does of the profound experiences of artists as ‘mediators between limited man and infinite humanity’ who, by their activity strive for ‘the infinite [that] impregnates all spirit and life’ and who ‘would do it even if no one were there’.⁶³⁵ However, both the partial and transitory nature of these such experiences as are manifest, and the challenge of mediating such experiences to others highlight a further challenge which was a source for further reflection – the very ineffability of musical experience that is both its strength and its weakness.

⁶³⁵ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 7.

5.5 Ineffability in musical experience

The challenge of meaningfully talking about the experience of music

In the last section we touched on the way that musical experience presents a challenge to describe meaningfully. Whilst this can be seen in a positive light – indicating that music offers an extension of human experience beyond that which can be easily interpreted and described using words – it also presents a problem when we try to interpret the theological content that might subsist within such musical experiences. There were a number of participants who, in trying to communicate the effect of such spiritual or religious experiences that they had whilst performing in the liturgy, articulated a challenge both in the perception and description of these experiences. The challenge presented by the dominant attention of the individual being focused on the practical actions necessary to undertake a musical performance (and the concomitant distraction that allowing one to become absorbed by any other actions present) has already been touched on, but it remains to explore the difficulty present in finding appropriate language to describe these experiences. This difficulty can be found in two specific ways: firstly, in finding adequate language to communicate clearly felt responses,⁶³⁶ and the inherent difficulty in finding suitable language when reflecting on the significance of the spiritual or transcendent aspect of musical performance. Translating musical – let alone potentially spiritual or religious – experiences into words was a clear challenge for many of those engaged in conversation and taking part in the interviews; typical responses indicating that despite there being ‘a very definite connection there’ it is ‘a struggle to find the right words’.⁶³⁷

This ineffable quality of music has already been acknowledged as both a key strength, yet also an interpretive weakness, and has led to a number of interpretations from a philosophical perspective. Jankelevitch articulates a strong argument, from an overtly atheist background, that the inability to attribute clear meaning or significance to the spiritual effects of musical performance leads to an inevitable questioning as to how any such experiences can be the source of meaningful reflection on a reality beyond the tangible.⁶³⁸ Jankelevitch’ approach is that music is a phenomenon within the material world, and anything beyond what is demonstrable within the realm of the material world asks more than the capability of music allows – and therefore all talk of the meaning of music in these ‘ethereal’ terms is talk that has no true meaning. In these terms, we are not looking only at a struggle to find the right words, but a struggle to find words at all. However, citing the exemplar comment given above, such an approach denies the truth of the statement that there is a ‘very definite connection’ in just this realm. Even those who were more tentative about any spiritual

⁶³⁶ For example, the use of the term ‘spine-tingling’ to describe a response to a particular performance, P07.

⁶³⁷ P03

⁶³⁸ Vladimir Jankelevitch (translated by Carolyn Abbate), *Music and the Ineffable*, (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2003).

experience that they had whilst performing were clear that they understood that others did have meaningful spiritual experiences as a result of the performance of music within the liturgy:

It is actually what it can do for other people, maybe. You know, I love the act of singing and I love making music. But it's also conveying that emotion and making somebody else feel something that I think is really powerful about music in general and also, particularly, sacred music. You know, it's written for a purpose and some of the poetry and words of the things that we perform are so beautiful. But it's different if you're singing them.⁶³⁹

Unless we are to deny the veracity of these claims, there must be something more than Jankelevitch would admit going on in order that people can attribute some form of spiritual meaning to music within the liturgy. There was no evidence of an approach such as Jankelevitch's in any of the interviews undertaken, and in the wider conversations the possibility of experience beyond the purely material (even if this was the experience of others who were not directly involved in the performance) was a constant corrective to a purely material understanding of musical performance within its liturgical context.

Each of the positions articulated above tends to view the ineffability of music as providing an implied weakness as to its theological content. However, it was not only those who had a weaker theological viewpoint who spoke of the difficulty in articulating their experience of music in words, but also those who had a strong theological foundation underpinning their reflections.

Whilst not admitting theological weight to the ineffability of music, the English philosopher Roger Scruton takes a somewhat softer approach in his argument that the ineffability of music means that the strongest we can claim is that, rather than allowing access to a transcendental experience beyond the empirical, music might offer a hint of the possibility of such a transcendental experience. The transcendental direction of music is admitted by Scruton, but clearly contained within the bounds of an empirical epistemological framework, stating that:

'the best we can conclude...is that music helps us to imagine some kind of contact with the transcendental. But certainly offers no proof that such contact is possible'.⁶⁴⁰

For Scruton, music points to something that may be beyond our experience without actuating that transcendental experience, or giving us direct knowledge of it. Thus, we find that whilst there might be a 'transcendental realm that we glimpse in the sacred space of music', and that 'music is putting us in touch with another world, beyond the reach of our human knowledge', nonetheless this transcendental experience is not a present reality but merely an experience that '[helps] us to see

⁶³⁹ P02

⁶⁴⁰ Roger Scruton, *Music as an art*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 83.

that unattainable world in human terms'.⁶⁴¹ In terms of the ineffability of music, it is therefore a truism that we cannot, by describing the musical experience, describe something that it cannot itself embody – the best we can manage is to describe something that points beyond itself to a reality that we may wish to anticipate or extrapolate from the actual experience that we have.

Whilst Scruton's approach seems to cut off dialogue about the spirituality of music and its capacity to convey meaningful information about any theological reality when he says that 'to say that [musical experiences] reach beyond the empirical to the transcendental is to misrepresent their way of working',⁶⁴² he does offer a way of approaching such meaningful dialogue at one remove with his comment that music may 'help us to imagine some kind of contact with the transcendental'.⁶⁴³ While denying the capacity of music as a means of actual theological experience (and thus theological proof), Scruton admits a role for music in expanding human experience in such a way that it becomes possible that, by expanding the nature of our experience, we can imagine further possibilities – including the reality of a transcendent God. This is a theme picked up in a different way in a recent work by the Cambridge academic Julian Perlmutter with his study of the role that desire has in stimulating meaningful engagement with the possibility of theological knowledge for both people with belief and those who he describes as having 'interested non-belief'.⁶⁴⁴ Here the focus is less on music and the experience of musical performance as a listener as a means of proving a theological reality, but rather as a way by which those who are open to such a theological reality approach that possibility in a way that engages the imagination with reality in a way that words and thoughts alone are not sufficient.

In the light of this, in discussing the importance of music within the liturgy and its power to transcend mere earthly worship so that it becomes an image of the worship of heaven, Ratzinger highlights the way in which music can be seen to have a distinctive role in the expression of human faith and the participation in heavenly worship that moves beyond words. In doing this, he quotes an adapted form of Wittgenstein's famous maxim that reinforces the way in which the move beyond easy explanation, which is a barrier for those adopting a purely secular approach to musical meaning, becomes a central aspect of musical performance in the liturgy:

"What one cannot talk about one can, indeed must, sing and make music about if one cannot be silenced"⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴¹ Scruton, *Music as an art*, p. 83.

⁶⁴² Scruton, *Music as an art*, p. 84.

⁶⁴³ Scruton, *Music as an art*, p. 84.

⁶⁴⁴ Julian Perlmutter, *Sacred Music, Religious Desire and Knowledge of God: The Music of Our Human Longing*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

⁶⁴⁵ Philipp Harnoncourt, "Gesang und Musik im Gottesdienst", in *Die Messe: Ein kirchenmusikalisches Handbuch*, edited by Harald Schutzeichel, (Dusseldorf, 1991), pp. 9-25 (quotation from p. 13, quoted Ratzinger, "In the Presence of Angels", p.470.

Similar sentiments regarding the unique voice of music can also be seen in the comments of organist-composer Olivier Messiaen, saying

The arts, especially music... allow us to penetrate domains that are not unreal, but beyond reality.⁶⁴⁶

In these comments, we can see the clear assertion of the role that music might have in explicating the truth of God in ways that move beyond the language of words alone, bringing a distinctive voice to the theological task.

By way of concluding these thoughts on how we might best understand those participants who spoke of the difficulty of putting their experiences into words, if the outright materialism Jankelevitch does not adequately match the views regarding the ineffability of musical experience expressed in this study, then Scruton and Perlmutter's approaches provide us with ways to understand the difficulty of finding adequate ways to describe the experiences of participants within the context of their musical performances in the liturgy. Alongside these approaches, it is also possible to hold an outrightly positive theological view when approaching the idea of the ineffability of musical experience, such as that adopted by Messiaen (as a composer and performer) or Harnoncourt (as a performer) in saying that music has as meaning that cannot be reduced retrospectively to words, and thus has a meaning of its own.

It is clear that for many of those taking part in the conversations and interviews there were perceptions of meaningful experiences within their performing lives – performances in a liturgical context that had, variously for them or others involved, an element of meaning beyond the purely musical. The majority of those speaking had, at some point, experienced at least some occasions which they characterised in different ways as transformative (albeit often transitory) in character, whilst a similar (and overlapping) proportion recognised that others may well experience something of spiritual or possibly theological significance as a result of their performances. Such experiences were often difficult for the participants to adequately communicate retrospectively using words. Within the broader conversations there were very few interlocutors who felt that there was no spiritual impact resulting from their performances – though there was one of those involved in the more detailed interviews who saw that such experiences were something that they never experienced, and that the spiritual experiences of non-performers were the prime source for such reflections resulting from musical performance in the liturgy.⁶⁴⁷ (This latter view was a more extreme manifestation of the wider perception that the physical, mental and practical demands of

⁶⁴⁶ Olivier Messiaen, 'Music and Color', p. 233.

⁶⁴⁷ P02

performing to a high standard left limited capacity for those performing to 'relax' sufficiently to engage with their performances as a spiritual level).

These ideas of musical experience within the liturgy point toward other ways of interpreting the experience of performance within the liturgy such that the dependence on words no longer remains relevant – here we are left returning to the patristic concept of the 'inner voice' articulating something internally that is echoed by the physical music that is sung, or the Romantic vision of the privileged artist having access to a particular internalised experience. In either case, any attempt to verbalise this experience will – at best – be an approximation of the reality experienced by the performer.

5.6 A reflection: Individual and corporate aspects of spirituality and theology

The individual and the corporate

One feature that can be seen within the responses of the participants is a distinction between responses that were purely personal and those that had a corporate element to them.⁶⁴⁸ Some participants spoke straightforwardly of their own understanding of the spiritual nature of their participation in the music of the liturgy. Most often, these participants had views that, as we will see in Chapter 7, are consonant with a definably Anglican spirituality and theological pattern of understanding:

I find it very personally uplifting but also, I can see that it has a massive effect on lots of people who come. [...] [Music] speaks to those of us who are taking part but also to other people in lots of different ways with the music, the light and darkness in the cathedral or in any building, the beauty of the building, the beauty of what you're hearing, the beauty of the language and the Bible, the stories, the poetry. I mean, in every sort of artistic way, it's speaking of God and the beauty of holiness.⁶⁴⁹

However, there were two other responses that, whilst expressing ideas that sat within this tradition did so in a way that distanced the individual participant from personally holding these views.

Of those whose spirituality was not clearly and solely within the Anglican tradition, firstly, there were participants who spoke of the technical demands meaning that they were unable to see their own performances as personal spiritual experiences. Among this group of respondents their descriptions of spiritual experience and theological potential were couched in terms of third person descriptions of their understanding of how others experienced their performances, or how they understood the tradition of the Church to frame their work. Thus a participant who couched their own understanding in the following terms

I am focused on the music. I think at the same time, I appreciate the spirituality of it. I'm here to do a particular job and that is to lead the music and the singing in the best way I possibly can. And that's sort of my focus, I think rather than necessarily, how spiritual I feel.⁶⁵⁰

could also describe the effect this had on other people using patterns of understanding that are Anglican in tone and nature,⁶⁵¹ saying that

[Music] can have that role and that ability to kind of transport people beyond sort of the physical realm...⁶⁵²
and

⁶⁴⁸ The participants descriptions of this were explored in more detail in the material presented in Part 2.

⁶⁴⁹ P01

⁶⁵⁰ P05

⁶⁵¹ This will be seen in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁶⁵² P05

There's always something in [singing] of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens.⁶⁵³

Secondly, there were participants who held different theological views, but nonetheless articulated a corporate understanding of their work that contrasted with their personal understanding. This was exemplified by one participant who articulated that despite holding a strong faith, their work as a singer was not inherent to their own spiritual practice, saying that

I enjoy the services, I just don't feel very Christian in them.⁶⁵⁴

Nonetheless, they articulated the sense by which other people could experience their performances in spiritual terms using definably Anglican characteristics of participation through music:

To other people ... it's like a halfway house to God. I mean, there are certain pieces of music where you do feel, I mean, you're listening to it like, "God is here," I think. But I only get that when listening to it.⁶⁵⁵

These distinctions between individual and corporate aspects to understanding their activity directly mirror Stringer's concept of individual and corporate discourse that was introduced in Chapter 3. The importance of these distinctions is that, far from only describing personal spiritual experience, many of the participants in both the initial group conversations and the in-depth interviews expressed an understanding of their work that was corporate in its nature; where understanding was mediated by means of an institutionally articulated and historically contingent tradition of spiritual activity and theological interpretation. In the following chapters (6 and 7) we will explore the ways that the experience and understanding of participants in the study correlates with institutional factors and historical influences specific to the institutions within which their activity takes place.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the different ways that participants understood the spiritual and theological import of their activity. It articulates the variety of theological approaches described in the course of the empirical study; some of which are securely located within the Anglican tradition of theology and spirituality (Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3), whilst others reach further beyond that tradition (Sections 5.4 and 5.5). Section 5.6 identifies the characteristic way that, whilst there are a variety of personal spiritual responses to the experience of singing within the liturgy (and their underlying theological patterning), the corporate understanding that participants articulated was more cohesive, and securely grounded in what might be termed the 'classic' Anglican approaches

⁶⁵³ P05

⁶⁵⁴ P02

⁶⁵⁵ P02

that are described in the first three sections of this chapter. This grounding of the commonly articulated Anglican approach to understanding their activity will be returned to in Chapter 7. Meanwhile, Chapter 6 explores the way that institutional understanding shapes corporate understanding held by participants of their musical activity within its liturgical and ecclesial context.

CHAPTER 6 The impact of cathedrals as institutions

This chapter seeks to identify the institutional influences that were seen to inflect the accounts participants provided of their activity. This focuses firstly on the concept of their performances being vicariously offered for or on behalf of others and, secondly, on their activity as a corporate offering of music within worship that can be contextualised in terms of the monastic *opus Dei*. The institutional nature of cathedral choirs is a persistent underlying presence within the accounts provided in many of the interviews. From one participant who joked that whilst ‘not wanting us to go back to being monks’⁶⁵⁶ to the reflections of other participants on the way that the origin of cathedral choirs offering a daily round of worship on behalf of the wider Church continued to shape the routine of cathedrals in the present day, it is clear the institutional origins of today’s cathedral choirs continue to have an influence on the self-understanding of those participating in their life today. The twin features of this institutional understanding are exemplified by the quotations used at the beginning of this section, describing that in the daily singing of the liturgy:

‘We weren’t necessarily doing it for the congregation...there might be no-one [other than the choir itself] in the Choir’ and ‘I’m...part of the choir that is offering up to God [and we are] offering that on behalf of the congregation’⁶⁵⁷

Here we can see a twin understanding of the choir’s activity being directed primarily by the choir as a group offering music in worship to God, and the understanding within that group of doing this on behalf of the wider body of the Church (congregation). As we will trace in this chapter, these features correspond to both the role of lay clerks as successors to those performing the monastic round of daily worship of the New Foundation cathedrals and the earlier development of lay vicars within Old Foundation cathedrals. The particularity of the self-understanding of lay singers within an Anglican context in seeing their work as vicariously offering music in worship on behalf of others was highlighted by a couple of participants, who both had experience of singing in English Roman Catholic as well as Anglican cathedrals – offering a comparison of their experiences in these outwardly similar situations. Both participants noted a marked difference between the institutional role of the choir, where:

‘one of the defining characteristics of the Anglican cathedral tradition is that at the heart of it is the body of singers who sing the liturgy daily’.⁶⁵⁸

Another participant, coming from a Roman Catholic background and with experience of non-cathedral settings where evensong was something of a single event, identified that in the setting of an Anglican cathedral evensong was more than event but:

⁶⁵⁶ P04

⁶⁵⁷ P07

⁶⁵⁸ P05

‘is part of the every-day, and part of the worship...something that happens every day and it doesn’t matter whether there are five people or 50 or 100 or whatever’.⁶⁵⁹

Given the continuity within cathedral foundations and the expressed value given to tradition, it is possible to see the impetus for the maintenance of a daily round of worship traced directly back to and inspired by the parallel origins of the secular cathedral in maintaining a vicarious round of prayer for and on behalf of the absent members of the cathedral foundation and the monastic vocation to the ‘opus Dei’ in offering the daily round of worship as part of their monastic obligation.

Another participant was clear in their own sense of vocational calling to offer their musical performances ‘on behalf of everybody else’, stressing that singing within the liturgy is a performance primarily directed at God, and rejecting the notion that singing within the liturgy was primarily for any others present. They articulated in vivid terms that ‘it doesn’t bother me if on a Monday night...hardly anybody’s there – we’re not doing it for the customers anyway.’⁶⁶⁰ Whilst acknowledging that there were spiritual benefits to themselves and others in the performance of music within the liturgy, they stressed the primacy of directing their singing to God rather than being for ‘their own enjoyment or anybody else’s enjoyment’.⁶⁶¹ This led to the explicit statement of the vicarious nature of their activity as a liturgical musician

‘we’re doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they’re there or not.’⁶⁶²

Such an understanding of the nature of the choir’s role within the life of the cathedral and wider Church is an important counterpoint to the implicit understanding of worship as ‘attractive’ and primarily directed at others attending that was noted when considering official literature regarding cathedral worship in the contemporary Church of England.⁶⁶³ In this chapter we will explore the manner in which institutional origins correlate with these understandings of the role of choirs within a cathedral setting.

Institutional origins: secular, monastic and parish-church cathedrals

In order to understand the importance of the institutional circumstances of the role of lay singers in cathedral choirs, it is necessary to explore in more detail the historic development of the role that these lay singers hold. This is a complex history that varies depending on the specific institution, and one that can be hidden by factors which have homogenised the institutional character of cathedrals (most notably in the latter 20th century, but in a process that can be traced

⁶⁵⁹ P06

⁶⁶⁰ P01

⁶⁶¹ P01

⁶⁶² P01

⁶⁶³ 2.3

back to the cathedral reforms of Henry VIII). As has been persuasively argued by Christopher Haigh, the particular form and structure of English cathedrals, arose from the 'messiness' of history and the way that cathedrals survived the various significant periods of change throughout the reformation period, retaining much that was in continuity with their past – more by accident than design.⁶⁶⁴ Whilst there are, of course, also significant disruptions – both liturgically, through the imposition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and institutionally, most notably seen in the hiatus of the Commonwealth period – cathedrals (and a small number of collegiate foundations) developed an expression of liturgical practice that differed significantly from that developing in most parish churches, and which included a significant role for musicians within its performance.

This rich history has resulted in three historic patterns of development of the institutions within which the lay singers of cathedral choirs sing: the Colleges of Vicars Choral within cathedrals of the 'old' foundation; the role of minor canons and lay clerks within cathedrals of the 'new' foundation; and the separate development of the role of the lay singer within many of the choirs of the parish-church cathedrals. If it is accepted that the development of choirs in parish-church cathedrals is in many ways derivative of their older ecclesiastical cousins (something that will be explored later in this chapter), then the development of the cathedral choir comes from two historic impetuses; the role of choir-monks and elaboration of the liturgical provision in monastic Lady Chapels (which was the precursor to the body of lay clerks in the 'new' foundation cathedrals), and the development of vicars choral in historic secular cathedral foundations. These influences can be seen in the following characteristics identified in the responses of participants in this study:

- the vicarious role of choir offering worship on behalf of the wider Church and community;
- reference to monastic ideals as a means to understanding the practice of the regular singing of the daily offices; and
- the particular charism of the choir as a body offering music to the glory of God.

⁶⁶⁴ Christopher Haigh, *Why do we have cathedrals?*, St George's Cathedral Lectures, (Perth: St George's Cathedral, 1998).

5.1 The vicarious nature of the choir's activity

Within Part 2, it has been suggested that the vicarious nature of the role of lay singers in cathedral choirs has an influence on the pattern of self-understanding in two ways: firstly, the choir singing on behalf of an absent body of people;⁶⁶⁵ and, secondly, the music of the choir being performed for the spiritual benefit of others present.⁶⁶⁶ In the material that follows each of these ideas will be explored in more detail. In reflecting on the role of the choir in worshipping on behalf of others, this will highlight the way that this understanding of the institutional role of the singers is rooted in the deep history of cathedrals and their choirs as institutions, whilst in the exploration of the second idea that the singing of the choir is an activity that is undertaken for the spiritual benefit of others present will underscore the way that this sits in sympathy with more recent models of understanding the role of cathedrals and their musical activity.

Colleges of Vicars Choral

In exploring the origins of the Lay Vicars, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is not a long-standing body of material on which to draw, with study of the institutional place of Vicars Choral a field that has, until recently, been relatively neglected. Thus, a 2005 collection of papers, which could claim the first distinct study of English Vicars Choral, contains 'a wealth of architectural, archaeological and historical information',⁶⁶⁷ and was justified in stating that it remains the case that 'the study of the music and liturgy of the mediaeval cathedral choir has been relatively neglected'.⁶⁶⁸ Nonetheless, it is possible to trace the development of the mediaeval vicar choral, the emergence of a choir of lay adult singers as their successors following the reformations of the Tudor period, and the development of the almost entirely lay choir of today's cathedrals.

The 2005 collection drew together various aspects of the study of Vicars Choral for what may well have been the first time, producing 'a wealth of new information from ... different disciplines and permitting the first properly rounded view of this remarkable group of churchmen'.⁶⁶⁹ Whilst historical in its basis, this volume is useful in identifying both the recent genesis of such study of the minor clergy within cathedrals, although the focus on architectural, archaeological and historical information noted above means that, whilst providing a useful foundation of knowledge and richness of insights, it does leave an absence of in-depth study surrounding the spirituality of adult singers in cathedrals and the potential theological import of such singing. Although the main

⁶⁶⁵ 4.5

⁶⁶⁶ 4.3d

⁶⁶⁷ Richard Hall, 'Preface' to Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedral*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), p. vii.

⁶⁶⁸ John Harper, 'The Vicar Choral in Choir', in Richard Hall and David Stocker (Editors), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedral*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), p. 22.

⁶⁶⁹ Hall, 'Preface', p. viii.

content of the volume is archaeological and architectural in foundation, the introductory chapters offer a broader foundation; offering a broad analysis of their origins,⁶⁷⁰ and exploration of their parallels in wider European culture,⁶⁷¹ and a broad outline of the liturgical and musical context in which they worked.⁶⁷²

The introduction itself traces the development of the corporate body of vicars choral from their possible Anglo-Saxon origins through a time of developing institutional structures following from the Norman period; tracing the particular development of vicars choral through a series of stages which progressively increased their corporate identity and collegial character, especially noting:

- the compulsion on absentee canons to provide a deputy during the 12th-century;⁶⁷³
- the subsequent extension of this practice to include resident canons during the following century;⁶⁷⁴
- the development of security of tenure, followed by the development of a corporate character (with some parallels to the monastic bodies of the non-secular cathedrals);⁶⁷⁵
- the formal incorporation of these groups of personnel as legally constituted bodies by the mid-15th-century;⁶⁷⁶ and
- their continuity during the Edwardine reforms of the 1540s.⁶⁷⁷

It is not surprising, given the acknowledged narrow nature of this field of study that many of the secondary resources are in fact to works by others within the same collection: something exemplified by Dobson's references to Barrow (who provides one of the other introductory chapters) within his introductory matter,⁶⁷⁸ indicating that this is not yet a mature area of study. In common with the other writers in the foundational volume, Dobson outlines this pattern of development of the mediaeval vicar choral to the point where it can be clearly identified as a corporate body with a communal nature, with an internal progression from the choristers within the cathedral to this body of minor clergy, and a clear distinction from the body of canons responsible for the governance of the cathedral itself.⁶⁷⁹ These conclusions are drawn from the evidence that is available, and again it is important to note the qualification offered relating to

⁶⁷⁰ Barrie Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral: An Introduction' to Hall and Stocker (Eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*, pp. 1-10.

⁶⁷¹ Julia Barrow, 'The Origins of Vicars Choral to c.1300' in Hall and Stocker (Eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*.

⁶⁷² Harper, 'The Vicar Choral in Choir', p. 17-22.

⁶⁷³ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 4-5.

⁶⁷⁴ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 5.

⁶⁷⁵ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 5.

⁶⁷⁶ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 6-7.

⁶⁷⁷ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 6.

⁶⁷⁸ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 5.

⁶⁷⁹ Dobson, 'An Introduction', p. 8-9.

‘the dramatic contrast between the enormous amount of scholarly attention paid to the cathedral as a building and the more or less complete neglect...of the men who actually worshipped within that building’.⁶⁸⁰

In this latter point there is a surprising parallel between this lacunae in the study of the mediaeval Vicars Choral and the approach to their successors in the modern setting that is outlined in Part 1 of this study.

An important step in linking together the archaeological or architectural study of cathedrals and the body of Vicars Choral and their liturgical and musical context is provided by John Harper,⁶⁸¹ reflecting his contribution to the conference that provided the genesis for Hall and Stocker’s collection.⁶⁸² Having outlined the practical, ceremonial, and musical nature of the life of Vicars Choral within the wider cathedral community,⁶⁸³ identifying that they ‘undertook the lion’s share of the work...overseen by one of their seniors or by a small group of minor canons’ and ‘formed the core of the larger body gathered for worship’.⁶⁸⁴ This description of the role of the mediaeval Vicars Choral is equally applicable to their modern day successors singing in today’s cathedrals.

Having identified the liturgical and musical role of the Vicars Choral, Harper outlines the way that this group was structured as part of three forms that offered a progression that allowed individuals to transition from being choristers to become Vicars Choral,⁶⁸⁵ a pattern common to other non-cathedral collegiate churches.⁶⁸⁶ By this process, choristers and secondaries would gain the necessary confidence in singing and reading, and demonstrate the necessary good conduct that was required prior to admission as a Vicar Choral,⁶⁸⁷ with the security of tenure that this involved. This acquisition of skills is further examined in relation to the increasing specialisation that can be discerned in the 16th-century, including not only the common ability to sing simple improvised polyphony, but also to play the organ and perform more complex written polyphony.⁶⁸⁸ This increasing specialisation is accompanied by more frequent incidences of lay personnel becoming involved in the musical establishment of cathedrals.⁶⁸⁹ This pattern is not unique to secular cathedrals, being reflected in the evolution of other ecclesiastical foundations, including the monastic cousins of the secular collegiate churches and cathedrals which will be explored in the next section. The work by Bowers, on which Harper bases his description, is explored in more detail

⁶⁸⁰ Dobson, ‘An Introduction’, p. 9-10.

⁶⁸¹ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 17-22.

⁶⁸² Hall, ‘Preface’, p. vii.

⁶⁸³ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 17-18.

⁶⁸⁴ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 18.

⁶⁸⁵ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 18-19.

⁶⁸⁶ Nick Brown, *Empty vessels?: The cultural and spiritual contribution of the collegiate churches in Ottery St. Mary and Crediton prior to the reformation*, (Unpublished BTh dissertation, University of Oxford)

⁶⁸⁷ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 19.

⁶⁸⁸ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 21.

⁶⁸⁹ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

below in relation to the choirs of monastic Lady Chapel choirs. Whilst perhaps oversimplifying the relationship between Lady Chapel choirs and their post-Reformation successors, Harper traces the development of the cathedral choir from a body that deputed for the canons in singing the plainchant of the daily liturgy to a more specialised group of singers, with increasing elements of lay participation as these musical qualifications became more keenly required for the better performance of cathedral worship. In his conclusions, Harper echoes comments of others about neglect of the study of this particular group within cathedral foundations, stating that ‘perhaps it is time for musicologists to do more to seek out the voice of the mediaeval vicar choral’;⁶⁹⁰ a comment that might easily be applied to the study of their spirituality and that of their modern-day successors.

Worshipping on behalf of others

In the account of the institutional development of the role of Vicars Choral summarised above, we can see both the functional development of the body of vicars singing in place of absent members of the collegiate foundation, and the musical development of this group as a body of skilled singers offering music to the glory of God. Whilst Harper says that there is a need for musicologists to examine more closely the work of their mediaeval forebears, in this study we can see echoes of these institutional factors in the accounts provided by present-day participants in this study. In one participant reflecting that ‘We weren’t necessarily [singing] for the congregation...there might be no-one [other than the choir itself] in the Choir’ we can see an indication of the way that the self-perception of the role of the choir is not necessarily seen in relationship to others present who form a congregation.⁶⁹¹ This is clarified in a further comment, reflecting the view that the choir’s activity is in some way undertaken on behalf of an absent ‘other’, saying that ‘I’m...part of the choir that is offering up to God [and we are] offering that on behalf of the congregation’.⁶⁹²

Just as this account is clear in its evocation of a group of singers whose activity is not dependent on the presence of others, but has its conscious purpose in offering worship on behalf of those who are not present, a majority of the participants expressed similar sentiments, both in terms of (a) the absence of a necessity for the presence of others and (b) the sense that in their music was an offering to God that is self-sufficient:

- (a) we’re doing it on behalf of everybody else, on behalf of the world, whether they’re there or not.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹⁰ Harper, ‘The Vicar Choral in Choir’, p. 22.

⁶⁹¹ P07

⁶⁹² P07

⁶⁹³ P01

...that's sort of the unique thing about it, I think, is that it happens every day and it doesn't matter whether there are five people or there are 50 or 100 or whatever.⁶⁹⁴

- (b) It doesn't bother me in the slightest if on a Monday night or whatever day of the week it is hardly anybody's there because we're not doing it for the customers anyway.⁶⁹⁵
'there's always something in it of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens – it's always there.'⁶⁹⁶

These two factors are evocative of the institutional origins of cathedral choirs as vicarious body of singers, offering worship on behalf of the absent members of the cathedral foundation.

There are some similarities in the understanding displayed here and the concept of 'vicarious religion' articulated by Grace Davie in the context of the social study of religion in contemporary Europe.⁶⁹⁷ Restating this theory in a later work, and using the state churches of the Nordic countries as her exemplar,⁶⁹⁸ Davie identifies this as 'the notion of religion performed by an active minority on behalf of a much larger number'.⁶⁹⁹ Davie identifies parallels between this and attitudes within the English context,⁷⁰⁰ and her concept of 'vicarious religion' has an obvious parallel with these ideas of the body of singers maintaining a round of daily prayer and worship for and on behalf of the wider body of the Church (and for the wider community) that is characteristic of the accounts provided above. Whilst it is perhaps more questionable as to whether Davie's assertion that this vicarious activity is done on behalf of those 'who implicitly at least not only implicitly understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority are doing',⁷⁰¹ the self-understanding of the participants in this study reveals the deep-seated nature of the concept of vicarious religion within historic practice as it affects their activity. The historic understanding of the cathedral choir as a body that maintains a daily round of prayer and worship on behalf of the wider Christian community remains a lively concept within the self-understanding of those involved even if it is less fully understood by either the wider community or (perhaps more acutely, given the language of church-growth reports) the wider Church (see section 2.3).

Enabling the worship of others

Alongside this direct echo of the vicarious character of cathedral choirs, there was an interesting extension of the vicarious nature of performance where the performance was not on behalf of an absent congregation, but for the spiritual reflections of others present who were not performing.

⁶⁹⁴ P06

⁶⁹⁵ P01

⁶⁹⁶ P05

⁶⁹⁷ Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

⁶⁹⁸ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, (London: SAGE, 2007), pp. 140-43.

⁶⁹⁹ Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, p.126.

⁷⁰⁰ Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, p.126.

⁷⁰¹ Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, p.126.

This idea, connected to the feeling of the participant that their personal focus on performance precluded their own devotional involvement, resulted in a collaborative involvement where music was sung vicariously by the singers for the spiritual reflection of those not singing, which gave value to the music as a spiritual activity:

‘I’m there to do a job [singing], and I can’t see past that, which I find really difficult, but I feel like I’m enabling somebody else’s worship rather than my own.’⁷⁰²

A similar dynamic was identified by another participant who expressed the idea that the choir was able to offer a distinctive element that others in the gathered congregation were not equipped to do:

we’re offering that [music] on behalf of the congregation [...] we’re, on their behalf, offering it up.’⁷⁰³

In this understanding, that the specialist singers of the choir offer music as part of a wider offering of which they are only a part, we find a mutation of the idea of the singers performing on behalf of an absent body to their activity being a distinctive part within a larger worshipping body. This perhaps offers a synthesis of the inherited idea of singing vicariously with the more dominant model of congregational worship that is dominant within the Church of England – and underlies the expectation of many of the models of church attendance that are implicit within recent Church of England reports touching on worshipping communities. Alongside this accommodation with the prevailing understanding of gathered worship, it is perhaps important to note the distinctive position that is more deeply rooted within the institution of the cathedral choir – of the choir (and therefore Church) offering worship on behalf of the wider community and body. Here is one of the distinctive features of Anglican ecclesiology regarding cathedrals that continues to correlate with the experience of singers within the choirs of these institutions. As we will see in the next section, this continuity also preserves echoes of the monastic inheritance that also subsist within the tradition of cathedral worship.

⁷⁰² P02

⁷⁰³ P07

6.2 The monastic work of God

In order to explore the potential influences on lay clerks in the previously monastic cathedrals of the 'new' foundation, it is necessary to look beyond the 2005 study of vicars choral in the 'secular' cathedrals. Nicholas Orme's more recent study of the English cathedral provides a useful account of the development of the various bodies within cathedral foundations,⁷⁰⁴ and draws out the distinction between the development of vicars choral in secular cathedrals and later development of the role of the Lay Clerk in former monastic cathedrals of the new foundation.⁷⁰⁵ Orme notes the trend, in both secular and monastic cathedrals, from 1450 onwards of increasing provision for polyphonic music, appointment of instructors of the choristers and a consequent increase in the provision of choristers within the foundations and the move to recruit specialised lay singers, with a reduction of the number of vicars choral to allow the recruitment of specialist singers.⁷⁰⁶ Orme also notes the distinction that existed between secular and monastic cathedrals, with the role of choristers being more restricted in the monastic setting and, in practice, focusing almost exclusively on the worship of the Lady Chapel.⁷⁰⁷

The musical aspects of this development are outlined in greater detail by Roger Bowers, who traces the development of polyphonic singing from being the preserve of a small group of singers, initially formed exclusively of mens' voices to a broader chorus including both boy and adult singers.⁷⁰⁸ In a separate detailed study of the music of the Lady Chapel Choir at Winchester between 1402 and 1539 Bowers traces the development of a distinct repertoire in Lady Chapels.⁷⁰⁹ This pattern of monastic (and some collegiate) churches developing a repertoire of music including boys voices indicates a distinctive resource of boys singing with a smaller number of men (or even their Instructor as the sole adult voice).⁷¹⁰ This development was paralleled, from the mid-15th-century onwards, by the expansion of resources used by the main body of singers to include boys, with a consequent focus on training a larger group of boys to sing polyphony, and further increasing their number.⁷¹¹ This enables us to see the development of two distinct repertoires of polyphonic music: that for Lady Chapels (where the main daily cycle of worship was sung by the monastic choir) and the development of trained singers within the body of collegiate foundations (where the higher levels of non-residence of other personnel gave greater opportunity to the group of trained

⁷⁰⁴ Nicholas Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, (Exeter: Impress Books, 2017).

⁷⁰⁵ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, pp. 45-46 and 104-106.

⁷⁰⁶ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 81.

⁷⁰⁷ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 81-2.

⁷⁰⁸ Roger Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet: the performing resource for English church polyphony, c. 1390-1559' in Morehen (Ed), *English Choral Practice, 1400-1650*, p. 13.

⁷⁰⁹ Roger Bowers, 'The Musicians of the Lady Chapel of Winchester Cathedral Priory, 1402-1539' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 45, No. 2, April 1994, pp. 210-237.

⁷¹⁰ Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet', p. 38.

⁷¹¹ Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet', pp. 30-1.

singers). Bowers study of the choir at Winchester traces the way that the dedicated resources of the Lady Chapel Choir of the monastic foundation became the nucleus for the choir of the cathedral in the new foundation,⁷¹² providing a useful insight into the development of the choral resources that were to become so influential within the liturgy of cathedral churches from the reformation to the present day.

Returning to the pre-reformation origins of choirs, in exploring the transition of monastic choirs into the choirs of the 'new' foundation cathedrals, Orme highlights the process by which non-residence of canons within secular cathedrals led to the use of deputies (vicars), who progressively became more institutionally secure, provided a model for the choirs of the 'new' foundation cathedrals.⁷¹³ Orme notes a division within this into two distinct groups, the Priest Vicars who deputed for the canons in their sacramental duties as priests, and the Lay Vicars, who took on the bulk of the singing of the daily round of services – an important development when it comes to understanding the modern context of adult singers within cathedrals – and highlights the way that in the cathedrals of the new foundation this distinction was replicated in the practical division of duties between Minor Canons (vice Priest Vicars) and Lay Clerks (vice Lay Vicars). The application of these parallel structures in cathedrals of both types was formalised in the cathedrals of the old foundation by the Injunctions issued under the authority of Edward VI.⁷¹⁴ These distinctions are reinforced by Orme in his analysis of the confusion of these terms, as exemplified in the literature of Anthony Trollope.⁷¹⁵ This survey of the origin of the new foundation cathedrals in pre-dissolution monastic foundations and the synthesis that took place with the development of the old and new foundations of historic cathedrals highlights the monastic inheritance that was felt in many of the conversations and interviews within this study.

As well as explaining the development and structure of cathedral choirs, a study of institutional monastic characteristics reveals a further set of correlations within the understanding of lay singers to those identified regarding the vicarious nature of the choir's work outlined above. On some occasions, this correspondence uses the image of monastic practices within the account provided by the singer:

quite often there might be one or no one in the choir and you were kind of singing, it felt a bit more monastic in its kind of atmosphere, for the glory of God, rather than for a kind of carrying on the tradition as such.⁷¹⁶

when there's a lack of congregation, when it's a much smaller congregation or even an almost non-existent one, the choir is there maintaining the worship of

⁷¹² Bowers, 'The Musicians of the Lady Chapel of Winchester Cathedral Priory, 1402-1539', p. 234.

⁷¹³ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 45.

⁷¹⁴ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, p. 109.

⁷¹⁵ Orme, *The History of England's Cathedrals*, pp. 216.

⁷¹⁶ P07

the church in a monastic way. [...] They also do the Psalms for the day and quite often when there was a very, very limited congregation, in fact sometimes there wasn't even a clergy person. So we would carry out the evensong ourselves and quite often there would be the nice, a plainchant Psalms, quite often. [...] It was just, I suppose, a proper, you felt like a proper community offering something up.⁷¹⁷

I don't want us to go back to being monks... but to be honest, I don't know, that might be a way. If we all went back, [and] have a whole new renaissance and start again at the bottom. Because the monks would have had a focused life and a focused belief in God wouldn't they? And maybe if we can redevelop that in some way, but I just think that the pace of life nowadays is not conducive to that way of thinking.⁷¹⁸

In the accounts provided above, two characteristics of monastic worship are articulated: the primacy of the claustral community within the worshipping body and the centrality of a daily pattern of worship offered to God by that community. Even where the participants did not identify the explicitly monastic nature of their experience, there were nonetheless examples where these patterns of understanding permeated the accounts provided by them. This can be seen in the centrality of the psalms in discussions around the singing of texts in section 4.1, and a similar concern is present in the following passage that reflects on the central focus on canticles in the daily round of sung services:

'I like the way that there is this, almost like regular continual worship of certain text like the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis; there's that always continuing thread at each service.'⁷¹⁹

These features, which as we will see in section 7.1a were defended by Richard Hooker as essential elements of Anglican worship, have clear origins in the pattern of the daily office inherited from monastic practice. Similarly, the monastic emphasis on the offering of prayer and worship as a central element of the 'work of God' ('opus Dei') was reflected in comments by participants regarding the purpose of their work being an offering of worship to God:

[You] do it [sing in the liturgy] because you are there to glorify God.⁷²⁰

there's always something in it of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering up your voice to the heavens - it's always there.⁷²¹

In these comments (alongside similar statements included elsewhere in this study), and in the reflections on the offering of music that were recounted in section 4.5, there are clear echoes of the distinctive monastic characteristic of music within worship being offered to the glory of God and the primacy of this motivation over that of enabling the worship of others or supporting a wider congregation in its worship. We can see a clear correlation between present patterns of experience

⁷¹⁷ P07

⁷¹⁸ P04

⁷¹⁹ P07

⁷²⁰ P05

⁷²¹ P05

exhibited by some participants and inherited modes of understanding that might be seen as deeply grounded in the historic development of the Anglican Choral Tradition out of its pre-Reformation origins in a mixture of secular and monastic cathedrals.

Whilst having different institutional origins, the lay vicars/clerks in both types of foundation provided the core of specialised singers within the foundation, and it was to them that the duty of maintaining the round of daily sung services fell. In the monastic milieu, the distinct roles of choir monks and the specialist group of singers maintaining an elaborated round of worship within a subsidiary worship space that were drawn together at the time of the Reformations show important aspects of institutional identity coming into focus: the importance of the offering of daily worship within the framework of the *Opus Dei*, and the context within which complex polyphonic music could develop. In the refoundation of cathedrals in the Reformation period, the defence of their style and practices of worship by writers such as Hooker, and their later role as focal points for the development of a distinctive Anglican spirituality within the Church of England, the monastic and vicarious aspects of their institutional background had a key part in shaping the ongoing nature of cathedrals and their choirs as institutions. In the accounts provided above, we can see how this sense of institutional identity is reflected in the accounts provided by participants in this study – shaping both their understanding of the institution within which they operate and their own understanding of their musical practice within its liturgical setting.

Recent history: obscuring origins?

Before moving on to explore the historical context within which both the theological/spiritual and institutional understandings that have shaped the responses of participants in this study it is worthwhile exploring the way in which some of these patterns of understanding have been obscured or ameliorated by changes that have been overlaid on this inherited pattern of understanding since the institutional reforms of the 19th and 20th centuries. The historic development of the old and new foundation cathedrals that is traced above and respectively underlies the institutional foundations of the bodies of lay vicars and lay clerks and represents the key institutional background to both types of cathedral until the 19th century. This century saw a period of reform that had a significant impact on the life of cathedrals, with appropriation of the endowments of many cathedrals, moves to remove the independence of the corporate bodies of vicars choral in old foundation cathedrals,⁷²² and the establishment of parish-church cathedrals that operated from a different inherited set of assumptions.

⁷²² Anne Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells: A History of the College of Vicars Choral*, (Wells: Close Publications, 2016).

The process of reducing the number of Priest Vicars or Minor Canons began with the reforms that started in 1840,⁷²³ and its natural conclusion is found in the 1999 Cathedrals Measure,⁷²⁴ which contains no reference to such posts (although the resulting constitutions and statutes of some cathedrals do perpetuate these once significant roles). Given the increased specialisation of the Vicars Choral and Lay Clerks as musicians, which had been a feature of their development prior to the reformation, this process means that in many cathedrals the dominant group performing the daily liturgy is a group of lay musicians.⁷²⁵ Developments in the 20th-century have led to the morning portion of the daily office now being almost exclusively fulfilled by the smaller group of non-musicians – focused around the residentiary canons – of the community.⁷²⁶ These changes have had the effect of diluting the corporate identity of the choir as a body of priests and lay singers and severing the link between junior clergy and choirs as colleagues, and the potential to see choirs as a separate group of singers separate from the clergy.

Alongside these institutional changes, the 19th and 20th centuries saw significant changes to the musical performance standards and practices. These changes are traced by Barrett, who traces the ways in which cathedral choirs, which had generally been characterised by their small size, lack of attendance, unrehearsed performance and bad discipline in the period leading up to the mid 19th-century, grew to become a body of singers that, by the end of the century were far better resourced, organised and professional in performance.⁷²⁷ This development laid the foundations both for the ever higher levels of performance achieved by cathedral choirs as they continued to develop in the 20th-century, and indicate the way in which the link between the clerical duty of the daily office became the musical performance of the liturgy – an important, if little understood, change when it comes to understanding the formation, training and role of singers within cathedral choirs.

These musical changes are traced in much more detail in a book by Timothy Day who draws on a wide range of information. He touches on areas surrounding the working conditions and musical education that characterised the adult singers before, during and since these developments.⁷²⁸ Day contests the popular conception that the sound heard in today's choirs is itself an integral part of an unbroken tradition going back centuries.⁷²⁹ Day's challenge regarding the longevity of the

⁷²³ P.S. Morrish, Parish-Church Cathedrals 1836-1931: Some Problems and the Solution, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 49, No. 3, July 1998, p. 435.

⁷²⁴ *Cathedrals Measure 1999*, accessed via <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1999/1/contents> on 14th March 2023.

⁷²⁵ Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet'.

⁷²⁶ Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History*, (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 223-5.

⁷²⁷ Phillip Barrett, 'English Cathedral Choirs in the Nineteenth Century' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, January 1974, pp. 15-37.

⁷²⁸ Timothy Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night: King's College, Cambridge, and an English Singing Style*, (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

⁷²⁹ Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night*, pp. 8-9 and pp.29ff.

particular expression of the choral tradition that is often seen as typical of the English cathedral choir finds earlier echoes in articles challenging narrow views of style and repertoire.⁷³⁰ Establishing that choral service was often not performed to the standard that is now seen as normative, in the course of his book Day argues that the reforms to choral foundations that started in the mid-19th-century transformed not only the sounds of choirs, but also their social make-up, with significant changes in educational provision, and concerted efforts to increase the standards of musical performance in the liturgy.⁷³¹ Especial attention is given by Day to the development of choral scholars within both collegiate and cathedral choirs, and the cultural influences on performance styles. Whilst anchoring this narrative in the choir of King's College Cambridge, Day draws on information about a wide range of individuals and institutions to make his argument. In doing so, he not only highlights the way that the ideals of the choral celebration of the liturgy were better realised from the 19th-century onwards, but also makes a useful contribution to understanding more fully the personnel involved as adult singers within the cathedral and collegiate choirs.

In the course of much that is written above, the prime focus is on the historic foundations ('old' or 'new') that have a long tradition of having a body of resident singers whose prime duty has been the performance of the Daily Office. However, the 19th- and 20th-centuries saw the emergence of the 'parish-church cathedral' as a new category with a broader cathedral landscape. Whilst some of the new cathedrals – such as Ripon and Manchester – had pre-existing choral foundations that could become the heart of the new cathedral foundation this was far from the case in all the new cathedrals. The response has varied from the development of existing parish church choirs to sustain their changed role within what have become cathedrals, to the establishment of new foundations modelled on those of the historic cathedrals. Reference is made elsewhere to some of the ways in which the older cathedrals and parish-church cathedrals have reacted to develop in ways that share their mutual characteristics, with older cathedrals acquiring some of the congregational features of their parish-church counterparts and parish-church cathedrals developing patterns of worship echoing the long-standing practices of their more established cousins.⁷³² However, the broadening of the identity of cathedrals in general might be seen to dilute the particular characteristics of the distinct body of singers that was the inheritance of the historic cathedrals.

⁷³⁰ Alan Luff, 'The Music of the Church of England in the 20th century' in *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie*, Vol. 34 (1992/93), p. 125 and Thomas, *English Cathedral Music and Liturgy in the Twentieth Century*.

⁷³¹ Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night*.

⁷³² Simon Lindley, 'Of Cities, Churches, Choirs and Cathedrals' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 129, No. 1743 (May, 1988), pp. 265-267.

Together, these changes have led to an increasing sense of specialisation among the body of singers, contributing to (or at the least colluding with) an increasingly functional view of choirs that is evident within some recent church reports regarding both worship and missions (see section 2.1). What is notable is that, despite the changes that have affected the institutional identity of cathedrals in recent periods, there is nonetheless a strong sense in which the earlier institutional character of cathedral choirs correlates strongly with some of the experiences of participants in this study, and continues to shape the self-identity of singers in cathedral choirs of the present day. This supports the underlying thesis of this study; that the self-understanding of lay singers of their activity within the liturgy correlates to (and may therefore be shaped by) the institutional context within which they are performing.

CHAPTER 7 Historical perspectives and the role of tradition with the accounts given

So far this study has explored the experiences of singers (as outlined in Part 2) and, in the first chapters of Part 3, has explored the theological patterns that are present within the resulting reflections. Chapter 5 identified patterns of personal and corporate theological understanding that confirm the spiritual and theological significance of their activity, whilst Chapter 6 explored the potential institutional influences that can be seen to inflect their understanding of their work. In this chapter we will explore the manner in which these varied theological and institutional factors can be seen as drawn together and rooted in the episodic development that is characteristic of the historical development of the Anglican tradition within the wider Church of England.

In what follows we will explore the ways in which the understanding of singers can be understood as rooted in the distinctive historical phases of the development of Anglican spirituality understood as a tradition within the Church of England. We will see the degree to which the empirical material of this study can be located within each of the following historical episodes:

- (a) The Elizabethan survival of cathedrals
- (b) Classic Anglicanism of Andrewes and the Caroline Divines
- (c) Oxford movement
- (d) Contemporary responses to Secularism

Analysing each of these episodes in terms of the positive contribution they offer in forging identity and understanding (both personal and corporate), we will also move on to see how the idea of a historically rooted tradition presents some problems within the experience of the participants, and might provide fruits for future developments.

7.1 The positive role of tradition in the identity of cathedral singers

In the introduction it was identified that the concept of tradition, and of participants being a part of an ongoing tradition was a feature of all the interviews that form part of this study, a feature that reflects the strong association that existed in the broader conversations that had preceded these interviews. It was clear that the identity of individuals, as well as their perception of the institutions of which they were a part, was strongly associated with the idea of there being an Anglican Choral Tradition of which they were a part. For many of the participants this concept of tradition was a powerful and positive source of self-understanding – this being at least as strong in the case of those participants who professed their own faith background to be less securely rooted within an Anglican tradition of spirituality or theology. However, although the concept of tradition was so obviously a key identifying factor, it was surprising how this was reflected ahistorically – the tradition having an identity that did not seemingly refer to its grounding in the historical development of Anglican thought or spirituality nor (at any rate, explicitly) its institutions.

The strength of the identity of the Anglican Choral Tradition was reflected in its natural adoption, in varied ways, by all the participants in the study (even the individual for whom the nature of this tradition presented a barrier to their own spiritual participation). The powerful and attractive nature of the idea of tradition was clear for one participant whose engagement had grown from childhood, and who stressed the durability and continuity of that tradition:

‘when I was a kid, I was intrigued by the English Choral Tradition’⁷³³

‘I think it’s brilliant to keep tradition going, which we have had for hundreds of years’.⁷³⁴

Whilst this participant had a strong personal faith, tradition was equally (if not more) important to those with less clearly articulated personal faith, and the idea of tradition, and the perception of its rootedness, was not only something of importance to those for whom it was an integral part of their personal spirituality. For instance, another participant who identified their own approach to spirituality as secular in its motivations nonetheless saw the icon of continuity as of vital importance in establishing the importance of performances; that

‘being present...makes one think about the fact that it’s happened day after day for centuries and centuries’ and ‘subconsciously makes people feel that they’re taking part in something more serious, something quite great and something special’.⁷³⁵

This sense of cultural rather than necessarily spiritual or theological importance within the Anglican Choral Tradition is something that is picked up on by a number of writers who are interested in the

⁷³³ P06

⁷³⁴ P06

⁷³⁵ P03

broader issues of Anglican tradition in contemporary culture;⁷³⁶ and we will return to these a little later in this chapter when we consider how the Anglican tradition has continued to be shaped by trends in wider society.⁷³⁷

Tradition was also identified as something to be maintained not only for its own sake, but on the musical educational value of the tradition as much as its spiritual or cultural content, with one participant stating that:

‘it’s brilliant to keep a tradition going which we have here for hundreds of years – but I also think it’s a great opportunity for young children to have a fantastic opportunity to make music on a very, very high standard’⁷³⁸

This latter idea, that the Anglican Choral Tradition is justified on the basis of musical and educational value (and its potential fragility) was shared in the comments of another participant who, reflecting on multiple challenges for those pursuing a musical career, pondered the question as to whether the tradition would continue, saying that ‘I genuinely hope there is another 500 years of choral evensong, but a lot of me worries that there isn’t another 50 years’.⁷³⁹

Interestingly, the two participants who made little explicit reference to tradition and the need for its continuance were the two participants who had strong Anglican self-identities and who, in discussing the spiritual implications of their work demonstrated the greater sympathy with that aspect that had a direct correlation to an established understanding of Anglican spirituality.⁷⁴⁰ Reflecting on this, it might be hypothesised that the way that Anglican thought has been integrated with their personal spirituality means that these influences have, to a significant degree, been internalised.

Even for those participants for whom tradition was viewed less positively (see section 7.2), it was still an important presence. Even among those whose approach to tradition was more ambiguous, it could still be seen as having the potential for the positive reshaping and renewing the spiritual vigour of the tradition from within:

‘If we all went back and have a whole new renaissance, starting again from the bottom – maybe if we can redevelop that in some way’⁷⁴¹

Having commented on tradition as something that could sometimes lead to a feeling of ‘spiritual stagnation’, it was clear that the experience of singing within the liturgy was of great personal

⁷³⁶ Brian Mountford, *Christian Atheist: Belonging without Believing*, (Alresford: O-books, 2010); Roger Scruton, *Our Church: A personal history of the Church of England*, (London: Atlantic, 2013); Mary Warnock, *Dishonest to God: On Keeping Religion Out of Politics* (London: Continuum, 2010).

⁷³⁷ See section 7.1d.

⁷³⁸ P06

⁷³⁹ P04

⁷⁴⁰ P01 and P07

⁷⁴¹ P04

importance to this participant, and that maintaining the continued existence of this tradition into the future was something of great emotional importance to them. The ambiguity present in this discussion of the role of tradition is suggestive of a feeling that tradition needs to maintain a character as a 'living tradition' that brought spiritual fruit, rather than something that merely exists to self-perpetuate itself.

In this brief survey of the way that tradition was an integral part of most participants' responses, indicates that it has a number of different influences which can be articulated around the following themes:

- its longevity being something of spiritual value;
- that the tradition itself is something of cultural importance;
- that the Anglican Choral Tradition has a particular place in the training of musicians;
- that it implicitly shapes the spirituality of those who identify closely with it in their own spiritual lives; and
- that it provides a source of inspiration for the continued renewal of the tradition itself.

All of this presents something of an enigma. If the role of tradition is so clearly marked out as part of peoples identity as singers and given such a close association with the institutions within which that activity takes place, why did the historical foundations of that same tradition not manifest themselves more clearly in the conversations that took place?

An outline of the development of an Anglican tradition of theology and spirituality

For many people the Church of England has its origins in the various reformations to which it was subject in the late Tudor period – the most enduring of these being the Elizabethan Settlement that characterised ecclesiastical life of England in the latter part of the 15th century. Whilst the Latin phrase 'ecclesia Anglicana' most simply describes 'the English Church', predating the separation of the Church of England from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome within western Christendom, the derivative usage of the term Anglican has come to have multiple meanings. From this original simple meaning use of the designation Anglican underwent a progressive narrowing of meaning, from a defence of the national nature of the English Church to a specific theological and ecclesial view within that national church in the period following the Restoration of 1660. (This is further complicated by the now common use of the word Anglican to identify the interconnected national churches that form the Anglican Communion,⁷⁴² and its more general use as a synonym for the Church of England).⁷⁴³ In identifying the scope of their work, the editors of the *Oxford Handbook*

⁷⁴² <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/>, accessed on 1st July 2023.

⁷⁴³ In a legal context this can be seen in references to Anglican Marriage (for example, <https://facultyoffice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Anglican-Marriage-in-England-and-Wales-Third-Supplement.pdf>, accessed 1st July 2023).

of *Anglican Studies* reflect this multiple uses, identifying that Anglicanism can be understood to refer to:

- (i) a church 'shaped by firm Reformed or Calvinist principles', in the mode of the formularies of the Elizabethan church;
- (ii) a 'polity [originating] from ancient and non-papal catholicism that is rooted in sacramental and ministerial continuity'; or
- (iii) as a signifier of a particular church being a part of 'a 'commonwealth' of churches' forming the Anglican Communion.⁷⁴⁴

Given this potential confusion with the use of a term that is central to this study, it is therefore important to clarify the meaning that the term Anglican is taken to have when used in the discussions that follow.

There is a clear sense in which the historical development of an Anglican sensibility is episodic in nature, with key developments taking place during definable periods in its development from the Reformation period and onwards, namely:

- Jewel and Hooker, expressing an essential continuity in defending both liturgical praxis and the institutions of episcopacy and their associated cathedrals as fundamental elements within the Elizabethan settlement; resulting in the preservation of cathedrals and choral foundations and their liturgical praxis as a part of a comprehensive, Reformed Church.
- The 'Classic' Anglicanism of Lancelot Andrewes and the Caroline Divines which had a direct relationship to the Laudian return to 'catholic' practices, fulfilled in the settlements following the events of 1660 and 1688
- The Tractarian and other reactions that were a result of the Oxford Movement in the 19th century leading to liturgical renewal in the 20th century
- The encounter and accommodation with secular and post-modern trends within society resulting in contemporary movements such as Radical Liberalism, Radical Orthodoxy and a secular understanding of 'Cultural Anglicanism'.

As we will find, these various episodes each have a key role and importance to a variety of spiritual and institutional understandings that were implicit in the self-understanding of participants within the study and the ways that they gave meaning to their musical performances. Nonetheless, despite these influences being present in the narratives provided by the participants in this study, they remained implicit. This general lack of explicit connection between the historical development

⁷⁴⁴ Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke and Martyn Percy (Editors), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 11.

of Anglican spirituality and theology and their lived experience, must be identified as an important feature in articulating the ways that those who are at the heart of the worshipping life of the Church of England's cathedrals understand their own work, and have implications for the wider understanding of that activity by the wider Church.

7.1a Ecclesia Anglicana – Elizabethan survival of cathedrals and episcopacy, and the 'liturgical fifth column'

Hooker and the defence of liturgical worship and music

From the break with Rome onward, the generalised use of the term 'Anglican' became more clearly focussed before becoming the identifying mark of a particular ecclesiological, theological and spiritual tradition within the Church of England. The initial steps in this process were made among those promoting the Church of England as a comprehensive national Church. Thus, in a somewhat anachronistic way, the origins of the Anglican tradition of theology can be traced back through a lineage to the reformers of the first stages of the English reformation. This can be seen most notably in John Jewel's *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana*, which provides a tightly argued defence of the Catholic nature of the Church of England, rooting its reform not in innovation, but faithfulness to its historic inheritance and recovery of the historic faith of the ancient Church.⁷⁴⁵ A further definition of what was to become seen as Anglicanism is found in Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, where arguments are delineated along what were later to become defining characteristics of the Anglican/Puritan divide.⁷⁴⁶ Hooker's defence of the conformist tradition he sought to guard within the national Church included justification of elements that would later be essential elements of the tradition of choral worship that was to develop in the cathedrals of the Church of England, including:

- recitation of prose psalmody as a fundamental part of the Church's liturgy;
- the place of the scriptural (Gospel) canticles within the Daily Offices;
- use of set, rather than extemporary, prayers and the systematic reading of the Bible within the liturgy; and
- the role of music within worship as a means to enhance the spiritual experience of those involved in worship.⁷⁴⁷

Neither Jewel nor (arguably) Hooker sought to establish and articulate a specific 'party' within the Church of England, both remaining committed to and defending a particular

⁷⁴⁵ John Jewel, *The Apology of the Church of England*, downloaded from <http://anglicanhistory.org/jewel/> on 14th September 2012.

⁷⁴⁶ Raymond Chapman (Editor), *Law and Revelation: Richard Hooker and his writings*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2009).

⁷⁴⁷ Hooker, *Laws*, V.26 and V.37/38 in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 118-120 and 127-130.

expression of a comprehensive national Church.⁷⁴⁸ Thus, whilst Hooker can be seen to have ‘understood himself... as following more or less in the footsteps of the leading Protestant Reformers’,⁷⁴⁹ he nonetheless describes this wider English Church in terms that would later provide the foundations to what would become an ‘Anglican’ perspective. In the course of identifying the way that Hooker moved outside the Reformed tradition in his thinking, Voak summarises this by saying that ‘it was the Oxford Movement, drawing on earlier Laudian notions, that firmly cemented Hooker’s position as the first systematic defender of a mainstream Anglican *via media*’, whilst concluding that Hooker can ‘probably be seen as being at of near the head of a movement away from the Reformed tradition of the Church, of which Arminianism and Laudians were only in certain respects and expression’.⁷⁵⁰

In this context, Hooker’s defence of the recitation of prose psalmody within a set liturgy would become a stark dividing line between the emergent Anglican and Puritan parties and the centrality of prose psalmody to the experience of many of the participants in this study was obvious. It is markers such as these that have had an enduring effect on the Anglican Choral Tradition; an effect that can be seen echoed within the responses provided by participants in this study.

Of significance in this study is the way that these early identifying marks of Anglican worship can be seen to corollate with the responses given by many of the participants within the study. In reflecting on the importance of words and texts a majority of those interviewed reflected on the centrality of psalmody to their experience of singing within the liturgy. An example of this is provided by one participant who commented that ‘I really do enjoy singing the psalms’;⁷⁵¹ going on to reflect that ‘some of the words are very expressive [containing] a range of emotion’.⁷⁵² The correlation between the key features of the Church’s liturgy as defended by Hooker and the responses given by participants in this study increased proportionally as people identified more strongly as Anglican in their own spirituality. This is demonstrated by one participant identifying that the psalms were of great importance to their own spirituality ‘because I’ve sung them every day for most of

⁷⁴⁸ For different approaches to this assessment of Hooker, see W. Bradford Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker: A companion to his life and work*, (Eugene: Cascade, 2015); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); W. J. T. Kirby, *Richard Hooker’s Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy*, (Leiden: Brill, 1990); and Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁷⁴⁹ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 67

⁷⁵⁰ Voak, *Hooker and Reformed Theology*, pp. 2 and 323.

⁷⁵¹ P05

⁷⁵² P05

my life and I just know how they go',⁷⁵³ and offering a reflection on the importance of deep reflection on the psalms and their meaning, giving the example that understanding that the Hebrew word for 'the voice of the Lord' is the same as the word for 'thunder' can shape the interpretation of the text when singing it.⁷⁵⁴ This correlation was even more evident in the conversations with another participant who identified each of Hooker's four defences within their own reflections:

- prose psalmody: commenting on the centrality of 'doing the psalms for the day', and the way that these contribute to the communal aspect of the choir's worship;
- canticles: 'the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis...a continuing thread at each service';
- set readings and prayers: commenting on the 'changing seasons of readings' and the 'close connection between the texts of anthems and readings that supports and strengthens the whole theme for a service'; and
- music enhancing spiritual experience: 'music can heighten the senses...if it was all spoken there would be something missing that would [otherwise] stir up their hearts.'⁷⁵⁵

In these comments we can see the way that the tradition that has been received by those participating within it has embodied the central characteristics that were defended at its earliest stages and, whilst the connection is not made by those participating in the study, nonetheless the influence of the arguments made by Hooker remain as central characteristics of the liturgical life of cathedral choirs as lived and experienced in the present day.

Hooker: Conservative retrenchment, evolving reform, or a new tradition?

Recent discussion of Hooker's inheritance has addressed the question of whether Hooker was motivated by a desire to reverse the effects of reform, to further develop thinking within the Reformed tradition, or to develop a distinct *via media* in the form of a new tradition.⁷⁵⁶ No matter which of these approaches is adopted in interpreting Hooker's thought, one of the distinctive (though not unique) features of Hooker's work was his use of patristic and scholastic sources – such that Littlejohn can speak of a 'density of classical and scholastic citations' in Hooker's writing.⁷⁵⁷ In many ways it is this use of a wide range

⁷⁵³ P01

⁷⁵⁴ P01

⁷⁵⁵ P07

⁷⁵⁶ Voak, *Hooker and Reformed Theology*, pp. 2 and 323, quoted above.

⁷⁵⁷ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 82.

of theological and philosophical resources that provides the foundations for the later place Hooker has in the development of Anglican thinking. However, much recent scholarship regarding Hooker's work is typified as a move that, far from seeing Hooker as distinctive and unique, in this regard sees him as part of a wider tradition of using scholastic approaches within Reformed thinking.⁷⁵⁸ This approach can be seen in Hooker's exploration of the relationship between Grace and Nature and his articulation of a theology of participation.

Whilst acknowledging a lack of clarity that can obscure Hooker's meaning,⁷⁵⁹ Voak considers Hooker's understanding of common grace, asserting that he 'states explicitly that common grace is necessary for humans to be able to know and observe natural law, and sanctifying grace is necessary for humans to be able to know and observe divine law'.⁷⁶⁰ Hooker's own articulation of the role of music in 'the raising up of men's hearts and the softening of their affections towards God' indicates the way that music may play a critical role in the action of grace on both performer and listener.⁷⁶¹ In describing Hooker's thinking regarding grace, Littlejohn identifies the similarity of Hooker's position with that of Aquinas,⁷⁶² whilst Voak's exploration of Hooker's doctrine of grace makes similar claims regarding the influence of Prosper of Aquitaine.⁷⁶³ In his discussion of Hooker's theology of grace, Littlejohn begins with Hooker's restatement of the relationship between nature and grace:

the...Apostle teacheth...that nature hath need of grace, whereunto I hope we are not opposite, by holding that grace hath use of nature⁷⁶⁴

Noting the clear echo of the Thomist articulation that 'grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it',⁷⁶⁵ Littlejohn proceeds to outline Hooker's position both with regard for the need that nature has for grace;⁷⁶⁶ that whilst we desire the supernatural (and 'have not lost all knowledge of the object of this desire') we lack the natural capacity to fulfil this need.⁷⁶⁷ Having established Hooker's position that 'nature naturally finds its fulfilment in grace',⁷⁶⁸ Littlejohn outlines the way that Hooker's thought regarding nature places it as a means

⁷⁵⁸ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, pp.53-55.

⁷⁵⁹ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, p. 159-60.

⁷⁶⁰ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, p. 105.

⁷⁶¹ Hooker, V.37/38, in Chapman (Ed), *Law and Revelation*, pp. 129.

⁷⁶² Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, pp.82, 86.

⁷⁶³ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, p. 106.

⁷⁶⁴ Hooker, quoted in Littlejohn, p. 86.

⁷⁶⁵ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 86.

⁷⁶⁶ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, pp. 86-89.

⁷⁶⁷ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 87.

⁷⁶⁸ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 89.

through which grace can bring us to deeper knowledge of God.⁷⁶⁹ Summarising the position that 'faith takes root in our natural faculties of reason and will',⁷⁷⁰ Littlejohn goes on to describe the way that grace acts to draw human activity in the direction of experience of the divine nature, citing Hooker's description of the way that

'God himself, who being that light which none can approach unto, hath sent out these lights whereof we are capable, even as so many sparkles resembling the bright fountain from which they rise'.⁷⁷¹

Hooker's philosophical approach here provides a framework of understanding that allows us to see a clear way in which music may be one such means of reaching out beyond the earthly to the heavenly – which can then become the subject of rational reflection. In the context of understanding the role of music within such a framework, music can be seen as a product of purely natural acts, but that nonetheless, through the action of grace, can become a vehicle to fulfil the 'desire for supernatural happiness'.⁷⁷² This identification of the relationship between nature and grace in Hooker's theology results in a participatory account of the relationship between creator and created within his writing. In *Laws*, this can be seen clearly in his articulation that

'all things that God hath made are in that respect the offspring of God, they are in him as effects are in their highest cause, he likewise is actually in them, the assistance and influence of his deity is their daily life'.⁷⁷³

In reflecting on Hooker's participatory theology, Littlejohn recapitulates the earlier outline of the relationship between nature and grace to say that 'just as grace perfects a preexisting inclination toward God in nature, so the mystical union of believers with God as the source of new life perfects a preexisting union of creatures with God as the source of any life'.⁷⁷⁴ This links back to the experiences of participants recounted in sections 5.1 and 5.2, making a clear link between contemporary liturgical experience and historically contextual philosophical approach articulated by Hooker. In this regard, Hooker's articulation of the relationship between Grace and Nature in Book V bears some similarity with de Lubac's extensive work within the context of much more recent Catholic theology. This identifies humanity's supernatural calling resulting from God's grace, and the incarnation as a crucial events that reveals the interaction between the supernatural and man whereby the 'infinite distance that man alone cannot bridge' is removed.⁷⁷⁵ Grace is revealed to have nuances of meaning; being both a calling to the supernatural, and that action of God that

⁷⁶⁹ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, pp. 89-92.

⁷⁷⁰ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 90.

⁷⁷¹ Hooker, *Laws*, III.8.9, quoted in Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 90.

⁷⁷² Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 87.

⁷⁷³ Hooker, *Laws*, V.56.5, quoted in Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 172.

⁷⁷⁴ Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker*, p. 172.

⁷⁷⁵ Henri de Lubac (translated by Richard Arnandez), *A Brief Catechism on Nature and Grace*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), p.119.

accomplishes the union of nature and the grace in Christ – together establishing a new relationship through the Incarnation and Redemption.⁷⁷⁶ A theological approach to music can be derived from this approach to Grace and Nature. This sees music pointing beyond itself to heavenly worship through the action of grace on nature (whilst our own music remains earthly in its scope and nature). Acceptance of the action of incarnation and redemption opens up a new understanding of the scope and nature of heavenly worship – revealing a new perspective on what it is to which music directs our thoughts and emotions. In the light of this, some of those experiences recounted in Part 2 (especially 4.3) can be seen to have a theological significance as vehicles of grace by which nature can direct us toward the experience of heavenly worship and the presence of God; that there is a metaphysical potential in musical performance and reception to glimpse something of God that is only possible through the action of grace.

In his writing on both grace and participation, it can be seen that Hooker draws on both patristic and scholastic resources to develop his own position within the context of Reformed thought. Recent writing, such as that of Littlejohn and Voak is part of a pattern of Hooker's thought being (re)appropriated within the Reformed theological tradition. Hooker's use of the resources of patristic and scholastic resources demonstrates pattern of thinking, following the method of Jewel's *Apologia*, that was to become characteristic of the Anglican tradition. Dominiak's restatement of Hooker's participatory understanding within contemporary Anglican debate and Davison's broader development of a participatory approach to theology are indications of Hooker's ongoing importance to Anglican theology.⁷⁷⁷ Hooker's method also provides a touching point to writing, such as that of de Lubac, Balthasar and (more recently) Ratzinger, that consciously draws on similar patristic and scholastic resources in shaping Roman Catholic theological understanding.⁷⁷⁸

The continuity of cathedrals

In the same way that Hooker's early defence of the elements of liturgical worship, that were to become inherent elements of worship within the Anglican Choral Tradition, have had a lasting effect that can be seen in the responses of participants in this study, a parallel process can be seen in between the historical continuity of cathedrals and their institutional character. In turn, we will find in the next chapter that these historically contingent events remain influential to the self-understanding of those working within this tradition today; a

⁷⁷⁶ de Lubac, *Brief Catechism*, pp. 121-2.

⁷⁷⁷ Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*, (London: T&T Clark, 2020); Davison, *Participation in God*; also see 5.1.

⁷⁷⁸ See 5.2.

factor that has already been seen in looking at the institutional influences on the understanding of participants in this study.⁷⁷⁹

It can seem something of a puzzle as to why cathedrals were not excised from the Church of England in the process by which it became a Reformed Church. Perhaps the most straightforward explanation is that given by Christopher Haigh, that this survival is one of 'the accidents of history', and that cathedrals survived the various periods of significant change and retained much that was in continuity with their past more by accident than design.⁷⁸⁰ In reflecting on the effect that this had for later developments, MacCulloch argues that the effect of the continuing presence of cathedrals within the Church of England was that 'cathedrals acted as a liturgical fifth column within the Elizabethan church', citing Lehmborg in seeing cathedrals as providing a seedbed from which the Laudians could develop the 'cathedral ideal of the beauty of holiness'.⁷⁸¹ Although such a view is tempered by the arguments of writers, such as Atherton, who react to the idea that choral foundations became 'incubators of conservative, ceremonial, and sacerdotal ideas and practices'⁷⁸² by highlighting the breadth of theological perspectives in cathedral chapters,⁷⁸³ there is a compelling case for seeing cathedrals as an almost unique feature of the Church of England, with their institutional continuity having both theological and institutional influences that were to affect the subsequent development of the Church of England well beyond their walls.

We find cathedrals emerging from the formative years of reformation, rebellion and restoration with a distinctive ecclesiological, theological and liturgical character within the Church of England. Cathedrals remained (with very few exceptions)⁷⁸⁴ the only collegiate communities in the Church of England. Along with the educational focus that was a defining characteristic of many of the new foundations of Henrician foundation, the main *raison d'être* of the cathedrals was the maintenance of a daily offering of prayer and worship on behalf of the whole Church, focused on the particular episcopal see of which they were the cathedral church. By virtue of their continuity, they obtained a conservative character as they emerged from this formative century within the Church of England and, whilst it is not

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁷⁸⁰ Christopher Haigh, *Why do we have cathedrals?*, St George's Cathedral Lectures, (Perth: St George's Cathedral, 1998).

⁷⁸¹ Lehmborg, *The Reformation of Cathedrals* cited in Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The Myth of the English Reformation' in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1991), p. 8.

⁷⁸² Ian Atherton, 'Cathedrals, Laudianism, and the British Churches' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (December 2010), p. 897.

⁷⁸³ Atherton, 'Cathedrals, Laudianism, and the British Churches', p. 903.

⁷⁸⁴ These being the educational colleges of Winchester and Eton alongside the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the collegiate churches of Manchester, Southwell and Ripon.

made explicit in the conversations that are at the heart of this study, we will see that the enduring institutional characteristics of cathedrals have a direct impact on the self-understanding of those working within their liturgical lives. The effect of the institutional continuity that arises from the historically contingent survival of cathedrals as institutions with their distinctive characteristics will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

A conclusion

The importance of the developments articulated above lie in the fundamental contribution they make in preparing the ground for later phases of the Anglican tradition. In the writing of Hooker we find an example of the thinking that undergirded the place of the fundamental elements of cathedral worship within the worship of the Book of Common Prayer, including the place of music within the performance of the liturgy. The themes that were identified in Hooker's writing, such as the importance of prose psalmody, the place of the canticles and the spiritual importance of music are ones that recur within the material gathered in the course of this study. Similarly, the institutional continuity – not only of personnel but also of structures – that was a feature of this period was to contribute to the continuity that grounds later developments in their pre-Reformation precursors. This is particularly apparent in the continuing monastic influence in areas of liturgical structure, spirituality and the self-understanding of singers that was apparent in a number of contributions to this study. In this earliest episode within the development of the Anglican tradition we can see, in the defence of fundamental continuities, the foundation of a liturgical tradition and continuation of institutional patterns that enabled the transmission of a culture on which later episodes would build.

7.1b Classic Anglicanism – a spirituality of the beauty and glory of God made present in worship and worship as a window to heaven on earth: Hooker, Herbert and Donne

Heaven espied from earth

Writing of the movement that in the 1620s and 30s laid the foundations of what would later be defined as 'Anglican' worship and theology, Parry articulates the difficulty in finding a term to adequately describe a movement that was eventually to be designated as 'Anglican'. Using the term Laudianism, Parry explores a revival in ceremonies and beautification of worship that can be traced back to the Elizabethan and Stuart Divine Lancelot Andrewes and, through a group of leading characters such as Neile, Buckeridge and Cosin, to the time of Laud.⁷⁸⁵ Noting that much of this movement found a congenial setting in the cathedrals and university chapels, Parry outlines the influence this group had

⁷⁸⁵ Graham Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), p. xi.

through appointments within both universities, cathedrals (notoriously including Durham), and the Chapel Royal.⁷⁸⁶ Exploring the vigorous programme of beautifying cathedrals and chapels and their furnishings, Parry then outlines the distinct body of devotional prose and poetry that was indicative of interests that stressed the sacramental continuity with the pre-Reformation Church and offers a real indication of the Catholic leaning sympathies of those within this movement, even among more moderate figures such as George Herbert.⁷⁸⁷

Following Parry, it is to the writings of Hooker and the poetry of the later Anglican Divines, such as Herbert and Donne, that can help to sketch out the beginnings of an Anglican understanding of the spirituality and theology of music that was explored in more depth when looking at the theological content of the empirical material.⁷⁸⁸ Emblematic of the later stages of this development, both Herbert and Donne encapsulate within their poetry different aspects of what was to become an important strand of the Anglican understanding of the spirituality and theology of worship; the idea that in the liturgical worship of the Church (within which music is an integral part) there is a movement by which the earthly worship elevates human experiences to gain a glimpse of the heavenly worship which it both imitates and with which it is one. As we saw earlier in this study, Herbert's poetry offers a description of the way that earthly and heavenly worship are part of a single unity by which heaven and earth are united, and by which heaven can be glimpsed in earthly worship; whilst Donne offers a slightly different perspective by which a primary concern with anticipating the life to come is expressed through the anticipatory nature of worship in the present of that which is perfected in heaven.⁷⁸⁹

This conception of music as a means of direct spiritual experience by which those involved can come closer to experiencing the presence of God was reflected by one participant who spoke of music as 'like a halfway house to God'.⁷⁹⁰ They developed this statement by speaking of music as 'the highest form of offering', concluding that 'the way to get closest to God is through music'.⁷⁹¹ Although this particular participant found that they were spiritually fed in other ways, they articulated the transcendent effect of music as something that was of importance for the spirituality of others and an inherent part of the spiritual work of the choir as a whole. Another participant expressed this same concept (of music

⁷⁸⁶ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, pp. 8-12.

⁷⁸⁷ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, pp. 132-140.

⁷⁸⁸ See section 5.2

⁷⁸⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁷⁹⁰ P02

⁷⁹¹ P02

offering a transformative experience which bridges the gap between earthly activity and the apprehension of heaven), describing music as having ‘that ability to kind of transport people beyond sort of the physical realm’.⁷⁹² The same participant later linking the act of singing in the liturgy to this transformative action were music has ‘something in it of glorifying God and offering that praise and sort of offering your voice up to the heavens’.⁷⁹³ A final aspect of this was provided by another participant who spoke of the personal spiritual effect that such transcendent moments have as ‘something you are not quite prepared for...something that’s of such beauty...that you are caught off guard – and that can really move you’.⁷⁹⁴ Each of these comments – coming from individuals with different spiritual approaches – speak of the spiritual impact that music performed within the liturgy can have; articulating this in terms that are expressive of the Anglican sensibility for earthly worship to provide a window into something transcendent – what Herbert articulates when he speaks of music as a means to ‘know the way to heaven’s door’.⁷⁹⁵

The beauty of holiness

Acknowledging a diversity of emphasis with the Laudian movement, Parry identifies a common concern for ‘order and beauty to the service of God’ across this group of what might (slightly anachronistically) be termed moderate and more extreme Anglicans within the Stuart Church of England.⁷⁹⁶ Whilst the main focus of Parry’s argument is the architectural and artistic artifacts of Laudian worship, he outlines the continuity of worship offered by the choral foundations and the way that the choirs of cathedrals offer an example of ‘a survival of Catholic practice’.⁷⁹⁷ Parry’s theological analysis of the place of music within the liturgical practice of the Stuart Church is relatively superficial, but does acknowledge the role of music in ‘intensifying the devotional ethos’ of worship.⁷⁹⁸ In order to point toward a deeper understanding of music, Parry looks not to musicians, but to the works of Hooker and Herbert to suggest the importance of music to worship in a wider movement that was oriented to seeking the ‘beauty of holiness’ in the worship of the Church of England’s cathedrals and college chapels where music is one aspect of a wider offering of beauty within liturgical worship.⁷⁹⁹ One participant, whose own spirituality was consciously Anglican in character, was explicit in the use of this language to describe the

⁷⁹² P05

⁷⁹³ P05

⁷⁹⁴ P07

⁷⁹⁵ Herbert, ‘Church-music’ in George Herbert, *The Complete English Works*, (London: Everyman’s Library, 1995), p. 63.

⁷⁹⁶ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, p. 137

⁷⁹⁷ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, p.157.

⁷⁹⁸ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, p. 168 and 161

⁷⁹⁹ Parry, *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, pp. 157-158.

importance of seeking both quality and beauty in the performance of music within the liturgical setting, articulating the sense in which quality and beauty in poetry, architecture and music come together within the liturgical setting so that:

‘in every sort of artistic way, it’s speaking of God and the beauty of holiness’.⁸⁰⁰

This was echoed by another participant, with a strongly Anglican sense of spirituality, who placed a similar stress on musicians seeking to offer ‘ideally the most perfect thing that they can manage to the glory of God’ revealing ‘a beauty...that can really move you’ in which the meaning of text and music coming together in a liturgically directed sense of meaning that ‘strengthens worship.’⁸⁰¹

However, it was not only those participants who had a strong self-identity within an Anglican spirituality who articulated a similar sense of seeking the beauty of God in worship. The power of this sense of liturgical meaning was seen in comments by those whose own self-identity varied widely. Thus, one participant who saw their own spirituality as being secular in its basis spoke of the way that music takes on a deeper meaning when combined with other aspects of liturgical celebration, speaking of the way that

‘there is definitely more than just the music; when its combined with the setting and with the liturgy and with the story you’re trying to tell, all of those things compound and create and experience that is greater than its parts’⁸⁰²

saying that the combination of ‘the theatrics and ceremony’ of the liturgy combined with music ‘stirs up something in a very deep way’.⁸⁰³ Similarly, this element of music combining with other elements to create something of beauty was reflected by another participant speaking of the offering of music to God was ‘a beautiful thing to do’.⁸⁰⁴ These slightly more generalised conceptions of the place of beauty within worship were also reflected in the comments of another participant who, despite holding a very different personal spirituality, nonetheless articulated a sense in which the corporate work of the choir was focused on offering something of beauty to God through the combination of words and music in an intentional framework:

it’s written for a purpose, and some to the poetry and words of the things that we perform are so beautiful...music adds another dimension; it’s probably the highest form of offering. The way to get closest to God is through music.’⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁰ P01

⁸⁰¹ P07

⁸⁰² P03

⁸⁰³ P03

⁸⁰⁴ P06

⁸⁰⁵ P02

In each of these examples, we can see something of the Anglican sensibility for the presentation of beauty within worship in a way that embodies the concept of ‘the beauty of holiness’ within the context of the liturgical worship of the Church of England. This emphasis on beauty in worship was intended as a means by which the earthly worshipper is led to reflect on, and even encounter with the earthly worship of the Church something of the heavenly worship in which Divine beauty is encountered in perfection; themes that were central to the concerns expressed in the poetry of Herbert and Donne.

Both the view of worship as an image of heaven on earth and the idea of the Church’s liturgy as an expression of the beauty of holiness were fundamental understanding that underpinned the developing tradition of worship that coalesced around those promoting the reform of worship within the Laudian period that was consolidated and more coherently understood as Anglican liturgical spirituality following the Restoration of 1660. However, within the material gained in the course of the interviews in this study, whilst there are many comments that reveal an understanding of the dynamics of worship in terms that are consonant with this definably Anglican approach, there were very few direct allusions on the part of those being interviewed to the historical basis on which these patterns of understanding might be seen to be founded.

Therefore, just as consideration of the historical contingency of the continuity of cathedrals as institutions made it necessary to look forward to the way that cathedrals as institutions might be seen to shape the self-understanding of those taking part in its musical and liturgical life, so it is necessary to look forward to the exploration of their spirituality and the theological implications of the views expressed in the interviews in order to establish that the ways in which these historically contingent developments of the Anglican tradition within the Church of England might continue to have an influential role in shaping the spiritual responses of those singing within the cathedral choirs that maintain its round of daily worship.

A conclusion

Looking back to the exploration of the theological content of music in Chapter 5, we examined the implicit theological content of music; developing the idea of music as analogy that was found in the content first presented from participants in section 4.3b. Section 5.1 placed this in the context of the participatory theology embodied in the writings of Hooker; and this developed in more depth in section 5.2 which explored evidence from the interviews in the light of image of the worship of heaven within the poetry of Herbert and Donne. The resulting portrayal of heaven on earth and emphasis on theological beauty in the work of Hooker, Herbert and Donne were seen in section 5.3 to have a synergy with the

ideas of music in creation that was present in the interview material. This section also drew out the way that Laudian ideals provided a sensibility that, placing a strong value on the perception of beauty within human experience in worship, had strong echoes in much of the material presented in Part 2 of this study. In turn, this section has outlined how these theological approaches can be grounded in the spiritual tradition that arose during the period of Andrewes, Herbert and Donne (and which was consolidated in the period following the Restoration of 1660). Thus we can see the ideas that were developed in terms of their implicit theological content in Chapter 5. in the context of the poet-theologians who helped to define the Classic Anglican tradition of spirituality, the development of which can be clearly located during the early 17th-century. It is possible to see a correlation between the thought of this foundational period in Anglican spirituality within the self-understanding of those involved in the Anglican Choral Tradition that encompasses not only the personal spiritual beliefs of some participants but also encompasses the corporate understanding demonstrated by others.

7.1c Oxford movement: a resurgent tradition and liturgical renewal

If the Restoration from 1660 onwards saw the Laudian re-reform and reshaping of the church that has been characterised 'not so much as natural growths... [but] as foreign grafts onto cathedral rootstock'⁸⁰⁶ brought into the mainstream and develop into the Anglican tradition within the Church of England, then the period from the mid-19th century onwards saw a further critical re-shaping of this tradition as a result of the Oxford Movement. Stimulated by Keble's Assize Sermon of 1832, this movement sought a conscious recovery of the catholic identity of the Church of England and saw a re-reading of the Anglican tradition as a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Reformed Churches.⁸⁰⁷ This manifested in three movements that were to have lasting effects on character of worship within the Church of England: the reinvention of the parish choir, the promotion of prayer book revision and the Parish Communion movement. Each of these movements marked a development in the relationship in the way that Anglican spirituality was manifested within the Church of England, and the externals of its worship. Taken together they mark a period when the Anglican tradition (which had largely been confined to the universities, cathedral and relatively few parish churches) had a broader impact on the wider Church. Whilst the parish choir movement had an effect largely beyond the cathedrals which were in many

⁸⁰⁶ Atherton, 'Cathedrals, Laudianism, and the British Churches', p. 918.

⁸⁰⁷ Richard Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 24, 26 and 130; and Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 10 and 192-193.

ways its inspiration,⁸⁰⁸ it did lead to greater attention being placed on the better performance of daily choral services in the cathedrals and college chapels of the Church of England.⁸⁰⁹

However, it was the combined effect of the movement toward prayer book revision and the changes to liturgical practice that arose from the Parish Communion movement that had a significant effect on the pattern of worship and has led to a more visible external similarity between the liturgical practices of Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals within England. The process of attempted revision of *The Book of Common Prayer* culminated in the rejection of the deposited book by parliament in 1928.⁸¹⁰ However, despite the failure of legislation, the variations contained in the deposited book were widely authorised for use by the bishops of the Church of England, and led to the possibility of the eucharist being celebrated in a shape far closer to that of the 1549 prayer book (and in turn, with a much greater similarity to the pre-Reform Sarum Rite from which this first prayer book was derived).⁸¹¹ In turn, the failure of the parliamentary process in 1928 led to further legislation being brought forward for the Church of England to legislate itself for change to its liturgical practice, which bore fruit in the various experimental services from the 1960s onwards and the adoption of *Common Worship* as a complete set of revised services for use within the Church of England. The cumulative effect of these changes was that the widely used form for the eucharist within most cathedrals was outwardly much closer in form (and largely content) with the revised order for the mass that was promulgated within the Roman Catholic Church following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.⁸¹² Together with the impact of the Parish Communion movement (which promoted the more frequent celebration of a communal Sung Eucharist as the main act of worship on Sundays) these liturgical developments have brought a far greater visible similarity to the liturgical practices of cathedrals within the Anglican tradition and Roman Catholic cathedrals. It was therefore significant that several participants, who had experience across the denominational boundary between Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals, commented on this similarity

⁸⁰⁸ Bernarr Rainbow, *The choral revival in the Anglican church (1839-1872)*, PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2015, downloaded from https://figshare.le.ac.uk/articles/thesis/The_choral_revival_in_the_Anglican_church_1839-1872_/10134542 on 21st April 2023.

⁸⁰⁹ Outlined in Timothy Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night: King's College, Cambridge, and an English Singing Style*, (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

⁸¹⁰ John Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-1928*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009).

⁸¹¹ *The Book of Common Prayer with the additions and deviations proposed in 1928*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁸¹² Comparison of 'Holy Communion: Order One' from *Common Worship*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), pp. 166-206, and 'The Order of Mass' in *The Sunday Missal*, (London: Collins, 1990), pp. 25-61.

between the practice of worship in the two traditions (Anglican and Roman Catholic). One participant with a Roman Catholic background noted the general similarity in liturgical practice in his experience of both traditions and the similarity of the role of music within the liturgical framework, an indication of the convergence of liturgical form during the course of the 20th century:

In terms of liturgy, I thought hmm, see what's going to happen. But I was surprised that on a Sunday morning mass is just 95% the same basically. So I was a bit surprised in terms of that because I thought, oh, I see all the change will be but there's hardly any change actually.⁸¹³

However, whilst there has been a convergence of liturgical practice in the time since the Oxford Movement within the Church of England (and more recently the effects of Vatican II within the Roman Catholic Church), it is clear that some participants with experiences crossing the denominational borders still saw some noticeable differences in the character of worship in its institutional setting. This was clear in the experience of one participant who expressed an understanding that 'the Catholic way is normally more reverential, more incense, more prayers, the service follows a slightly different plan'.⁸¹⁴ They also noted that 'having a cathedral choir is more common of the Church of England places' and that music had a less central role in the liturgical life of the Roman Catholic cathedrals, explaining that 'we weren't there quite as often, (just a Tuesday evening and a Wednesday evening and then a Sunday morning) – it's not like here [an Anglican cathedral] where it's evensong nearly every day'.⁸¹⁵

A third participant, again with experiences in both Roman Catholic and Anglican settings, made a similar comment, regarding a collegial characteristic of Anglican cathedrals that was not present in the same way in their experience of Roman Catholic cathedrals:⁸¹⁶

[In] the Anglican cathedrals, you feel the team of clergy in general I would say, were very supportive of the choir – and you felt, as a choir, you were part of the cathedral community, very strongly. But at [RC cathedral] you had one, maybe two people you'd see regularly in the clergy there and it was a very separate entity. They very kept themselves to themselves and you felt that while you were serving God, it felt like you were serving them and doing the thing for them.⁸¹⁷

Here we can see a convergence resulting from recent historical developments that make visible the ways in which the worship of Anglican cathedrals has an underlying spiritual and

⁸¹³ P06

⁸¹⁴ P05

⁸¹⁵ P05

⁸¹⁶ P07

⁸¹⁷ P07

theological similarity with those Roman Catholic cathedrals that maintain significant provision for choral worship within their liturgical lives. In historical terms, this is still a process that is being written in the life of the Church. The deliberate flexibility of the official forms of worship authorised within the Church of England from 2000 onwards have resulted in a twin movement; seeing an acceleration both of divergence within the Church of England and convergence between the worship of its cathedrals at that of those Roman Catholic cathedrals that maintain choral resources that are akin to those present within Anglican cathedrals.

The importance of this episode in the development of Anglican thought and practice (and the wider ecumenical context in which it is situated) is seen in the responses that are elicited by those comparing the outward forms of Anglican and Roman Catholic worship. Whilst, prior to the mid-20th century, there were visible (and significant) differences in the outward forms of worship that cloaked some of the similarities that might have been present in terms of the theological of music within the liturgy, the liturgical reforms of the 20th century have resulted in an outward similarity that can be seen as a visible indicator of the sympathy that is present between some Roman Catholic and Anglican views of the theological understanding of music in the liturgy that this might signify (something that was explored in section 5.2). Thus, the outward liturgical changes of recent decades have made explicit and more noticeable those similarities of liturgical and musical theology that have been present within the Anglican tradition from its formative period; that which was waspishly described as ‘a liturgical fifth column’ within the Church of England is now a visible and open mark of ecumenical convergence.

A conclusion

It is clear that there were significant changes touching liturgical practice within the Church of England as a result the Oxford Movement. However, whilst it has had an impact on the context within which the participants of this study perform, it is less clear how it has impacted on the self-understanding they have of their singing in its liturgical context. Perhaps the strongest impact is seen in the wider dissemination of the style of worship previously restricted to cathedrals to have an influence on the worship of parish churches (as seen in the development of robed parish church choirs in the 19th and 20th centuries). The longer-term impact of the Oxford Movement was seen in the process of liturgical development that saw a convergence in the external forms of worship that, in the cathedral

setting, saw a move toward a greater similarity between the worship of Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals.⁸¹⁸

However, in theological terms there is less compelling evidence of enduring spiritual or theological significance in the experience of those participating as singers in cathedral choirs with little that can be identified in material gained in either discussion or interview that can be linked to this episode in the development of the Anglican tradition. Thus, whilst the externals of worship in parishes were radically affected by the Oxford Movement – taking on some of the marks of cathedral-style worship – there was less direct influence on the cathedral tradition itself; this seeming to be limited to the increasing similarity in liturgical rites between the Anglican and Roman forms and the underlying changes that saw musical expectations and performance standards improve in the course of the 20th century. One explanation for this may be in the latent presence within the cathedral tradition of a broad Catholicism (reflecting the view of MacCulloch, outlined in section 7.1a) meant that the liturgical and musical changes that emanated from the Oxford Movement were in sympathy with already present spiritual and theological sensitivities within the Anglican tradition of choral worship that were rooted in earlier episodes of its development already outlined above (in sections 7.1a and b).

7.1d Responses to Secularism: Radical Liberalism, Cultural Anglicanism and Radical Orthodoxy

One of the key challenges facing churches of all denominations in recent decades has been the ongoing challenge of dealing with perceptions of an increasingly secular society. Whilst there is a degree to which secularity and its effects are contested, there are nonetheless some apparent signs of its impact on a diverse range of churches, and there are some trends of thought within the Anglican tradition that can be seen to have their origin either in an accommodation with or reaction to secular views of faith and belief. Chronologically, those moves to make accommodation with different, broadly secular, views of understanding society led to the presence from the 1960s onwards of a strand of radical liberalism within the Anglican strand of the Church of England, with a more obvious countering of secular views becoming apparent from the 1990s onwards. This section traces the development of both of these strands, identifying points where they touch views expressed in the course of the interviews and pointing onward to some of the considerations that may,

⁸¹⁸ It should be noted here that although the change to largely eucharistic worship on Sunday mornings must have an impact on this experience this was not expressed in the course of the interviews – possibly as none of the participants had experience of singing in cathedral settings prior to the changes that had such an impact from the 1960s onwards.

speculatively shape the experience and self-understanding of singers in the present-day (but of which it is too early to discern their full significance).

Radical liberalism and Cultural Anglicanism

The first significant event in the development of a radical form of liberal theology within the Church of England is often marked by John Robinson's *Honest to God* in 1963;⁸¹⁹ though in reality this was part of a wider movement, and appeared in the context of Robinson's own ministry within 'South Bank Religion'. Developing Bonhoeffer's motif of religionless Christianity, Robinson questioned the images and language that are used to describe God. A further notable development was marked by Don Cupitt's work extending these ideas to promote a non-realist conception of God in the book (and television series) *Sea of God*,⁸²⁰ which popularised this theologically non-realist movement within Anglicanism as a form of cultural Christianity accommodating modern philosophical approaches. A more nuanced approach is found in the writing of more moderate figures who might be placed within the broader context of this strand of thinking – all of whom share a common endeavour to interpret traditional Christian faith in a contemporary culture. Recent examples include the writing and broadcasting work of Richard Holloway,⁸²¹ Robert Reiss's book *Sceptical Christianity*,⁸²² and Brian Mountford's collection *Christian Atheist*.⁸²³ Each of these writers is positioned within the broader Anglican tradition, and many of them have an affinity with the liturgical tradition that is characteristic of Anglican practice – something that is explicit in the latter two works. Robert Reiss affirms the theological importance of beauty as a characteristic of God revealed in music,⁸²⁴ refers to John Robinson's own work on creating meaningful liturgy,⁸²⁵ making the personal statement that he is 'not alone in combining a certain questioning stance about Christian theology with a more traditional and dignified approach to worship'.⁸²⁶

The way that this radical liberal approach can affect the theological reception of musical performance can be found expressed in two books that sit within this tradition. In *Christian Atheist*, Mountford writes of the way in which the transcendent quality of music can be received as transformative, even by those professing no explicit theistic faith.⁸²⁷ In

⁸¹⁹ John Robinson, *Honest to God*, (London: SCM Press, 1963).

⁸²⁰ Don Cupitt, *Sea of Faith*, (London: SCM Press, 2003).

⁸²¹ Richard Holloway, *Godless morality: Keeping Religion out of Ethics*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999; and Richard Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria: A Memoir of Faith and Doubt*, (Edinburgh, Canongate, 2012).

⁸²² Robert Reiss, *Sceptical Christianity*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016).

⁸²³ Mountford, *Christian Atheist*.

⁸²⁴ Reiss, *Sceptical Christianity*, p. 51.

⁸²⁵ Reiss, *Sceptical Christianity*, p. 138.

⁸²⁶ Reiss, *Sceptical Christianity*, p. 140.

⁸²⁷ Mountford, *Christian Atheist*.

exploring this issue, Mountford articulates the possibility of transcendence through music as a way of encountering deeper meaning, without the acceptance of conventional theistic conception of the divine.⁸²⁸ In a work outlining the theological issues that are at stake within radical liberal theology, Antony Freeman, drawing on what he opines to be the more ‘detached’, ‘non-personal’ language of worship from the *Book of Common Prayer* makes the point that many Christian humanists, may find this worship more appropriate for their needs, before stating that the tradition of ‘fully choral Prayer Book services are best for me’.⁸²⁹ In both these instances, we find that the epistemic gap is closed by taking a non-realist approach to the existence of God, with the result that the transcendence of music (and indeed the parallel aesthetic provided by texts such as the *Book of Common Prayer*) becomes transformative within the more restrictive constraints of a realist worldview. However, this by no way minimises the importance of music to those approaching God in this way – indeed, in some ways it seems that such ways of providing depth of meaning through aesthetic experience become more important once some of the theological scaffolding of traditional dogmatic belief is removed.

In writing from outside the ecclesiastical and theological milieu we can see these ideas reflected in Warnock’s writing about a non-religious ethical framework where, in arguing for such a framework, she articulates an ongoing and valued place for the spiritual tradition of Anglican worship.⁸³⁰ Whilst many within the Church would argue strongly against such an approach, it does nonetheless illustrate the ongoing contribution that Anglican spirituality and worship might have for those who do not adhere to its full theological implications. Similarly, we can see a similar cultural touching point in the writing of Scruton, whose philosophical work on music as art was encountered in section 5.5. In a far more personal book, Scruton articulates the way in which, despite his personal theological scepticism, the spiritual tradition of the Church of England (and musical elements within it) are a source of personal spiritual importance to him.⁸³¹ In both these approaches, we can see a number of synergies with the theological approach that was articulated in the exploration of the ineffability of music in section 5.5, and the potential within this for music within the liturgy to be a touching point for those who, in the words of Perlmutter, hold an ‘interested un-belief’.⁸³²

⁸²⁸ Mountford, *Christian Atheist*, pp. 18-24.

⁸²⁹ Anthony Freeman, *God in us: A case for Christian Humanism*, (Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2001), p. 41.

⁸³⁰ Warnock, *Dishonest to God*.

⁸³¹ Scruton, *Our Church*.

⁸³² Julian Perlmutter, *Sacred Music, Religious Desire and Knowledge of God: The Music of Our Human Longing*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

Radical Orthodoxy

A more recent, contrasting movement within Anglican theology has been the emergence of 'Radical Orthodoxy' as a deliberate and concerted movement. Whilst not located solely within the Church of England the justification for its positioning as a movement derived from High Church Anglicanism comes from the self-identification of those editing the foundational volume published in 1999, who remarked that 'seven of the [twelve] contributors to this volume are Anglicans, all of a High Church persuasion',⁸³³ whilst the remaining five were Roman Catholics holding similar theological (if not ecclesial) views. Sharing much with the Roman Catholic *nouvelle theologie*, which also sought to recover the patristic inheritance of the theological corpus within western theology, Radical Orthodoxy has clear touching points with earlier expressions of Anglican theology. It is no accident that many of its proponents emerged from the academic homes of Anglicanism in Oxford and Cambridge, and have been fostered by those in sympathy with its ideals in cathedrals and universities that have a strong Anglican ethos.⁸³⁴

Whilst the theological interpretation of music within the writings of Radical Orthodoxy is relatively limited, the associations within this group that link both to Anglican styles and forms of worship within the milieu of cathedrals and university chapels and the easy cross-over between Anglican and Roman Catholic writers within Radical Orthodoxy point to the underlying characteristic of Anglican worship that has been identified above. In the light of this, Anglican patterns of worship provide a spiritual context for that is conducive to a theological approach that is at a point of interaction between the 'reformed catholic' theology as expressed within this part of the Church of England and theological traditions within the Roman Catholic Church that (especially since the revival of just such patristic approaches in the early 20th-century by theologians such as de Lubac and Balthasar) share an approach to interpreting Church tradition in the light of its patristic inheritance.

Radical orthodoxy, whilst complex in many of its expressions, holds that the wisdom of early Christian theology has a richness that can be used to unlock deeper understandings of reality in a world shaped by modern and post-modern cultures. Far from being purely antiquarian in its theological outlook, this leads its exponents to read traditional theological texts in dialogue with modern insights – grounding the oft-shifting sands of postmodern philosophy in the secure foundations of patristic and early mediaeval theology. In the initial collection of essays this is exemplified by the approach that Catherine Pickstock takes to

⁸³³ John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (Editors), *Radical Orthodoxy*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), p. xi.

⁸³⁴ A point made by the authors in the Acknowledgements within Milbank, Pickstock and Ward (Eds), *Radical Orthodoxy*.

reading Augustine's *De musica* alongside the work of Lacoue-Labarthe and Attali.⁸³⁵ A practical outworking of this theological method is found in a sermon on the role of music as witness to the salvific acts of God by Andrew Davison that is contained in a derivative collection of sermons.⁸³⁶ The fundamental connection to classic Anglicanism is revealed in the appeal to patristic texts as the foundation for finding common understanding – a long-standing feature of Anglican tradition rooted in the approaches of Jewel and Hooker. Given its inherent appeal to earlier roots, Radical Orthodoxy is more challenging to evidence on the basis of the material gained in conversation with the participants in this study. However, its underpinning appeal to patristic and mediaeval sources and its dominant theme of theological participation are motifs that reflect the implicit theological discourse present in a number of the interviews and which was explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

Whilst it is difficult to make direct connections between the writings within Radical Orthodoxy and the evidence obtained in this study, it is necessary to note the sympathy that exists in theological method between those involved in the development of this strand within contemporary Anglican thinking and the inheritance that the Anglican Choral Tradition has in Anglican theological method – something that was reflected in the patristic patterns of understanding explored in Chapter 5. It is also important to note that, in significant part, Radical Orthodoxy has arisen within contexts where the Anglican Choral Tradition is a central part of the spiritual milieu. At the present moment it is probably not possible to make stronger links between the writings of Radical Orthodoxy and the experience of singers within Anglican choral foundations. However, it is necessary both to note the common inheritance they hold and to place a marker as to whether the relationship between Radical Orthodoxy and the practice of worship within the Anglican tradition will become of greater significance in the future.

A conclusion

It can be seen from the brief summaries in section 7.1d that Anglicanism has continued to develop as a theological discipline, with the long-established Liberal, Anglo-Catholic and Anglo-Roman strands within the Church of England providing the grounding for new approaches that are faithful to their roots, whilst responding to the contexts in which they are now operating. These more recent developments within Anglican thinking have included both theologically liberal (and philosophically sceptical) approaches and, within

⁸³⁵ Catherine Pickstock, 'Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine' in Milbank, Pickstock and Ward (Eds), *Radical Orthodoxy*, pp. 243-277.

⁸³⁶ Andrew Davison, 'Music and What Matters Most' in Alison Milbank, John Hughes and Arabella Milbank (Editors), *Preaching Radical & Orthodox*, (London: SCM Press, 2007), pp. 33-36.

the more recent Radical Orthodoxy, philosophically realist responses. It is worthy of note that a number of those working within both these recent expressions of the Anglican tradition within theology have affinity with the choral worship of the Church of England, working within cathedrals and the collegiate universities and therefore have potential significance for this study.⁸³⁷

This substantial section of this chapter has considered the role of tradition in the narratives provided by the participants in this study. It has identified the presence of a distinct tradition that can be identified within the choral worship of the cathedrals of the Church of England and observed the positive way that this is present in the narratives of many participants. It has also been outlined the way in which this tradition has been shaped by a number of episodes, each of which has had a distinct effect on the development of the tradition. However, it has also noted that the descriptions of this tradition have not been explicitly linked by the participants with the underlying history that has shaped it. The distinctive nature of the Anglican Choral Tradition with its clearly delineated episodic historical development provides the specific context within which the Anglican tradition of spirituality, theology and worship has developed. All of this is suggestive of an interpretation that pays close attention to the historical development of the tradition, but understands this to be expressed through the effect that its institutions have on the self-understanding of those working within them and on the implicit spiritual and theological narratives that are both dependent on and expressive of its historically grounded reality.

However, having considered the broadly positive way in which tradition was expressed in the interviews, and looked at where there may be either explicit or implicit touching points between the episodes that have marked out the development of the Anglican tradition of theology, spirituality and worship within the Church of England, the remaining two sections of this chapter consider the negative affect that tradition held for a minority of participants and the way that some participants expressed the possibility of tradition being a source for future reflection and regeneration of the tradition of choral music within the Church of England. Each of these sections will be significantly shorter, reflecting the level of material and the relative impact these topics had in the course of discussion.

⁸³⁷ This point is made by the authors in the Acknowledgements within Milbank, Pickstock and Ward (Eds), *Radical Orthodoxy*.

7.2 The burden of tradition

The dominant relationship between the nature of tradition and participants was generally positive. However, there were occasional hints of the possibility that tradition might be a burden, and these became explicit in the comments of one of the participants whose own spirituality was largely formed in churches outside the Anglican Choral Tradition. For this participant, the sense of tradition as a potential burden was situated within a broader understanding of the potential for a disconnection between a particular act within the liturgy and the meaning it carries. This was echoed in a reflection where the participant discussed the different ways that they interacted with texts in two different ways: largely cognitive when singing, and spiritually engaged when reading or hearing preaching. The first approach was reflected in the comment that:

‘I know exactly why I sing...and I know all the meanings behind it, and I think they’re lovely meanings – but do they actually mean anything to me?’⁸³⁸

The participant contrasted this with the spiritual effect that was present when they were not concerned with the practical and technical concerns of singing, so that:

‘when I’m listening to a homily, that’s when I feel like I’m practising my faith – because I’m listening to what they’re saying, I’m engaging with it and it sparks thoughts in my head’.⁸³⁹

Although the potential for there to be a negative spiritual effect when singers were absorbed by the demands of singing were noted by other participants, they were reflected particularly starkly in this particular interview – with the participant going on to reflect that although music had a transcendent quality such that ‘when you’re listening to it, like, “God is here,” I think – but I only get that when I am listening to it...I can’t get that close to things when I’m singing’.⁸⁴⁰

This reflection on the potential disconnection between act and meaning was equally present when considering the liturgical setting within which the musical performance is placed, and the demands that this places on musicians as performers in a wider liturgical sense. The potential for this disconnection to impact on the deeper participation of those involved in performance – and the reality that this leads to in terms of the demands of the ritual acts of a particular liturgical tradition on those involved was reflected in the following comments:

‘I think what I struggle with, in the Church of England is that, you know, they say things like, “Hallelujah! Blah, blah, blah,” but there’s no... oh, it sounds terrible, it seems very... it’s all very pomp and circumstance..., “We’re all very traditional, we all do it this way, we’ve always done it this way, we’ve all got to be very serious.”

‘And at the end of the day, to be a Christian, what I want to do is to praise God and to thank God and to look at what He’s done and all that sort of stuff. And I just feel that sometimes, there’s a mismatch.’

⁸³⁸ P02

⁸³⁹ P02

⁸⁴⁰ P02

Here we can see a very real way in which the demands of the liturgical performance associated with tradition can have the effect of excluding spiritual engagement with the musical performance on the part of those involved in the very act of performing – whilst recognising that this provides a very real spiritual experience for others present (and indeed, a recognition that being in the role of listener can be a very real spiritual experience for the participant themselves. This points to a potential formalism within the performance situation that effects the nature of the engagement of the performer with the musical (and wider liturgical and spiritual) performance in which they are engaged – where there is a focus on the externals demanded by the act of performing in accordance with the demands of the tradition, rather than an engagement in the inner or deeper meaning that is latent within the performance (and recognised by others).

7.3 Tradition as a source for reimagination

In the main body of this chapter (Section 7.1) we have seen how the concept of tradition within the musical and liturgical activity of the Church of England's cathedrals is a powerful influence, and that underlying this is a pattern of self-understanding that is reflective of the historical developments that have shaped this tradition. In general, the comments and reflections that have underpinned this understanding have treated tradition as something that has shaped what is received, and seeks to preserve what has been received as something of value for the present, and something to be communicated to future generations. However, a further perspective regarding the way that tradition was approached was particularly evident in the reflections of one participant who reflected on the potential that the content of tradition, as it relates to the Anglican Choral Tradition, might be something that is capable of reshaping and renewing that tradition from within.

As with the view that tradition is a potential burden with the potential to create a barrier to understanding by diverting attention from the inner dynamics to externals (explored in summary in Section 7.2), the participant considered below had a personal spiritual journey that included significant spiritual experiences beyond the Anglican Choral Tradition. Having both significant affection for their own experiences singing within the setting of cathedrals, but with a vibrant period within a variety of more charismatic church settings this participant noted that in both cases a sense in which spiritual lives can 'become humdrum'.⁸⁴¹ Having spoken of the way that their initial growth within the choral tradition had been subsumed by their charismatic experiences, they spoke of the sense by which 'even Evangelical churches, to some point, get to a stagnation point'.⁸⁴² This highlighted the potential issue that arises when an individual's spiritual journey reaches a transition point, and was discussed with an implication that this could occur with traditions too – that, in a way that reflected something of the discussion in section 7.2, tradition can lose something of its meaning or inspiration over time.

One of the possible responses to this issue proposed by the participant reflected on the potential for the tradition itself to have the seeds for both personal and corporate renewal. This centred on the participant's fundamental understanding that the singing of those involved in the cathedral's liturgical work should be motivated by their personal faith. In responding to the way that their own experience had led to what they described as 'stagnation' and reflecting on the origins of choirs in the communities of monks that had preceded the post-Reformation lay clerks, this participant reflected on the potential that the 'focused life and focused belief in God' might have for renewing

⁸⁴¹ P04

⁸⁴² P04

the spiritual life of those involved in the routine work of cathedral choirs.⁸⁴³ In this response, it is possible to identify a clear link between the reception of tradition by the participant, and their creative engagement with it as a means for re-imagination of the tradition and the reengagement of those participating in its life with its underlying purpose.

A consequent reflection incorporated further comments on the way that a considering the insights of tradition can help those participating in the life of cathedral choirs in the present day to reconsider the nature of those experiences. This was articulated in terms of reconfiguring the concept of what was initially described as the spiritual 'stagnation' experienced by the participant in terms of the stability that is a part of the inheritance of the monastic tradition. This consideration of the concept of 'stabilitas' (a central aspect of Benedictine spirituality, and reflecting the origins of a majority of the 'new' foundations cathedrals as Benedictine monasteries) as an inherent part of the tradition allowed a reconsideration of the negative thought of stagnation in the more positive terms of stability that can sustain a spiritual life in a different way, where it might be considered that 'stability is not a bad thing, but only if it is stability without stagnation'.⁸⁴⁴ Again we can see a way that the insights that are possible when reconsidering aspects of tradition and previous phases in the historical development of the Anglican Choral Tradition can have a positive role in considering experiences within the life and work of cathedral choirs in the present day. This led the participant to reflect on the potential for aspects of tradition to be the source for 'a whole new renaissance, and starting again from the bottom'.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴³ P04

⁸⁴⁴ P04

⁸⁴⁵ P04

Conclusion

Across the chapters of Part 3, it can be seen that the descriptions provided by lay singers of the experience of singing in the liturgy can be seen through the lenses of theological meaning, institutional purpose and historical context. This has demonstrated the way that the experiences of singers can be understood from a variety of personal perspectives with varying degrees of spiritual content and theological meaning (both implicit and explicit in nature). Whilst these personal spiritual and theological narratives demonstrate a variety of individual narratives, there is a far greater of unanimity when it comes to the corporate narratives that were expressed. In turn, these corporate narratives correlate to institutional characteristics of choral foundations (such as vicarious performance and the *opus Dei* of daily worship). Further to this, exploration of the historical development of an Anglican liturgical theology and spirituality also demonstrates a correlation not only with some of the individual spiritual and theological narratives contained within the accounts provided by participants, but also a strong correlation between ‘classic’ Anglican spirituality and the features common to the corporate narratives presented. These connections support the thesis that the experiences of lay singers in choral foundations embody a deeply rooted spirituality with theological implications that reflect both the institutions in which they perform and the historical context within which their activity has developed. Failing to note these connections risks seeing their performances as purely musical in nature and missing the theological reality that illuminates their corporate narratives (and in a number of cases underpins the spiritual experience of individuals).

PART 4: CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 8 Institutional and theological understanding within the context of a living tradition – informed by historical context

This final chapter looks back at the purpose of this study, summarises the findings of the empirical study and recalls the theological narratives (both explicit and implicit) that underpin the descriptions provided by the participants, the institutional factors these reveal and the historical episodes with which they can be correlated. In the course of the study the experiences of lay singers within cathedrals and choral foundations of the Church of England has been described and analysed – revealing that a majority of participants taking part in this study ascribed spiritual value to their activity within a liturgical context. Whilst there was variety in the patterns of understanding at an individual, personal level, there was a much greater congruence when it came to articulating a corporate understanding of their activity. The resulting corporate accounts correlated strongly a theological understanding that was inflected by the institutional and historical context within which the Anglican tradition of musical performance within the liturgy has developed.

The first stage of gathering qualitative data involved group interviews involving a total of 30 participants, that resulted in the identification of 18 themes relating to how participants understood their musical performances in a liturgical context. The most frequently recurring themes were grouped into five broad categories that were the focus of more detailed one-to-one interviews. Involving seven participants who were selected to reflect the range of views present in the first stage of data gathering, these interviews allowed a more in-depth exploration of the understanding that participants had of their activity.

The group conversations demonstrated that there was often a diversity of personal approaches to the experience participants had of performing music within the liturgy. For some participants their musical performances were spiritual in nature and had theological import at a personal level, whilst others engaged with music in the liturgy from a more exclusively musical perspective. Within this latter group there were two distinct reactions – one attributing music a spiritual significance that the demands of performance made it difficult to engage with, whilst others saw that their performances might have spiritual significance for others rather than themselves. Despite these varied personal approaches to understanding the spiritual and theological significance of their activity, there was far more coherence when conversations expressed a more corporate account of their activity.

The variety of spiritual and theological approaches evident at an individual level in the group conversations were replicated in the interviews:

- Three of the seven participants articulated a personal spiritual engagement with music in liturgical performance that was consonant with Anglican approaches to spirituality and theological understanding of the role of music in worship. Whilst significant, this still represented a minority view at a personal, individual level.
- The remaining perspectives, of participants who found their personal faith and spirituality at variance with their experiences of singing in the liturgy, were represented in the one-to-one interviews. Reflecting the varied individual responses in the earlier conversations, two of the participants holding a strong faith did not connect to a spiritual engagement with their musical activity. The remaining two participants held a high view of the spiritual value of musical performance but were less confident at connecting this to personal faith. All of these participants articulated that the practical demands of performance to a high standard disrupted their own ability to engage with their performances in a spiritual way.

However, strikingly, and in contrast to the variety of individual responses, all the participants articulated a corporate understanding of the role of music in liturgy that correlated strongly with Anglican approaches to the theological meaning of music and its spiritual effect in worship. All seven accounts of the corporate meaning of their activity correlated to an Anglican understanding of the spirituality and theology of music in worship that was explored in Chapter 5. These corporate expressions of understanding their activity included reference to the vicarious nature of their performances and offering music on behalf of others. Both these ideas, which relate directly to institutional characteristics of the cathedrals and foundations in which the participants sing, were explored in the more detailed one-to-one conversations and were detailed in Chapter 6.

Having identified the correlation between the corporate accounts that arise from the qualitative data and a distinctively Anglican understanding of the spirituality and theology of musical performance in worship in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6 institutional factors within the participants' accounts were established. In Chapter 7 these theological narratives and institutional influences on understanding were grounded in the historical, episodic development of Anglican theology and spirituality. This process demonstrates the way that, despite diverse personal experiences of the spiritual significance of music at a personal level, the material obtained in the empirical research and its reflective analysis supports the underlying thesis lay singers hold a strong corporate understanding of the spiritual significance of their liturgical activity. This corporate understanding is shaped by distinct institutional and historical factors; indicating that lay singers see their activity to have an important place within the spiritual life of institutions that (atypically when considering an overall decline) have been exemplars of numerical growth within the Church of England in recent

years. In the light of this, this study has identified the theological significance of the work of lay singers and illustrates the way that institutional and historical perspectives correlate, at both personal and corporate levels, to the understanding singers have of their performance within the Anglican liturgy. Without considering these influences, and seeing the musical activity of these performers as an inherently spiritual element within the life of the Church, their activity and the contribution they make to the institutions within which they are active cannot be properly understood.

8.1 Revisiting the purpose of this study

This study started with the central thesis that the theological significance of the work of lay singers can only be properly understood by looking at the institutional and historical perspectives that shape their experience of singing within the Anglican liturgy. After an exploration of the literature (both in terms of ecclesiastical reports and scholarly activity), the conclusion was drawn that the experience of the lay singers in cathedral choirs is an area that has not been the subject of detailed exploration. Whilst church reports tend to focus on either the institutional governance arrangements of cathedrals or the missionary output in terms of attracting new members across the threshold into church life, scholarly activity was found to focus predominantly on developing an understanding of the historical, social, liturgical and musicological aspects of the life of lay singers and the music they sing. This revealed the lacunae that exists with respect to the spiritual aspect of the experiences of lay singers, and the theological potential that it may have.

With this at the forefront, this study has gathered evidence as to the experiences of those involved in singing within the liturgical life of England's Anglican cathedrals in two different phases, and an initial overview gained through group interviews with groups of singers which were followed up with more detailed one-to-one interviews with individual participants. Drawing from theological methods from within the Anglican tradition of theology, to better understand this musical activity in which they engage it was interpreted through three distinct interpretive lenses, namely:

1. The spiritual or theological perspectives of participants in relation to their musical activity within the context of the life of Anglican cathedrals that are key to understanding the meaning given to musical performance in its liturgical context;
2. Institutional narratives that shape, at both personal and corporate levels, the self-understanding of the musical activity of choirs in choral foundations; and
3. The sense of these spiritual/theological and institutional understandings being located within a specific tradition and historical context which underpins the responses of many individuals taking part in the study.

In its overall shape, this study places the reflections of individuals involved in the day-to-day life of Anglican choral foundations into a wider exploration of the historical, institutional and spiritual themes that emerged from the individual conversations and posits that this provides a methodological process particularly suited to understanding the work of these musicians in spiritual terms and in its theologically freighted context.

By the means outlined above, this study provides a means to establish a way of understanding the activity of lay singers in cathedral choirs from three distinct perspectives:

1. By understanding the experience of the individual, this study provides a framework of understanding within which the experiences of individual musicians can be placed – specifically drawing out the ways in which those experiences are spiritual in nature and might be seen to have theological potential.
2. At an institutional level, the study articulates the theological nature of the performances that take place within the setting of the cathedrals of the Church of England, enabling a wider appreciation of the spiritual and theological nature of this activity (rather than just is missiological output or the archaeological or musicological imprint their activity leaves).
3. In methodological terms, the study provides a pattern for triangulating individual experiences within their institutional setting and historical context, providing a methodological process which might equally be applied to other aspects of institutional life within the Church and beyond.

8.2 Summary of the research and its interpretation

Part 2 of this study provided thematic accounts of the experience of the participants in this study. The material gained in both phases of research revealed 18 identifiable first level themes, the most significant of which (on the basis of the range and richness of accounts received) were grouped into five higher level themes, forming the basis of a rich description of the participants' experiences of performing within the liturgical contexts of English cathedrals:⁸⁴⁶

(i) Singing of texts

In the discussions surrounding the texts used in worship a recurring theme was the importance of beauty, and the place that poetic language has (in combination with music) to inspire a response in the listener. The discussions surrounding text also highlighted the importance of a corpus of familiar texts – often linked to the idea that these texts reflect the long-standing nature of the tradition of choral worship in cathedrals, and having strong (and often explicit) echoes that link back to monastic origins of the daily offices of which the choir's activity is a part.

(ii) Singing and personal faith

The conversations exploring the personal faith of participants elicited a more diverse series of responses, which were capable of categorisation in the following ways:

1. Those for whom their musical activity was an integral part of their own personal faith – and for whom an Anglican spirituality and theological framework (as explored in more depth in Part 3) was a natural means of understanding this faith.
2. Those for whom the link between their musical activity within the liturgy and their own personal faith was more ambiguous – often as a result of spiritual formation in settings beyond the context of the Anglican worship characteristic of cathedrals. In each of these examples, the participants often articulated an understanding of the effect that their work had on others in terms of the Anglican tradition – expressing this in terms where their own activity was enabling the worship of others within this spiritual tradition.

⁸⁴⁶ It should be noted at this point that although the primary focus of the study was the context of Anglican (i.e. Church of England) cathedrals, many of the participants had experiences of singing in other contexts – most frequently in the choirs of Roman Catholic cathedrals. In itself, this provides an interesting touching point with the account that was encountered in Part 3 of the Anglican tradition acting as a reservoir for a 'Catholic' spirituality within the Church of England, whilst also providing a potential starting point for further research into the interactions between the musical practices of Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals in a British context.

3. Those for whom their musical activity was not related to their own faith, either because their prime focus on the technical aspects of performance predominated over personal spiritual engagement or because they held a less strong personal faith. In the latter case, theological interpretation of their activity was articulated in the third person, whilst in the latter case a cultural rather than theological account was dominant (though the effect of their musical performance on others was seen to be of spiritual benefit to them).

(iii) Singing as a transcendent experience

As with the link between singing and personal faith, a number of positions were articulated by participants. These could be interpreted within three typological categories:

1. Music as analogy to God;
2. Music as a direct experience of God; and
3. Music as experience for others.

Each of these positions was explored in more detail within the theological interpretation offered in Part 3.

(iv) Singing as event

In reflecting on their activity in terms of 'event' it was consistent that, no matter the nature of an individual's personal spiritual engagement with their activity, the nature and context of the performance had a direct effect on that engagement. There was a direct correlation between small-scale performances and a deeper personal engagement, and participants were unanimous in identifying a significant difference between liturgical and concert contexts for their performances. Whilst the nature of these changing experiences varied depending on an individual participants' spiritual outlook, it was consistent that participants expressed small-scale liturgical performances to be more meaningful.

(v) Singing as offering

Three forms of offering were present in the material from the interviews:

1. Offering to others;
2. Offering on behalf of others' or
3. Personal offering.

In each of these the importance of musical performance of a high quality was clearly articulated, being linked to the pursuit of beauty in worship and the feeling that, despite human inadequacy, seeking perfection in worship was a

motivating factor. Alongside this, the concept of offering on behalf of others allowed some participants to articulate a theological approach that drew on a corporate understanding that was Anglican in nature and at variance with the individual's own spiritual or theological understanding.

These accounts provide an evidence base for the spiritual experiences of the participants and attest to the impact that singing in liturgical contexts has on many of those involved.

In Part 3 this same material was interpreted through three lenses; exploring its spiritual and theological meaning, the institutional influences present, and the way that these relate to the various episodes in the historical development of the Anglican tradition of spirituality and theology:

Spirituality and theology

Within the thematic analysis exploring the spirituality and theological implications of the evidence gained in the empirical research there were three themes that could be closely identified as being consonant with the Anglican tradition, namely:

1. Participation in God through music (5.1);
2. The image of worship in heaven (5.2); and
3. Theologies of music within creation (5.3).

The fourth theological theme arising was that of direct spiritual or theological experience mediated through music (5.4), whilst the final theme explored the impact of the ineffability of musical experience (5.5). This revealed a diversity of spiritual and theological responses among the participants whilst also revealing that even where there was a variety of personal responses, participants were consistent in the way that they articulated a more corporate understanding of the spiritual aspects of their performance and its theological potential – with this corporate response located consistently within the first three themes.

Institutional factors

In looking at the evidence from the empirical research from the perspective of the institutional factors that might have influenced participants experience and understanding of their activity two significant elements were discerned:

1. An understanding of the vicarious nature of the choir's activity (6.1); and
2. A core understanding of their activity as an offering of music to the glory of God (6.2).

These two aspects of institutional influence were inter-related, and both factors showed the potential that understanding the implicit culture of an institution has for interpreting the experience of those working within it. In both cases, there were examples of the way that the historically conditioned nature of the institution had a direct correlation with the understanding that participants in the study had of their own activity within it.

Historical contextualisation of the spiritual, theological and institutional themes

Building on the way that a historically aware understanding of the development of cathedrals as institutions related directly to the understanding participants had of their activity, the third section of Part 3 explored the diverse ways in which the historical development of Anglican thought and practice connected with the experiences recounted in the empirical data from the interviews. Chapter 7.1 explored the ways in which tradition had a positive relationship to the description singers gave of their activity, with various patterns of understanding associable with particular episodes in the historic development of Anglican thought and practice.

1. The first episode (7.1a), associated with the earliest phases of reformation within the Church of England, included the defence of liturgical worship and music and the institutional continuity of cathedrals. The significant impact of this earliest episode within the development of the Anglican tradition was the defence of fundamental continuities, the foundation of a liturgical tradition and continuation of institutional patterns that enabled the transmission of a culture on which later episodes would build. This has a direct relationship to the institutional factors identified in chapters 6.1 and 6.2.
2. The second episode (7.1b) was the development of a spirituality of the glory of God in worship and heaven on earth within the Church of England from the 1600s onwards. These Caroline and Laudian developments, which were to be consolidated as a more definable Anglicanism in the years following the Restoration of 1660, had a direct correlation to the theological patterns of understanding that were identified within the empirical evidence of the participants in sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. Here there is a direct correlation between the thought of this foundational period in Anglican spirituality and the

experiences of the participants – expressed by some as their own personal spirituality, and by others in more corporate terms as their institutional understanding of their activity within the liturgical life of the cathedrals in which they worked.

3. The third historical episode (7.1c) covered the period of the Oxford movement; a period that saw a resurgence of appreciation for tradition and liturgical renewal drawing on a Catholic understanding of the Church of England. Whilst this period saw a radical change in the externals of worship in parishes as a result of the Oxford Movement, the worship of cathedrals was largely unaffected in the immediate period – in large part as they were the means by which a more ‘catholic’ attitude to worship had been communicated within the Church of England, and were thus the models used for the reform of parochial worship. However, the increasing similarity in liturgical rites between the Anglican and Roman forms in the decades following (and continued in the liturgical reforms of both Churches in the 20th century) were causal factors behind the commonality between Anglican and Roman Catholic worship that characterised the experiences of some participants who had sung in both settings.
4. The final episode considered was the response within the Church of England to secularism within wider society (7.1d). Here two diametrically opposed approaches within wider Church thinking were identified: a radical liberalism (and parallel development of cultural Anglicanism) and a renewal of traditional theology and philosophy (characterised by the school of ‘Radical Orthodoxy’). These movements illustrate that the Anglican tradition continues to evolve as a theological and spiritual tradition. Whilst it was noted that a number of those influential in both responses to secularism worked in settings that indicate an affinity with the choral worship of the Church of England, there was less clear evidence of the influence across the body of evidence gathered within. However, some individual comments that resonated with cultural approaches to Anglican worship and a need for renewal of tradition indicate that this may be an area for future engagement as these responses have a potential enduring influence of the Anglican tradition.

The two final interpretive chapters dealt with response to tradition that saw it either as a 'burden' (7.2) or as a source for future renewal (7.3) of tradition. Within Chapter 7, section 7.2 illustrated the way that formalism within the tradition, alongside the technical demands of performing, could be a barrier to the spiritual engagement of some participants. Notable, in terms of engagement within institutional patterns of understanding, was the way that participants responding to tradition in this way commonly articulated the spiritual or theological value of their activity in the two institutional factors described in chapter 6. More positive responses to the impact of tradition on the understanding of participants was seen in the reflections outlined in section 7.3 which saw individual elements within the Anglican tradition, such as its monastic inheritance or its high aesthetic appreciation, as potential starting points for re-imagination and rebirth of the tradition.

8.3 What the findings tell us about the experiences of singers, the spiritual impact of musical performance and its theological potential

In the course of the study the experiences of those who sing within the context of Church of England cathedrals has been presented – drawing on the themes evident in group conversations and examining in more detail the evidence of a series of one-to-one interviews. This has revealed a rich range of experiences that reveal a range of personal approaches to understanding the spiritual and theological significance of their activity within the liturgical life of Anglican cathedrals. It was evident from this initial evidence that a number of participants drew on the effect that their work had on others to give significance to their activity, whilst others drew on a supposed corporate understanding of the significance of their activity.

On the basis of this evidence (and the themes identified within it), the theological significance of the activity of lay singers was tested by exploring in more detail the patterns of understanding that underpinned both their own spiritual experiences and the corporate understanding that their accounts articulated. This led to exploration of institutional elements within the accounts provided by participants that highlighted the way that institutional characteristics gave shape to the way that participants understood their activity. Finally, these spiritual, theological and institutional aspects of understanding the significance of the activity of participants were contextualised in relation to the episodic historical development of the Anglican tradition of spirituality and theology.

In doing so, the central thesis of this study – that the activity of lay singers can only be properly understood by looking at the institutional and historical perspectives that shape their shared understanding of their experience and its theological implications – was tested. The qualitative evidence gathered in the study illustrates the way that historical and institutional factors clearly correlate with the corporate accounts of their activity provided by participants in this study. This same evidence demonstrates that, despite a variety of personal narratives, there is a strong corporate understanding of the theological and spiritual nature of their musical activity within the liturgy expressed by those who sing within the cathedrals of the Church of England. This reiterates the way that the spiritual and theological understanding of the musical activity of those who sing within the liturgical context of choral foundations within the Church of England is shaped by its institutional and historical contexts. The presence of a coherent corporate understanding of the meaning of musical performance in the liturgy presents an important contribution to understanding a fundamental corporate identity of lay singers that runs more deeply than their individual responses, providing a clear spiritual foundation on which this activity is built. This correlation provides strong evidence that the singers' corporate identity is derived from and shaped by the institutional and historical context within which the Anglican tradition of choral worship arose. This has significance as an important contribution to understanding this musical activity within its

liturgical context that the introductory exploration of this field of study demonstrated was under-recognised within both ecclesiastical and academic literature.

This study reveals a distinct theological pattern of understanding that embedded within the corporate life of the institutions within which these singers perform. In turn, this theological activity correlates to the various phases of the historical development of the Anglican tradition of spirituality and theology within the Church of England. Despite the variety of individual responses regarding the spiritual experience of singing in the liturgy and understanding that participants have of its theological potential, there was a strong correlation between the participants' perceptions of the corporate understanding of their activity and Anglican approaches to spirituality and theology. Whilst the personal faith and experience of some participants were synonymous with the Anglican patterns of spirituality and theological understanding there were other participants whose personal experience or beliefs varied from the definably Anglican corpus of understanding. Importantly, even in these cases the participants articulated an understanding of their activity that was consistent with an Anglican understanding – projecting this either onto other individuals present within the liturgical performance context or onto an institutional understanding of their activity.

8.4 Applying the insights of this study

This study contributes to expanding the knowledge of the Anglican choral tradition by filling the lacunae in knowledge of the spiritual effect it has on singers that was identified in the Chapter 2. In doing so it articulates the experience of lay singers who contribute to the musical and liturgical life of cathedrals within the Church of England and outlines the theological potential that these experiences can be seen to contain. Despite the variety of personal accounts presented, the espousal by participants of a coherent and consistent understanding of their activity (whether expressed as in individual or corporate terms), points towards a definable spiritual tradition which is grounded in specific patterns of theological understanding. By taking a methodological approach that examines the theological, institutional and historical perspectives, it has demonstrated a correlation between the views expressed by participants and the distinctive Anglican tradition of spirituality and theology that is a feature of the worshipping life of the historic cathedrals of the Church of England and is a substantial (if, perhaps, minority) tradition within the Church of England.

From an individual perspective, this study gives a voice to those singers who are an important element of the life of key institutions within the Church of England and contribute to its life. The data gained from the empirical study articulates the range of individual responses to the experience of singing in the liturgy and, in identifying the distinction between individual and corporate approaches to articulating meaning, it provides a framework to understand the activity of singers in the wider context of the Anglican tradition within which they operate. At a personal level, it provides a framework not only for individuals to explore their own spiritual and theological responses to the experience of singing within the liturgy of the church, but also provides an account of the corporate understanding by which they can relate their own experience and understanding to the wider body of Anglican spirituality and theology that is both institutionally transmitted and historically contingent in nature.

From an institutional perspective, this study is a potentially important starting point for articulating a coherent understanding of the spiritual and theological nature of the activity of singers working within the Church of England's cathedrals. By taking a wider focus than its purely missiological output, this study provides an opportunity for the Church of England to gain a deeper appreciation of the breadth and richness of spirituality contained within some of its key institutions. This study starts to map the theological foundations of a spiritual tradition that, whilst it appreciates bears missiological fruit, does not appear to be reflected in the substance of many of its most recent reports. A deeper appreciation of these spiritual and theological foundations should have an impact on how the Church understands the Anglican tradition of choral worship – with the potential of

better nurturing those within the tradition and providing a point of understanding for those not familiar with it.

In methodological terms, the study provides an example of triangulating individual experiences within their institutional setting and historical context. In applying this approach to the experiences of those active within the choirs of its cathedrals this study illustrates the way that these factors can be brought to bear in exploring aspects of church life and deepening understanding of them. As such it is a methodological approach that can equally be applied to other aspects of institutional life within the Church and beyond.

At a broader methodological level, this study also provides an example of an approach to the emerging field of Music Theology that takes the capacity of musical performance to be freighted with theological meaning as its starting assumption. This contrasts with some other approaches that take a more reductive approach, and consequently assume an absence of theological potential.

8.5 Limiting factors affecting the study

Sample size

Out of a potential population of between 380 and 400 singers, the group conversations included a total of 30 participants (7.5% of total population), whilst the one-to-one interviews involved seven participants (1.75% of the total population). Whilst this is justified in an initial study such as this, it does mean that, whilst this study maps out the contours of spiritual and theological understanding of those involved in the musical activity of cathedrals in the Church of England, it cannot claim to be exhaustive or definitive. Having mapped out the territory in this study, undertaking further research across a wider sample of the population would provide an opportunity to fully validate the conclusions derived from the research undertaken within the empirical phases of this study.

Parish-church cathedrals

One feature that is worthy of comment is the relative weakness of representation within the participants of those involved in the musical life of what were historically understood as parish church cathedrals. This does mean that the results of this study are biased towards the historic choral foundations (of both 'Old' and 'New' foundation). Whilst this does not weaken the validity of the conclusion reached in the interpretation of the results, it does mean that the nuance that may exist between such historic foundations and parish-church cathedrals is not present. This is something that might be addressed in the course of subsequent wider study, in which the potential for these differences could be addressed.

COVID

Given that the main research phase was prior to the disruptions to the musical life of cathedrals that resulted from COVID-19, it should be noted that the continuing validity of the results of this study may be impacted as a result of the impact that COVID has had on cathedrals and their singers. Whilst this is unlikely to have changed the underlying attitudes of the individual singers, it is undoubtedly the case that this has changed the experiences of singers within cathedral choirs – and may well continue to have ongoing impacts that cannot yet be predicted.

Correlation or causality?

Whilst there is strong correlation within the evidence between the personal understanding of some participants of their activity and a definable Anglican spirituality, and the corporate understanding held by the remaining participants and a corporate understanding, this does not demonstrate either the continuous nature of this connection or the way that this correlation may have been present as a continuous strand throughout the history of the institutions studied. This is another area for potential future exploration. Such a study of historic development could move from establishing a

present-day correlation to establish the reasons behind this and whether the cause and effect is on the basis of the continuous transmission of a tradition (with its spiritual and theological implications), or whether the strong correlation is a result of more recent appropriation of the tradition. Whilst the imprint of the various episodes of the historical development of the wider Anglican tradition is suggestive of an ongoing and organic development, the evidence itself (coming from a single chronological sample) is not sufficient to prove the nature of the cause and effect that underlies the correlation that is identified within the study.

8.6 Future directions

This study provides an initial exploration of the spiritual experience of lay singers in cathedral choirs and its theological significance – relating this to the theological, institutional and historical development of the Anglican tradition. It has the capacity to inform practice within the Church and contributes to a better understanding of a rich seem of spirituality that evidence suggests is often overlooked). Whilst restricted to singers performing in cathedrals and choral foundations of the Church of England, this study provides a starting point for further work exploring spiritual and theological interpretation of musical activity within liturgical contexts. Opportunities for further testing the thesis that performers understanding of their musical performance in the liturgy is shaped by its theological, institutional and historical context and setting are provided by:

1. Parish church choirs in the Church of England; and
2. Roman Catholic cathedrals in England.

Both these areas are proximate to the context of this study, whilst also providing aspects of theological, institutional and historical variation to allow further testing of the thesis by observation of the way these variations might shape corporate understandings of musical activity in liturgical contexts.

By providing a different institutional context, extending this study to encompass singers in parish church choirs would test the influence of institutional inheritance on the understanding singers have of their work. With a wide variation of institutional contexts in parishes, comparison of similarities and differences would be complicated by the broad range of ecclesial and historical influences at play. For example, there is a far broader theological breadth across parish churches (even within those where choirs are important elements of the provision of worship), increasing variability and making comparison challenging. Also, whilst there is generally a greater focus on gathered congregations in many parish contexts, the presence of churches which are heavily influenced by Anglican theology and spirituality (and where liturgical style may strongly associate with the worship of the Anglican Choral Tradition) means that a focus on vicarious prayer for the local community may replicate characteristics observed in the institutional setting of cathedrals and choral foundations. Nonetheless, exploration of these influences, and the effect they may have, would provide a useful extension of the thesis pursued in this study regarding the influence of theological, institutional and historical factors on the understanding singers have of their activity within the liturgy.

The different ecclesial setting of Roman Catholic cathedrals provides a second change in variables that would allow a deeper exploration of the way that theological interpretation of musical activity in the liturgy is shaped by its institutional and historical context. Given the fluidity of personnel

between Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals in England (noted in within the experience of some participants in this study), it would not be unexpected to find common aspects in any resulting accounts. Similarly, the theological proximity between Anglican spirituality within the Church of England and Catholic theology and spirituality identified within this study provides grounds to explore positive interactions and shared theological understandings of the role of music between these two traditions. Nonetheless, undertaking research following the pattern of this study in the context of Roman Catholic cathedral in England provides the possibility of understanding better the ecclesiological (and therefore institutional) factors at play in the understanding lay singers have of their musical activity in its liturgical context. The more recent nature of the foundation of Roman Catholic cathedrals in England also provides an interesting variation in the historical context in which this activity takes place.

Of course, there are further contexts that could be studied to explore the historical and institutional factors that might shape corporate theological and spiritual understanding of the activity of lay singers in liturgical contexts. For example, a parallel study undertaken by looking at Anglican cathedrals in Anglo-phone contexts, such as the Episcopal Church of the United States of America, would provide a comparison within Anglican contexts that have distinct historical and institutional influences that are significantly different from the English context has been the focus of this study. Finally, it would also be possible to use the same methodological approach to examine contexts of musical performance in worship that move beyond the English/Anglophone contexts mentioned above. Depending on the exact contexts chosen, these would allow the exploration of wider issues of the inculturation of the Anglican tradition in other contexts or, in contexts beyond the Anglican communion, of the interaction of institutional, historical and theological factors in other traditions of the Church.

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APPENDIX A: The historical development of the varied cathedral choral foundations and the situation in 2019

Whilst it may be true of many institutions it is certainly the case that every choral foundation is, by its geographical, economic, sociological and historical background, a unique institution. Although every choral foundation has a unique background it is possible to divide these into certain very distinct groupings and then into subsequent subdivisions that show broadly shared common characteristics. The first, and in many ways most significant division is between those choral foundations that are cathedrals, where the prime function is to be ‘the seat of the bishop and a centre of worship and mission’,⁸⁴⁷ and those that are part of an institution with a different primary purpose. Choral foundations in the latter category include the Royal Peculiars of Westminster Abbey and the College of St George at Windsor, and those Oxford and Cambridge colleges that continue to maintain, by statute, a formal choral foundation;⁸⁴⁸ these include New College, Magdalen College and Christ Church in Oxford, and Kings College and St John’s College in Cambridge, joined by Winchester College as a non-university education choral foundation (Eton College’s choral foundation having lapsed in 1974)⁸⁴⁹. Prior to the 19th-century there were a number of parish churches that also maintained statutory collegiate foundations with regular choral service, but these have either become cathedrals in their own right (Manchester, Ripon and Southwell) or now function as parish churches (for example, Wimborne Minster and Wolverhampton). It is also worth noting that within the foundations mentioned above, Christ Church has the anomalous position of being both an academic college within the University of Oxford and serving as the cathedral for the Diocese of Oxford.

Prior to the reformation in the 16th-century, there were two broad categories of cathedral – the ‘secular’ cathedrals served by a community of priests and clerks who shared a common life, but not under monastic vows, and those ‘monastic’ cathedrals that were served by a community of monks following a formal monastic ‘rule’ (in all but one case, this being the Rule of Benedict – the exception being Carlisle which was an Augustinian foundation). During the Henrician reformation, there was little change to the essential nature of the secular cathedrals, but the monastic cathedrals were dissolved as monastic communities and re-founded with new statutes issued by Henry VIII. In many ways these statutes replicated the patterns of the older, secular foundations, though there were subtle differences, including the patronage of canonries and a different hierarchic arrangement of the canons. In addition to the existing cathedral foundations, a number of new dioceses were established, with a former monastic church as its cathedral – with a foundation identical to the other ‘new’ foundations. These historic differences led to a distinction being drawn between the ‘secular’ cathedrals of the Old Foundation and the former ‘monastic’ cathedrals of the New Foundation. As well as the cathedral churches, a number of parish churches continued as collegiate foundations – with some of these becoming cathedral churches in the 19th-century. In addition to these historic foundations, the 19th

⁸⁴⁷ *Cathedrals Measure 1999*, accessed via <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1999/1/contents> on 14th March 2023, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁸ It should be noted that there are a number of other ‘peculiar’ that maintain choirs, but do not have the characteristic of being institutions established by statute and forming distinct legal entities, and that a number of other Oxford/Cambridge colleges maintain choral worship that is of similar scale and scope, but without the statutory element to their provision. This is analogous to those parish churches that maintain a round of choral worship that echoes that of cathedrals and can, in such cases as St Mary’s Warwick, Tewkesbury Abbey and Hexham Abbey, be as intensive as some cathedrals, though again without the statutory provision that underpins cathedral foundations.

⁸⁴⁹ Watkins Shaw, *The Succession of Organists*, (Oxford: OUP, 1991)

and early 20th-centuries population growth and redistribution led to the establishment of further dioceses, with the parallel establishment of cathedrals to serve them. In many cases this was achieved by designating an existing parish church as the cathedral for the diocese, with its incumbent priest becoming the Provost and leading a community that was in many ways more akin to that of a parish church than those of the historic cathedrals. In three cases – Truro, Liverpool and Guildford – completely new foundations were created to serve as the cathedral for the new diocese.⁸⁵⁰ The clear distinctions between the ‘parish church cathedrals’ and the cathedrals of both ‘new’ and ‘old’ foundation remained until the coming into effect of the provisions of the Cathedrals Measure 1999 which required all cathedrals to adopt a new constitution and statutes which, while allowing some degree of flexibility to reflect historic development, brought a much greater degree of commonality to cathedral foundations. The result of this historic development is a series of groupings which can help to understand the historic developments (and thus present day inheritance) of the varied cathedrals serving English dioceses:

- 9 cathedrals of the Old Foundation, comprising the cathedrals of Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, London (St Pauls), Salisbury, Wells, and York.
- 12 cathedrals of the New Foundation, created by the re-founding of the monastic communities of Bristol, Canterbury, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Ely, Gloucester, Norwich, Peterborough, Rochester, Winchester, and Worcester.
- 6 ‘modern’ foundations, including those collegiate churches that became cathedrals in the 19th-century (Manchester, Ripon and Southwell) and the cathedrals of Truro, Liverpool and Guildford. Although historic collegiate foundations in their own right, the first three of these continue to function as parish churches, whilst the parochial role of Truro has been settled on the remaining aisle of the original parish church which forms an integral part of the cathedral building.
- 14 parish church cathedrals, located in Blackburn, Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry, Chelmsford, Derby, Leicester, Newcastle, Portsmouth, St Albans, St Edmundsbury, Sheffield, Southwark, and Wakefield.
- In addition to these, as noted above, Christchurch Oxford has the unique distinction of being both chapel to an academic college and cathedral church, occupying a unique and potentially challenging legal position between Church and Academy.

From a musical perspective the most significant distinction is between the parish church cathedrals and those in other groupings, with the former generally having more reduced resources available to support choral services, whilst the latter can often be perceived to have choral provision more firmly embedded within the foundation. However, as is noted in *Heritage and Renewal*, the distinction between ‘dean & chapter cathedrals’ and ‘parish-church cathedrals’ has been eroded, with many older cathedrals now hosting quasi-parochial Sunday congregations, and parish-church cathedrals adopting the characteristics of cathedral worship.⁸⁵¹ The musical impact of this was noted by Lindley in an article that recognised the mutual interchange that had taken place between these two different expressions of cathedral worship,⁸⁵² and noted that ‘careful study’ is ‘long overdue’.⁸⁵³

It should be noted that this summary survey outlines the situation as it applied prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that radically affected the life of each and every foundation during 2020 and 2021, and it is impossible to predict what the long-term effect of this pandemic

⁸⁵⁰ It should be noted that the south-east choir aisle of Truro cathedral serves as the parish church, being a remaining part of the mediaeval parish church which was incorporated into the cathedral building.

⁸⁵¹ *Heritage and Renewal*

⁸⁵² Lindley, ‘Of Cities, Churches, Choirs and Cathedrals’.

⁸⁵³ Lindley, ‘Of Cities, Churches, Choirs and Cathedrals’, p. 267.

will be on the health and viability of these foundations. Therefore, the information tabulated in the following pages needs to be seen as summarising the situation as it was prior to the onset of this significant event, and providing a snapshot of the picture as it applied at the time of (and in the period leading up to) the primary research that forms the second part of this study. In ecclesiastical terms, the total survey population encompasses at least 350 individuals – equivalent to the stipendiary clergy of a couple of dioceses

TABLE 1: Summary of provision for music in cathedrals and collegiate foundations in 2019 (prior to COVID-19 epidemic)

| Type | Cathedral | Choristers | | Adult singers | | | | Organists | | Clergy | | Present liturgical routine |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------|
| | | Boys | Girls | Lay clerks/vicars | Choral scholars | Mixed voice choir | Voluntary choir(s) | Director of Music/Asst DoM | Organ scholars | Res. | Minor | |
| Cathedrals of the Old Foundation | Chichester | 14(4) | - | 6 | | | | 1+1 | 1 | 4 | | Mo,Tu,We-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Exeter | 19 | 19 | 12 | | - | Yes | 1+1 | | 4+1 | 3 | Mo-Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| | Hereford | 18 | - | Yes | 3 | | Yes | 1+1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | Mo,Tu,Th-Sa: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | Lichfield | 18(2) | 16(2) | 9 | (3) | | Youth Chamber Chorus | 1+1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | Tu-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Lincoln | 19 | 19 | 6 | 5 | | Consort | 1+3 | | 4 | 1 | Mo,Tu,Th-Sa: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | London – St Pauls | 30(8) | - | 18 | - | Yes | Chorus | 1+3 | 1 | 5 | 4 | Tu-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Salisbury | 16 | 16 | 6 | 0 | - | Yes | 1+1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | Mo-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Wells | 18 | 18 | 9 | 3 | - | 32 | | 2 | 3+2 | | Mo-Sa: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | York | Yes | Yes | 7 | 5 | | | 1+1 | | 4 | | Tu-Sa: E Su: SE, M, E |
| Cathedrals of the New Foundation | Bristol | 14 | 14 | 6 | 4 | | Consort | 1+1 | 1 | 4+1 | 1 | Mo-We, Fr, Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| | Canterbury | 25 | 24 | 12 | | | | 1+2 | | 4+1 | 1 | Mo-Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| | Carlisle | 14 | 10 | 6 | ? | - | 28 | 1+1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | Mo-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Chester | 12 | 12 | 6 | | | 25 | 1+1 | | 3 | | Mo,Tu,Th,Sa: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | Durham | 24 | 24 | 6 | 6 | | 24 | 1+1 | 1 | | | Tu-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Ely | Yes | Yes | 6 | - | - | Yes | 1+5 | | 4 | | Mo-Sa: E Su: SE, E |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-----|---|-------------------------|-----|---|-----|-------|--------------------------------------|
| | Gloucester | Yes | Yes | 9 | 3 | | Youth Chamber | 1+1 | 1 | 3+3 | 0 | Mo-Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| | Peterborough | 25 | 25 | 6+3 | 3 | | | 1+1 | 1 | 3+2 | 1 | Mo-Fr: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | London – Westminster Abbey | 30 | - | 12 | - | - | - | 1+2 | 1 | 5 | 3+PVs | Mo,Tu,We-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Norwich | 20 | 24 | 6 | 6 | - | 50 | 1+1 | 1 | 4+2 | | Mo-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Rochester | 20 | 20 | 3 | 3 | | Yes | 1+1 | | 3+2 | | Mo,Tu,Th,Fr: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Winchester | 22 | 20 | 12 | | - | 25-30 | 1+2 | | 2+1 | 2 | Mo-Sa: E Su: M, SE, E |
| | Worcester | Yes | Yes | 6+3 | 3 | - | Voluntary (B&M) Chamber | 1+2 | 1 | 4 | 0 | Mo, We-Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| Modern foundations | Guildford | Yes | Yes | 6 | ? | | Yes | 1+1 | 1 | | | Mo,Tu,Th,Fr: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | Liverpool | Yes | Yes | 12 | | | Youth | 1+4 | | 4 | | Mo,Tu,We-Sa: E Su: SE, E |
| | Truro | 18 | 18 | 6 | 6 | - | 35 | 1+1 | | 3+2 | 0 | Mo-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| Parish-church cathedrals | Birmingham | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | - | Singers | 1+1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | Tu, We, F: E Su: SE, E |
| | Blackburn | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | - | Young Peoples Consort | 1+1 | 1 | 3+2 | 0 | Tu, (We,) Th, Fr: E Su: PE, CE, E |
| | Bradford | 10 | 12 | Yes | Yes | | | 1+1 | | 3 | | Mo,Tu,Th: E Su: SE, E |
| | Chelmsford | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | Yes | 1+1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | Mo,Tu,Th,Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Coventry | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | Chamber | | | 3 | 0 | We, Th: E Su: SE, E |
| | Derby | 20 | 20 | 12 | Yes | | | 1+1 | | 3 | | Mo,Tu,Th: E Su: SE, E |
| | London – Southwark | Yes | 21(6) | 6 | 6 | | | 1+2 | 1 | 3+3 | 2 | Mo,Tu,Th,Fr: E Su: SE, E |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|---------|-----------|--------|---|-------------------------|-----|---|-----|---|---|
| | Manchester | 20 | | 9 | | | Voluntary | 1+2 | | 3+1 | 2 | Mo-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Newcastle | 24 | 24 | 6 | Yes | | Schola Cantorum | 1+1 | | 1+3 | 1 | Mo-Th: E Su: SE, E |
| | Portsmouth | 24 | (Youth) | 7 | 7 | - | Chamber and Youth | 1+1 | | 3+2 | 1 | Mo,Tu,Th,Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | Ripon | Yes | Yes | 6 | | | | 1+1 | 1 | | | Tu-Fr: E Su: SE, E |
| | St Albans | 24 | 26 | 12 | - | - | Parish | 1+1 | 1 | 3+2 | 2 | Tu-Sa: E Su: Parish, SE, E |
| | St Edmundsbury | Yes | (Youth) | Volunteer | - | - | Ladies Youth | | | | | Tu-Fr: E Su: SE, M, E |
| | Southwell | 12 | 10 | 6+ | | | 30 | 1+1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | Mo,Tu,Th-Sa: E Su: FE, SE, E |
| | Wakefield | Yes | Yes | Yes | | | | 1+1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | Tu-Th: E Su: PE, SE, E |
| Academic foundations | Cambridge – King’s | 16 | - | - | 14 | - | King’s Voices | 1+1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | Mo, Tu, We: E Th: CE Fr, Sa: E Su: CE, E |
| | Cambridge- St John’s | Yes | - | 15 | - | - | St John’s Voices | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | Mo-Sa: E Su: CE, E |
| | Cambridge – Trinity | - | - | - | (SATB) | - | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | Tu, Th, Su: E |
| | Oxford – Christ Church | 16 | - | 6 | 6 | | Singers College | 1+1 | 1 | 3+5 | 2 | Mo, Tu, We: E Th: CE Fr, Sa: E Su: M, CE, E |
| | Oxford – New | 16 | - | 6 | 6 | - | - | 1+1 | 1 | | | Mo, Tu: E Th: CE Fr, Sa, Su: E |
| | Oxford – Magdalen | 14(2) | - | - | 12 | | Consort | 1+1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | Tu-Sa: E Su: CE, E |

N.B. Manchester, Ripon and Southwell differed from the other parish-church cathedrals, in that they were previously parish churches served by a formally constituted collegiate foundation – as was Southwark for a limited period prior to its becoming a cathedral.

APPENDIX B: Interview materials

Consent Form

Project title: Experiences of lay singers in cathedrals

Researcher(s): Nick Brown

Department: Music

Contact details: nicholas.j.brown@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Bennett Zon

Supervisor contact details: bennett.zon@durham.ac.uk

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the project, what is involved and that you are happy to take part. Please initial each box to indicate your agreement:

| | |
|--|--|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [dd/mm/yy] and the privacy notice for the above project. | |
| I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. | |
| I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project. | |
| I understand that the nature of the research involves discussion of matters involving religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature. | |
| I consent to being audio recorded, and understand how recordings will be used in research outputs. | |
| I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs. (All quotations will be anonymised) | |
| I agree to take part in the above project. | |
| I confirm that I am 18 years old or older. | |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. | |

| |
|---|
| Participant's Signature _____ Date _____ (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) _____ |
| Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____ (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) _____ |

Participant Information Sheet

Project title: Experiences of lay singers in cathedrals

Researcher: Nick Brown

Department: Music

Contact details: nicholas.j.brown@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Professor Bennett Zon

Supervisor contact details: bennett.zon@durham.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a study that I am conducting as part of a PhD research project at Durham University.

This study has received ethical approval from the Music Department Ethics Committee of Durham University. The researcher has first degrees in music and theology and works as a parish priest in the Diocese of Lincoln, having previously been involved in church music.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in our 'Participants Charter':

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter/>

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to understand better the nature of musical performance in Anglican choral foundations, with an especial focus on any spiritual understanding of the participants and the theological potential for them or the wider Church. This study has been part-funded by the St Luke's College Foundation and St Mathias Trust. It is anticipated that the primary research will take place during the 2019/20 academic year, with the aim of producing the completed project by the end of the 2021/22 academic year.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you are a singer within the choir of a choral foundation. Three foundations have been selected for this study, reflecting the different backgrounds of the historic cathedrals, parish church cathedrals and academic choral foundations.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to agree to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. Your rights in relation to withdrawing any data that is identifiable to you are explained in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. There will be some prompts as to areas for us to discuss, including:

- your musical background and education;
- your experience of singing in the liturgy;
- to what extent you feel your singing is a spiritual activity;
- what singing may say about God; and
- how you think your work singing in the choir relates to the life of the Church.

However, if there are any areas that you would prefer not to discuss in the course of the interview your wishes will be respected and that element omitted from the discussion.

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher, which it is anticipated will last for between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews will be semi-structured, and if there are any areas you do not wish to discuss, or which give rise to particular concerns, you do not have to answer. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed location (away from the institution of which you are a part of, if you so request), and there will be no reimbursement of expenses involved.

Are there any potential risks involved?

There are no particular risks anticipated by your involvement in this research activity, but it will naturally involve discussion of religious practice and belief (which are protected characteristics). It is hoped that your participation will enable the research to identify existing experiences, establishing how the experience of those involved in the musical lives of Anglican choral foundations can relate better to the theological work of the church.

Will my data be kept confidential?

Unless otherwise agreed, all information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. If the data is published it will be entirely anonymous and will not be identifiable as yours. Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What if I change my mind?

If you decide not to participate before the completion of the interview then all data will be destroyed. If you decide not to participate once the interview has been completed then any identifiable data will be destroyed.

Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to the results of the project?

As well as forming part of the dissertation submitted as part of the requirements for the award of PhD degree, the results of the project may be shared in seminars, conferences and, potentially, in publications intended to promote a creative dialogue between musicians and those involved in theological study.

All research data and records needed to validate the research findings will be retained until the end of the project, and then destroyed.

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via the University's [Complaints Process](#).

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

PART 1 – GENERIC PRIVACY NOTICE

Durham University has a responsibility under data protection legislation to provide individuals with information about how we process their personal data. We do this in a number of ways, one of which is the publication of privacy notices. Organisations variously call them a privacy statement, a fair processing notice or a privacy policy.

To ensure that we process your personal data fairly and lawfully we are required to inform you:

- Why we collect your data
- How it will be used
- Who it will be shared with

We will also explain what rights you have to control how we use your information and how to inform us about your wishes. Durham University will make the Privacy Notice available via the website and at the point we request personal data.

Our privacy notices comprise two parts – a generic part (ie common to all of our privacy notices) and a part tailored to the specific processing activity being undertaken.

Data Controller

The Data Controller is Durham University. If you would like more information about how the University uses your personal data, please see the University's [Information Governance webpages](#) or contact Information Governance Unit:

Telephone: (0191 33) 46246 or 46103

E-mail: information.governance@durham.ac.uk

Information Governance Unit also coordinate response to individuals asserting their rights under the legislation. Please contact the Unit in the first instance.

Data Protection Officer

The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising the University on compliance with Data Protection legislation and monitoring its performance against it. If you have any concerns regarding the way in which the University is processing your personal data, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Jennifer Sewel

University Secretary

Telephone: (0191 33) 46144

E-mail: university.secretary@durham.ac.uk

Your rights in relation to your personal data

Privacy notices and/or consent

You have the right to be provided with information about how and why we process your personal data. Where you have the choice to determine how your personal data will be used, we will ask you for consent. Where you do not have a choice (for example, where we have a legal obligation to process the personal data), we will provide you with a privacy notice. A privacy notice is a verbal or written statement that explains how we use personal data.

Whenever you give your consent for the processing of your personal data, you receive the right to withdraw that consent at any time. Where withdrawal of consent will have an impact on the services we are able to provide, this will be explained to you, so that you can determine whether it is the right decision for you.

Accessing your personal data

You have the right to be told whether we are processing your personal data and, if so, to be given a copy of it. This is known as the right of subject access. You can find out more about this right on the University's [Subject Access Requests webpage](#).

Right to rectification

If you believe that personal data we hold about you is inaccurate, please contact us and we will investigate. You can also request that we complete any incomplete data.

Once we have determined what we are going to do, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to erasure

You can ask us to erase your personal data in any of the following circumstances:

- We no longer need the personal data for the purpose it was originally collected
- You withdraw your consent and there is no other legal basis for the processing
- You object to the processing and there are no overriding legitimate grounds for the processing
- The personal data have been unlawfully processed
- The personal data have to be erased for compliance with a legal obligation
- The personal data have been collected in relation to the offer of information society services (information society services are online services such as banking or social media sites).

Once we have determined whether we will erase the personal data, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to restriction of processing

You can ask us to restrict the processing of your personal data in the following circumstances:

- You believe that the data is inaccurate and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether it is indeed inaccurate
- The processing is unlawful and you want us to restrict processing rather than erase it

- We no longer need the data for the purpose we originally collected it but you need it in order to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim and
- You have objected to the processing and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether our legitimate interests in processing the data override your objection.

Once we have determined how we propose to restrict processing of the data, we will contact you to discuss and, where possible, agree this with you.

Retention

The University keeps personal data for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was originally collected. Most of these time periods are set out in the University Records Retention Schedule.

Making a complaint

If you are unsatisfied with the way in which we process your personal data, we ask that you let us know so that we can try and put things right. If we are not able to resolve issues to your satisfaction, you can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: Information Commissioner's Office

PART 2 – TAILORED PRIVACY NOTICE

This section of the Privacy Notice provides you with the privacy information that you need to know before you provide personal data to the University for the particular purpose(s) stated below.

Project Title: Experiences of lay singers in cathedrals

Type(s) of personal data collected and held by the researcher and method of collection:

Personal data will be collected through an interview which will be recorded. This will include a discussion of your experience of singing in liturgical settings, and the ways that you view these performances and the way that you see them relating to the received theology and doctrine of the Church. The nature of the topics discussed means that it is likely that the data will include material that could be categorised as religious in nature.

In addition to the data collected by recorded means, a written record may be made of your name and contact details. Unless you give specific consent, this information will be used solely for the purposes of identifying the recording and keeping in touch with you about the progress of the research.

Lawful Basis

Collection and use of personal data is carried out under the University's public task, which includes teaching, learning and research.

- *For further information see*
<https://durham.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/governance/dp/legalbasis/>

How personal data is stored:

All personal data will be held securely and strictly confidential to the research team.

You will be allocated an anonymous alphanumeric code for data collection. Information that identifies you will be kept separate from the anonymised data.

All personal data in electronic form will be stored on a password protected computer, and any hardcopies will be kept in locked storage. Data will not be available to anyone outside the research team.

The conversation will be recorded and stored on an encrypted device until it has been transcribed by the researcher. No-one else will have access to the recording, and it will be erased once the transcript has been completed.

How personal data is processed:

The data collected will be used to establish themes relating to people's experience of singing in liturgical settings, and their understanding of the theological potential that these performances may have.

The recorded conversation will be transcribed by the researcher, and personal information will be coded and anonymised. The original recording will then be erased.

Transcriptions of the recorded interviews will be used as the source for analysis. After six months the data will be completely anonymised and the original records, including any information which can identify you personally, will be destroyed. The only exception to this will be retention of your contact details so that you can be updated of progress with the project and its results. These details will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

Withdrawal of data

If you decide to withdraw from the project before the end of the interview then all data relating to you will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw at this point then you simply need to say so to the researcher, and you will not be asked to give a reason for your withdrawal.

If you decide to withdraw your consent after the interview has been completed then any data that remains identifiable will be destroyed. At this point, data that has already been anonymised will not be identifiable. You can request withdrawal of your data until it has been fully anonymised. Once data has been anonymised it will not be possible to identify you from any of the data we hold.

Who the researcher shares personal data with:

If the recorded data is transferred to a third party system for processing it will be anonymised before being transferred.

Personal data will only be used in publications or other project outputs if you have given consent for this.

How long personal data is held by the researcher:

We will hold personal data for six months, after which it will be anonymised. The exceptions to this are:

- The consent form, which will be retained until the completion of the project; and
- Your contact details, which will be retained until the completion of the project.

How to object to the processing of your personal data for this project:

If you have any concerns regarding the processing of your personal data, or you wish to withdraw your data from the project, contact Nick Brown (nicholas.j.brown@durham.ac.uk).

Further information:

Nick Brown (nicholas.j.brown@durham.ac.uk)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview objectives

The interviews aim to explore the experiences of those singing in the liturgy within Anglican choral foundations and relate this to the wider theological work of the church.

Form of interview

Semi-structured

Time available

30-45 minutes

Interview record

Recorded (audio only)

Content of areas to be discussed

- the musical background and education of participants;
- the experience of singing in the liturgy of participants;
- to what extent participants feel singing is a spiritual activity;
- what singing may say about God; and
- how singing in by choirs within the liturgy relates to the life of the Church.

Interview questions with possible supplementaries

1. Could you outline your musical background and education?
Cover areas such as:
Musical training
General educational background
Any specific training in theology
What brought you to sing in the choir at X?
2. Could you describe the experience of singing in the liturgy?
What makes singing meaningful for you?
How might you describe the dynamic involved in 'big events' compared with 'weekday evensong in winter'?
3. To what extent do you feel your singing is a spiritual activity?
(N.B.: Possible explanation of 'spiritual' as 'inner feeling within oneself')
4. Does singing say anything about God?
Is singing in any way transcendent? (i.e. takes us beyond ourselves)

If singing is transcendent, is this connected with any sense of the divine? (i.e. an objective reality beyond our ordinary sense perception)
Are the texts of music important? (What is the relationship between music and text?)
Is the context in which singing takes place significant? Is there a difference between the concert hall and the church?
How do you understand the church to relate music (and particularly singing) to Christian faith?
How might the experience of singing relate to the doctrines of God, as articulated by tradition in the Church?
5. How do you think your work singing in the choir relates to the life of the Church?
Why does the church support music within the liturgy?
What function or purpose does music have in the life of the church?

Do you see your musical performances as a part of the life of the church, or just a musical performance in a church context?

Debriefing Sheet

Project title: Experiences of lay singers in cathedrals

Thank you for taking part in this study. What I want to find out from this research is how those involved in singing within choral foundations within the Church of England understand their performances in terms of spirituality, and the theological potential that these performances may have. In particular, I am interested in the way that musical performances may contribute to personal spirituality and theological understanding, and how the potential that this may have is put to good use or is lost in the wider theological venture of the Church.

In writing up the study all data will be anonymized (unless you consent otherwise), and your individual data will not be available to anyone outside research team. You can request withdrawal of your data until it has been fully anonymised. Once this has happened it will not be possible to identify you from any of the data we hold. Details of how to do this are contained in the privacy notice.

If you would like further information about the study or would like to know about what my findings are when all the data have been collected and analysed then please contact me on nicholas.j.brown@durham.ac.uk. I cannot however provide you with your individual results.

If taking part in this study has raised any specific concerns about your spirituality or theological convictions then I would suggest you find support from those clergy attached to your institution.

Durham University Data Management Plan

Summary Information

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Lead Academic at Durham: | Nick Brown (Bennett Zon) |
| Project Title: | Experiences of lay singers in cathedrals |
| Start and End Dates: | January 2020 to July 2022 |
| Funder: | Self-funded (with supporting grants from the St Luke's Foundation, St Matthias Trust and Diocese of Lincoln) |
| Date Plan Completed: | 27 th November 2019 |
| Version: | 2 |

You should use your funder's DMP template if one is provided.

You should keep a copy of your plan with your project documentation and be prepared to provide it to facilitate ethical review and /or to Research and Innovation Services if requested.

The appropriate management of research data will:

- *ensure that sensitive data (including personal data) is handled appropriately*
- *support reproducibility and validation of research results*
- *ensure compliance with [University](#), legal and regulatory requirements.*

Addressing the questions below will help you to plan your project, identify whether it touches on any high risk areas. For advice and guidance, see our [data management webpages](#) or contact research.data@durham.ac.uk.

| Details | Guidance Notes |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Describe the data to be generated by the project</p> <p><i>Audio recordings of interviews, to be made using a hand-held recording device and stored on pass-word protected storage devices (backed up after interview) and stored securely.</i></p> <p><i>Memo notes from interviews, to be stored securely.</i></p> <p><i>Transcriptions of interviews, to be anonymised and stored securely.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What types of data will you be working with? e.g. survey data, video recordings, microscopic images, atmospheric measurements etc.</i> • <i>What methods/standards will be used for data creation?</i> • <i>If pre-existing datasets are being used, where will these come from? How will they be used?</i> • <i>What formats and software will you use?</i> • <i>Will any data be physical (non-digital)?</i> |
| <p>2. How much data do you expect to produce?</p> <p><i>12-15 sets of interviews, stored digitally.</i></p> <p><i>12-15 transcriptions, stored securely.</i></p> | <p><i>If you expect to produce more than 2TB of data, you should speak to your faculty/department CIS contact to discuss your storage requirements.</i></p> |
| <p>3. Will the data be governed by any ethical or legal considerations? If yes, please describe</p> <p><i>All data will be anonymised, with alphanumeric codes to identify individual recordings/transcripts. The key will be held separately and securely and only be</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will your data include e.g. personal identifiable data, security-sensitive data, commercially sensitive data, patentable data?</i> • <i>Are there security requirements for data storage?</i> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>used to identify data if and individual's data needs identifying to comply with a request to destroy an individual's data in line with the requirements outlined in the Privacy Notice.</i></p> <p><i>The consent form will include permission for the use of quotations within the final report generated by the project.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who owns the data? Does permission need to be obtained for further re-use or sharing (including with project partners)?</i> • <i>What is covered by consent obtained for use of personal data?</i> • <i>Are there any other restrictions on how the data may be used?</i> |
| <p>4. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the project team in relation to data management.</p> <p><i>Nick Brown is the key person with overall responsibility. Anonymised transcriptions may be shared with supervisors – Professors Bennett Zon and Peter Ward. After any session where data has been shared it will be returned to secure storage under the supervision of Nick Brown.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You should clearly identify the individual with overall responsibility.</i> • <i>Are particular responsibilities delegated within your team?</i> • <i>If your project is collaborative, what data is handled by Durham and what by other partners? Who is responsible for what?</i> |
| <p>5. How will active data will be organised and stored during the life of the project?</p> <p><i>Each recording will be given an alpha-numeric code and the original (and backup) recordings will be stored securely. The key linking the alpha-numeric code to the location and individual being recorded will be stored securely, and separately from the recordings.</i></p> <p><i>Transcriptions will be anonymised and secured securely.</i></p> <p><i>Paper data will be stored in locked cabinets.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What standards will be used for naming / organising data?</i> • <i>What metadata will be recorded and where will this be located?</i> • <i>At what point will any personal data be anonymised?</i> • <i>Where will data be stored? What storage media will be used?</i> • <i>How often will it be backed up? Where will back up copies be kept? Who is responsible for backups?</i> • <i>Please note how any ethical, legal or regulatory requirements will be met.</i> |
| <p>6. How will you access and share data during the project?</p> <p><i>Access to data will always be under the control of Nick Brown and will only be shared with the supervisory team (and in anonymised form).</i></p> <p><i>Most work will be done off-site, so storage will be on portable devices that will be kept in secure storage when not in use.</i></p> <p><i>Data will not be transferred or transported outside the UK.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who will have access to the data?</i> • <i>When will it be shared with any partners outside the University?</i> • <i>How will you exchange data with your collaborators?</i> • <i>If you need to transport data or access it off-site, how will this be done?</i> • <i>Will data be transferred or transported outside the UK?</i> |
| <p>7. What are the arrangements for long term storage and preservation of data?</p> <p><i>All data not required for validation will be discarded at the conclusion of the project.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What data will be archived (and what discarded)?</i> • <i>Where will the data be archived?</i> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Once validation of the project has been completed all data will be destroyed.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For how long will it be kept?</i> • <i>Who needs to have access (direct and indirect) to it?</i> • <i>Who will be responsible for it?</i> • <i>How will you ensure the data remains readable?</i> • <i>If there are any ethical, legal or regulatory requirements please note how these will be met.</i> |
| <p>8. If you plan to make the final dataset available, what data sharing arrangements will be in place? <i>Data will not be made available, other than in the final report of the project.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In what format and at what level of granularity will the data be shared?</i> • <i>Under what licence will it be made available?</i> • <i>How will any ethical, legal or regulatory requirements be addressed?</i> |

APPENDIX C: Sampling

The table below summarises the contextual experience represented at each of the two stages of the study:

| Type of institution | | Participants at each stage of the study (Note: only the number of institutions are shown for parish churches and non-Anglican contexts in order to maintain anonymity of participants) | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | | Stage 1 | Stage 2 |
| Institutions directly relevant to this study | Historic cathedral of the Old Foundation (9) | Exeter Lincoln London (St Paul's) Salisbury Wells | Lincoln London (St Paul's) Salisbury Wells |
| | Historic cathedral of the New Foundation (12) | Carlisle Chester Durham Gloucester Norwich Peterborough | Carlisle Chester Durham Gloucester |
| | 'Modern' or Parish-church cathedral (18) | Chelmsford Manchester Ripon Southwell Truro Wakefield | Chelmsford Wakefield |
| | Academic choral foundation (6) | St John's College, Cambridge Magdalen College, Oxford New College, Oxford | St John's College, Cambridge Magdalen College, Oxford |
| | Other choral foundation – England (2) | Westminster Abbey St George's, Windsor | Westminster Abbey |
| Other institutions of proximate interest | Other academic chapel (University) – England | Exeter University University College, Durham | 0 |
| | Other academic chapel (School) – England | 12 | 3 |
| | Cathedral – Wales | 1 | 0 |
| | Parish Church – England | 16 | 3 |
| | Parish Church – Wales | 0 | 0 |
| | Parish Church – Scotland | 2 | 1 |
| | RC cathedral – England | 1 | 1 |
| | RC cathedral – Wales | 1 | 1 |
| | RC cathedral – Scotland | 1 | 0 |
| | Other choral foundation – overseas | 2 | 2 |

APPENDIX D: Thematic analysis

Broad themes arising in the group conversations

The first stage of gathering data was a series of exploratory conversations with small groups of singers involved in cathedral music. These groups ranged in size from 3-6 and covered a total of 30 participants with experience of a wide range of choral foundations (including historic cathedrals, parish-church cathedrals and academic foundations). These discussions were unstructured and largely directed by the participants with little intervention from the researcher. Their value was in identifying a series of themes that would be explored in more detail in the semi-structured one-to-one interviews that provide the core data for this project. In total five overarching themes were recorded by the researcher in listening to these conversations, within which could be placed the more numerous first level themes that were identified in the later one-to-one interviews:

First level themes

- A: Texts – especially psalms
- B: Relationship of singing to personal faith (Positive, ambiguous, passive)
- C: Liturgy as event/attractive qualities of music
- D: Choral/solo singing
- E: Daily Routine
- F: Emotional/spiritual response to music within the liturgy
- G: Musicians enabling the worship/spirituality of others
- H: Size of setting/nature of event impact on nature of event (rel to C)
- I: Quality of performance
- J: Transcendence through music
- K: Music as offering
- L: Singing as gift from/to God
- M: Routine/spiritual discipline/Tradition (sterility, communal character)
- N: Reveals God in creation
- O: Beauty in music/universal character of music
- P: Music as mnemonic aid to prayer
- Q: Relationship of clergy to musicians
- R: (Musical) value

Having identified the broad spiritual experiences of a range of participants of their experiences of singing within the liturgical context of English cathedrals, a smaller number of individual interviews explored these themes in more detail, and were in turn analysed in relation to the way in which both personal and corporate understandings of their experiences of singing within the liturgy might be better understood by reflection on both the institutional context of their musical performance and its historically contingent nature – factors that will be explored in more detail in Part III of this study.

Some of the first level themes occurred in all, or a significant majority, of conversations whilst others arose either in only a single conversation or were given less significance by the participants when they did arise in multiple conversations. As a result of this, 12 themes were identified as having broader significance – and grouped together within the five overarching topics, or higher level themes that arose at the group stage conversations. These five themes cover the following areas:

- (i) Singing of texts**
A: Texts – especially psalms and poetry
- (ii) Singing and personal faith**
B: Relationship of singing to personal faith (Positive, ambiguous, passive)
- (iii) Singing as a transcendent experience**
N: Reveals God in creation
J: Transcendence through music
O: Beauty in music/universal character of music
- (iv) Singing as event**
C: Liturgy as event/attractive qualities of music
H: Size of setting/nature of event impact on nature of event (rel to C)
D: Choral/solo singing
I: Quality of performance
- (v) Singing as offering**
G: Musicians enabling the worship/spirituality of others
K: Music as offering
L: Singing as gift from/to God

As has been noted above, this left a number of themes that were covered but, whilst having potential importance in understanding musical experience in the liturgy, did not seem to have wider significance across the range of conversations. However, as these topics may well have a contribution to make in when drawing conclusions regarding the more common themes, they are noted as including:

- (i) E: Daily Routine**
- (ii) F: Emotional/spiritual response to music within the liturgy**
- (iii) M: Routine/spiritual discipline/Tradition (sterility, communal character)**
- (iv) P: Music as mnemonic aid to prayer**
- (v) Q: Relationship of clergy to musicians**
- (vi) R: (Musical) value**

Whilst each of these areas does not provide the same rich level of information to provide a discrete section, comments relating to some of these areas will be referred to in Part III when contextualising the substantive reflections and seeking to understand the ways in which context affects singers understanding of their experiences of singing within the liturgy.

