

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN: A STUDY OF THE HEALING PRAXIS OF BILL
JOHNSON.

By

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Abstract

This study explores the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as it is outworked in the context of Bethel Church, California. Engaging in practical theology, this study uses the pastoral research cycle to examine and analyse this healing praxis. Drawing on primary source material and empirical research findings, it identifies the central tenets of Johnson's healing praxis by teasing out the espoused and operant theology. The research findings are brought into dialogue with Randall Collins' interaction ritual chains theory, as well as with others who have developed Collins' theory.¹

This thesis critiques Johnson's theology and recommends that he engage more intentionally with academic theology particularly in relation to Christology, soteriology and eschatology. This thesis seeks to modify Johnson's Christological position through a dialogue with academic kenotic theology. It proposes that Johnson account for the elements of mystery, suffering and disappointment often neglected in his theology. Additionally, this study offers a means of conceptualizing the local and global significance of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church in relation to the healing praxis. It is the first academic study focusing on these subjects and as such provides insight into the local and global phenomenon stemming from Johnson and the Bethel Church community.

¹ Including Margaret Poloma, Joel Robbins, Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Mark and Sarah Lawrence. For who you are and for everything you do, thank you.

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The task of producing a thesis, as I have discovered, is no small achievement. It is to date the most challenging undertaking of my life. There are many people to whom I am overwhelmingly grateful and want to honour publicly for their encouragement, wisdom and love.

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 An introduction to Bill Johnson & Bethel Church, Redding	1
1.2 On earth as it is in heaven: The healing praxis of Bill Johnson	3
1.3 Overview of research	6
1.4 Original contribution to research area	9
1.5 Method	9
1.6 Chapter outline	10
2. Methodology	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Qualitative Research	15
2.3 Practical Theology	19
2.4 Case Study Design	27
2.5 Theory and Philosophical Assumptions	34
2.5.1 Ontology	34
2.5.2 Epistemology	34
2.5.2.1 Theories of truth	37
2.5.3 Axiology	38
2.5.4 Rhetoric	39
2.6 Qualitative Research Methods	40
2.7 Research Ethics	44
2.8 Focus of enquiry	46
2.9 Conclusion	47
3. The History of Bethel Church and its Pastor Bill Johnson	48
3.1 Introduction	48
3.2 The heritage of Bill Johnson	49
3.3 Bill Johnson's younger years	51
3.4 Before Bethel	55
3.5 The Toronto Blessing	61
3.6 Pastoring Bethel Church	66
3.7 The Assemblies of God	71
3.8 Present day	75
3.9 Conclusion	79
4. Healing Praxis: Theology	81
4.1 Introduction	81
4.2 On earth as it is in heaven	81
4.3 Christology	83
4.3.1 Discussion of Christology	87
4.4 Soteriology	90
4.4.1 Discussion of Soteriology	94

4.5 Eschatology	99
4.5.1 Discussion of Eschatology	101
4.6 Healing theology	104
4.6.1 Origin of sickness	104
4.6.2 It is always God's will to heal	106
4.6.3 God is always good	110
4.6.4 When healing is not experienced	111
4.6.5 Testimony	117
4.6.6 Wholeness	119
4.7 Conclusion	120
5. Healing Praxis: Practices	122
5.1 Introduction	122
5.2 Healing Rooms	124
5.3 Congregational ministry	133
5.4 Post service prayer	140
5.5 Inner healing and deliverance ministry	145
5.6 Conclusion	146
6. Social Science Analysis: Engaging with Interaction Ritual Chain (IR) theory	148
6.1 Introduction	148
6.1.1 Other applications of IR theory	151
6.2 Interaction Ritual Chain theory	152
6.2.1 IR theory introduction	152
6.2.2 Key contributors to IR theory	152
6.2.3 Randall Collins' IR theory	155
6.2.3.1 Ingredients and outcomes	155
6.2.3.2 Bodily presence	156
6.2.3.3 Symbols	157
6.2.3.4 Emotional energy	160
6.2.3.5 The market for emotional energy	162
6.2.3.6 Altruism	163
6.2.3.7 Summary	163
6.3 IR theory applied by Joel Robbins: Portable Practices	164
6.4 IR theory applied by Margaret Poloma et al: 'Godly Love'	168
6.4.1 'Godly Love' model applied by Candy Gunther Brown: Healing	173
6.5 IR theory applied by Wilkinson and Althouse: Soaking Prayer	178
6.6 IR theory applied to Bethel Church: Healing	181
6.6.1 Randall Collins' IR theory	182
6.6.1.1 Ingredients and outcomes	182
6.6.1.2 Bodily presence	184
6.6.1.3 Symbols	187
6.6.1.4 Emotional energy	189
6.6.1.5 The market for emotional energy	190

6.6.1.6 Altruism	191
6.6.2 Joel Robbins: Portable Practices	191
6.6.3 Margaret Poloma et al: ‘Godly Love’	193
6.6.3.1 Candy Gunther Brown: Healing	194
6.6.4 Wilkinson & Althouse: Soaking Prayer	195
6.7 Conclusion	196
7. Theological reflection/ construction	198
7.1 Introduction	198
7.2 Interaction Ritual Chain Theory	198
7.3 Strengths of IR Theory	200
7.3.1 The healing prayer model	204
7.3.2 The significance of Bill Johnson in the Bethel healing network	206
7.3.3 Bethel Church as a movement/ healing network	208
7.4 Weaknesses of IR theory	209
7.4.1 Christology	210
7.4.2 Soteriology	223
7.4.3 Eschatology	228
7.5 How does this case study modify IR theory?	237
7.6 Conclusion	240
8. Return to praxis	241
8.1 Introduction	241
8.2 Recommendation for renewed praxis: Theological engagement	241
8.3 Recommendation for renewed praxis: Adjustment in popular level discourse	246
8.3.1 Christology	246
8.3.2 Soteriology	249
8.3.3 Mystery	251
8.3.4 Eschatology	254
8.4 Recommendations for renewed praxis: Healing practices	256
8.5 Conclusion	262
9. Conclusion	263
9.1 Summary of research	263
9.2 Original contribution to research	265
9.3 Summary of conclusions	266
9.4 Evaluation	269
9.4.1 Strengths	269
9.4.2 Weaknesses	270
9.5 Recommendations for future research	271
Bibliography	273
Appendix 1: Application for Ethical Review	287
Appendix 2: Index of key terms/ concepts	301

1. Introduction

1.1 An introduction to Bill Johnson & Bethel Church, Redding

Bill Johnson is the senior pastor of Bethel Church, located in Redding, California. He and his wife Beni, have pastored this church since 1996. Johnson was originally an Assemblies of God (hereafter: AG) pastor and Bethel was an AG church founded in 1954. Bethel Church was previously led by his grandparents during the 1970s and 1980s and his parents were also pastors within the church prior to his appointment.¹ Before pastoring at Bethel Church, Johnson pastored at Mount Chapel in Weaverville, California for seventeen years.² During this season in Weaverville, Johnson began to attend conferences held by John Wimber, and was influenced by his teaching on healing.³ In 1995, Johnson visited Toronto after which he pertains to have been changed irrevocably through an ‘encounter’ with God.⁴ On his return from Toronto it is reported that there was a marked increase in the number of healing miracles amongst the church community in Weaverville.⁵ Johnson was asked to pastor Bethel Church in February 1996 and the current revival in Bethel is traced back to this shift in leadership.⁶ In 2006 Bethel Church voted to withdraw from the AG with the purpose of building a network to facilitate revival.⁷

Today, Bethel Church is a site of pilgrimage for Pentecostal and Charismatic visitors from all over the world.⁸ Bethel Church runs a school (Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry) that

¹ Johnson B., & Johnson E., *Momentum* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2011) p.118-9.

² Clark R., & Johnson B., *The Essential Guide to Healing* (Bloomington, Minnesota: Chosen Books, 2011) p.40.

³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.41.

⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.45-7.

⁵ Clark R. & Johnson B., *Healing Unplugged* (Minnesota: Chosen Books, 2012) p.59.

⁶ Johnson, B., *Dreaming with God* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006) p.72. The present day experience is understood in first order discourse as *revival* – see Appendix 2 for a definition of this term.

⁷ Bethel website www.ibethel.org/bethel-and-the-assemblies-of-god [accessed 01.02.2013].

⁸ Wilkinson, M., & Althouse, P., *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014) p.5

students can attend for up to three years; in 2012/13 there were over 1800 students.⁹ Since the publication of Johnson's first book *When Heaven Invades Earth* in 2003, there have been a plethora of other books published by both himself and other members of the Bethel Church leadership.¹⁰ Various ministries have emerged from within Bethel Church, notably Jesus Culture, the youth ministry that has evolved into a local church and global movement led by Banning Liebscher.¹¹ Ministries such as Healing Rooms which runs on site in Redding, as well as Bethel Music which records, produces and exports music worldwide have facilitated an expansion of the influence of the church.¹² As a local church, Bethel is led by Bill Johnson's eldest son Eric and his wife Candace.¹³ The movement emerging from Bethel Church is supported by Global Legacy which is the network through which churches worldwide can connect with Bethel Church.¹⁴ Johnson is also a part of the Revival Alliance, consisting of Rolland and Heidi Baker, Georgian and Winnie Banov, Che and Sue Ahn, Randy and DeAnn Clark and John and Carol Arnott who partner to pursue revival worldwide.¹⁵ The tension between local church and global movement is acknowledged on the Bethel Redding website:

We are a local church body who worship together at several weekend services across multiple campuses in Redding, California. However, we are not your typical church because of our global impact as a revival resource and equipping center. People from around the world attend Bethel conferences, trainings or our full time ministry school to experience more of God and the ways of His kingdom.¹⁶

⁹ BSSM website <http://bssm.net/about/mission> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹⁰ Johnson, B., *When Heaven Invades Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003).

¹¹ Jesus Culture website <http://new.jesusculture.com/music/> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹² Healing Rooms webpage <http://bethelredding.com/ministries/healing-rooms> [accessed 18.11.2014]; Bethel Music website <http://bethelmusic.com/> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹³ Bethel Church, Senior Leadership Team <http://www.ibethel.org/staff> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹⁴ Global Legacy website <http://globallegacy.com/> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹⁵ Revival Alliance website <http://revivalalliance.com/> [accessed 18.11.2014].

¹⁶ <http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 26.04.2015].

1.2 On earth as it is in heaven: The healing praxis of Bill Johnson

The title ‘On earth as it is in heaven’ makes reference to the primary biblical text that is used as the foundation on which Bill Johnson builds various theological statements and practices. Matthew 6:10 forms part of the Lord’s Prayer – ‘Your kingdom come, your will be on done; on earth as it is in heaven’.¹⁷ Johnson interprets this text as central to the commission of the church.¹⁸ Johnson’s kingdom theology is understood through the lens of the kingdom of heaven. As such Johnson understands that the church has a responsibility to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Heaven being established on earth is interpreted as the culture and order of heaven being established on the earth.¹⁹ What is available in heaven is the fullness of what was made available through Christ’s work on the cross, and can be appropriated into earthly reality.²⁰ According to Johnson, heaven is established on earth through miracles, signs and wonders as well as through cultural transformation. The ‘heaven on earth’ motif permeates the theology of personal salvation as well as cultural transformation of a region or nation.²¹ Healing is one of the primary means through which the culture of heaven can be established in the life of an individual. According to Johnson, the

¹⁷ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.58; Johnson, B., *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2005) p.32; Johnson, B., *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2007) p.51.

¹⁸ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.58, p.60, p.63; Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.38.

¹⁹ Vallotton, K., *How Heaven Invades Earth* (California: Regal, 2013); Johnson, B., *Release the Power of Jesus* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009) p.164 - ‘Multi-generational revival, along with societal transformation (the Kingdom coming ‘on earth as it is in heaven’) are at the top of God’s agenda. It must be what drives everything I do. Keeping the testimony releases the revelation of God’s nature into the earth, which in turn releases the power of God into the specific calamities of humanity. This is what helps to sustain revival by unlocking the heavenly resources of prophetic anointing and divine wisdom. It must become the intentional focus of the church worldwide’.

²⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.39 - ‘The Christian life has been harnessed to this goal, verbalised in the Lord’s Model Prayer: ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’. His dominion is realised when what happens here is as it is in heaven’; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.60 – ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ – ‘This is the primary focus for all prayer – if it exists in heaven, it is to be loosed on earth. It’s the praying Christian who looses heaven’s expression here. When the believer prays according to the revealed will of God, faith is specific and focused. Faith grabs hold of that reality. Enduring faith doesn’t let go. Such an invasion causes the circumstances here to line up with heaven’.

²¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.63 – ‘When we pray for His Kingdom to come, we are asking Him to superimpose the rules, order and benefits of His world over this one until this one looks like His. That’s what happens when the sick are healed or the demonized are set free. His world collides with the world of darkness, and His world always wins. Our battle is always a battle for dominion – a conflict of kingdoms’.

heavenly reality in relation to the physical body is full health and as such where the earthly reality is at odds, it must conform to the superior heavenly reality. The ‘heaven on earth’ motif extends beyond physical healing to include personal transformation, encompassing the conversion experience as well as inner healing and deliverance. In this case study, healing will be examined as an outworking of this ‘heaven on earth’ motif. The primary focus will be physical healing however the nuances of healing theology will also be given attention as ‘wholeness’ frames the healing theology and practices.

The title of this thesis refers to the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church. It is important to acknowledge that the Bethel Church community harbours a diversity of theologies in relation to healing. This diversity exists on two levels: each member of the community, and indeed the leadership has been shaped by their previous church experiences and theologies; and the Bethel Church leadership prioritise relationship with one another over agreement on doctrinal positions.²² In relation to the first dimension of diversity, it is important to recognise that everyone is impacted by their history, and this is particularly true in relation to experiences of church and theological teaching. Each leader is shaped by the theological beliefs and practices of these previous church experiences which form a lens through which the Bethel Church ‘core values’ are understood.²³ This second dimension of diversity identifies one of the ‘core values’ of the community that elevates

²² Silk, D., *Culture of Honor* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009) p.160 – ‘Honor is one of the most vital core values for creating a safe place where people can be free. Honor protects the value that people have for those who are different than they are. This core value is central in an apostolic culture because... the fivefold pattern of ministry is built around understanding, valuing and making room for the different graces that rest upon and flow through different people. Free people cannot live together without honor, and conversely, honor can only be used successfully amongst powerful people who have true sense of their personal responsibility in preserving the freedom around them’; Silk, *Culture of Honor*, p.212-3 – ‘The culture of honor is not about giving the church’s leaders more control. I hope I have made it clear that it is actually about getting rid of control and cultivating self-control and freedom. The Church is to lead in bringing more freedom to the earth. Heaven is begging to invade the prison so many people live in, whether it is depression, pain, disease or fear. Our role is to eliminate those things in our lives, homes, and church communities so we can lead others to the peace, joy, freedom and love we’ve found for ourselves’.

²³ <http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 26.04.2015] – ‘We have a passion for people, our city and our world. Our culture is characterized by worship, the presence of God, family, revival, miracles and healings, and honor. These core values have been shaped by our rich history and leadership of multiple generations’.

relationship between members of the church and leadership over the need to agree on doctrinal statements. Although these ‘core values’ are arguably equivalent to doctrinal statements, they tend to take the form of loose ideas and are not codified.²⁴ The ‘core value’ that places relationship as superior to agreement facilitates the coexistence of different nuances of beliefs on the premise that these beliefs endorse the ‘core values’. In relation to healing, the identifiable ‘core value’ amongst the Bethel Church community outlines that God always wants to heal.²⁵ However this value has the potential to be expounded or applied differently. As such although there is a foundational emphasis on the importance of healing, there exists a variety of beliefs amongst the leadership team of Bethel Church in relation to healing. It is for this reason that this case study has a narrow remit of the healing theology and practices of Bill Johnson. The primary focus of this thesis is the espoused and operant theology of Bill Johnson in relation to healing. By virtue of the relationship between and influence that Johnson exerts over Bethel Church as the senior pastor it is important to consider Bethel Church as a context in which Johnson’s theology is outworked and practiced. There are two dialectics in motion: Bill Johnson as an individual and Bethel Church as the context in which his espoused theology is a shaping influence; and the relationship between his espoused theology and operant theology. Both of these dialectics will be unpacked further. For the sake of clarity it is important to outline that this thesis will hone in on the healing theology formulated by Bill Johnson and practiced by himself and the Bethel Church

²⁴ <http://www.ibethel.org/articles/2006/02/01/the-power-of-a-vision> [accessed 26.04.2015] ‘Therefore, the things we believe to be true determine the way in which we interpret life. These "things" are called "core values." Core values are the lens or eyes of our heart. It is important for us to realize the incongruence between what our core values presently are and what we really want them to be. Often, the things we say we believe and the things we actually believe are not the same. We must understand that it is not the truths that we believe in our head that are our core values, but rather the ones we believe in our heart. The things we perceive to be true determine the way we respond to the world around us and to God who lives within us’;

<http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 26.04.2015] - ‘We are about revival... We are a community of believers who are passionate about the things of God: Relationship with God, Freedom through Salvation, Supernatural Ministry, Impact through Love and Power, A Glorious Bride’.

²⁵ DeCenso Jr., F., *Amazed by the Power of God* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009) p.216 – ‘There is a deep personal need in the Body of Christ to see Jesus for who He is. Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. That doesn’t change because not everyone I pray for gets healed. He stilled every life-threatening storm that He encountered. And deliverance came to all who asked. This is Jesus. And this is the Father, exactly’.

community. Bethel Church will only be discussed in relation to how the theology and practices of Bill Johnson have informed the theology and practices of the community.

In addition, this thesis will be discussing the healing praxis, meaning that both the espoused theology or beliefs and practices or action are of significance. The term praxis denotes the connection and interplay between beliefs and action. It should be noted that the separation between beliefs and action is an artificial one enacted for the purpose of analysis.²⁶

1.3 Overview of research area

To date there has been no published research undertaken on Bill Johnson or Bethel Church. As such this thesis will draw on material from further afield that relates to Pentecostal/Charismatic studies in general, and healing in particular.²⁷

Poloma's *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* and *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* considers the dynamics of routinization and revitalization within the AG. Poloma's work offers a lens through which to view the history of Bethel Church including the decision to leave the AG organisation and establish an independent global apostolic network.²⁸ Furthermore, Martyn Percy's *Words, Wonder and Power* studies the teaching of John Wimber using primary source material to formulate a

²⁶ The term 'praxis' is discussed further on pages 25 & 32.

²⁷ Anderson, A., 'Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions', in Anderson, A., Bergunder, M., Droogers, A., & Van der Laan, C., ed., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (California: University of California Press, 2010) - 'The terms Pentecostal and Pentecostalism refer to a wide variety of movements scattered throughout the world that can be described as having 'family resemblance'. Wittgenstein argued that family resemblance does not mean that there is something that all have in common but that all have certain similarities and relations with each other... The term itself is one with shortcomings but despite its inadequacy refers to churches with a family resemblance that emphasize the working of the Holy Spirit'. Bethel Church can be identified as part of the Classical Pentecostal category by virtue of its historical membership of the AG, there are also relations with the Charismatic movement, as well as neo-Pentecostal/ neo-Charismatic churches. As such this thesis will utilise a broad and inclusive definition of 'Pentecostal' and 'Charismatic'.

²⁸ Poloma, M.M., *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Poloma, M.M., & Green, J.C., *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

cohesive theological framework of power. His work sheds light on the influence of John Wimber toward Bill Johnson by outlining Wimber's theology and practices.

On the subject of Christology, James D.G. Dunn, Ralph Del Colle and David Brown provide lenses through which to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of Johnson's position.²⁹ In addition, Kimberley Alexander's work elucidates the Pentecostal Finished Work position which has influenced Johnson's soteriology.³⁰ Alexander's work is important in helping to identify the difference between the Finished Work position and the Wesleyan Holiness notion of sanctification. In addition, Pinnock's *Flame of Love* is another useful text offering a holistic soteriology that strengthens Johnson's soteriological position.³¹ In terms of eschatology, both Althouse and Land offer lenses through which to reconcile the now and not yet dimensions of the kingdom.³² Daniel Castelo's work on patient hope in Pentecostal eschatology is an important text against which to consider Johnson's eschatology.³³

HH Knight's work outlines two different healing paradigms and thereby provides a continuum on which other models can be placed.³⁴ The poles of this continuum are marked either by God's faithfulness to fulfil His promise to heal, and God's freedom to choose how to respond to prayer for healing. In addition, Candy Gunther Brown's edited work *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, provides a collection of essays that discuss

²⁹ Dunn, J.D.G, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1989); Del Colle, R., 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', *JPT* 3 (1993) 92-112; Brown, D., *Divine Humanity* (London: SCM Press, 2011).

³⁰ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing, Models in Theology and Practice*.

³¹ Pinnock, C.H., *Flame of Love* (US: IVP Academic, 2006).

³² Althouse, P. 'Pentecostal Eschatology in Context', in Althouse, P. & Waddell, R., ed., *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2010); Althouse, P., *Spirit of the Last Days* (UK: T&T Clark International, 2003); Land, S.J., *Pentecostal Spirituality* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

³³ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', in Althouse P., & Waddell R., *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies* (Eugene: Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2010).

³⁴ Knight, HH. III, 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom: A Comparison of Contemporary Theologies of Healing', *JPT* 2 (1993) 65-89.

contemporary global healing practices.³⁵ Daniel E. Albrecht's *Rites in the Spirit* identifies the patterns of Pentecostal and Charismatic rituals particularly in relation to the order of a service.³⁶ Joel Robbins also emphasises the significance of Pentecostal rituals particularly in relation to the globalization of Pentecostalism.³⁷ The Flame of Love project led by Margaret Poloma has resulted in a number of publications including *Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church*, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* and *The Heart of Religion*.³⁸ These texts develop the study of 'Godly Love' which is an important concept in relation to healing. 'Godly Love' refers to the interaction between divine and human love and this project identifies the interaction ritual chain which occurs when divine love is received and acts as a stimulant for benevolent action. Candy Gunther Brown's *Testing Prayer* is an important text for developing the 'Godly Love' model and applying it to healing. Brown identifies the networks that can be formed through interaction ritual healing experiences.³⁹ Althouse and Wilkinson also identify the influence of soaking prayer on healing practices.⁴⁰

These texts are all significant to varying degrees due to their interaction with the substantive issues of this thesis. In the absence of research done on the particular case in question, these texts map out the research area and highlight the relevant points of query.

³⁵ Brown (ed.) *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*.

³⁶ Albrecht, D.E., *Rites in the Spirit* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

³⁷ Robbins, J., 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', in Lindhardt, M., *Practicing the Faith* (New York, US: Berghahn Books, 2011).

³⁸ Poloma, M. & Hood Jr, Ralph W., *Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Lee, M. T., Poloma, M. M., *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009); Poloma, M. M & Green, J. C., *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Lee, M. T., Poloma, M. M., and Post, S. G., *The Heart of Religion* (New York: OUP, 2013).

³⁹ Brown, *Testing Prayer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, England: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*.

1.4 Original contribution to research

Given the absence of study undertaken on either Bethel Church as a whole, or Bill Johnson as an individual it is evident that this project is pioneering research in this area. This thesis will identify the central tenets of the healing theology (espoused theology) and the common practices that outwork this theology (operant theology). Both elements of praxis will be explored and analysed. Social scientific theory will be used to illuminate the findings and the combination of exploration, analysis and reflection will be used to inform suggestions for renewed praxis. In essence, this thesis will provide an in depth study of the healing praxis, that is both the espoused and operant theology of Bill Johnson as practised in the context of Bethel Church. It will provide an original contribution to research on the premise that there has yet to be any other research done on this particular case or leading figure both in relation to healing and in general.

1.5 Method

The next chapter will thoroughly expound the methodology that has guided and shaped this research project, however at this stage it is useful to identify the task that will be undertaken. This project will employ a practical theological approach, engaging in some empirical work to the extent to which permission has been granted. The purpose of this research is to explore praxis, the beliefs and actions related to healing, rather than engaging in the exercise of proving or disproving healing experiences.

Utilising the pastoral cycle, this project will move through the stages of exploration, analysis, reflection/ construction and return to praxis. As such the initial chapters will use primary source material to explore the relationship between Bill Johnson and Bethel Church, as well as identifying the pillars of Johnson's theology and the practices that translate the beliefs into

action. Having undertaken the exploration of the primary source material, the analysis will draw social science theory into dialogue with the exploratory findings. The evaluation will consider the strengths and weaknesses of this theory in illuminating and explaining the findings. Finally the return to praxis stage will provide recommendations for change on the basis of conclusions drawn from the analysis and evaluation.

It should also be noted that this research project will be designed as a case study. As has already been outlined, the subject of this case study will be Bill Johnson, and Bethel Church to the extent to which they are influenced and shaped by Bill Johnson. It is important to acknowledge that Bethel Church has been heavily shaped and influenced by Johnson; however there are other significant leading figures that also carry a level of influence towards the community. In addition, there are a number of individuals who shape the espoused and operant healing theology of Bethel Church, including for example, Chris Gore who is the appointed Director of Healing Ministries. For the purpose of this thesis however the focus will be narrowed to Bill Johnson and how his espoused theology has shaped the operant theology of Bethel Church.

1.6 Chapter outline

Chapter 1: This introductory chapter forms the first chapter of this thesis and serves to outline the title of the thesis as well as provide an overview of the content, and a brief introduction to the task that will be undertaken through the course of this research project. This chapter introduces the ‘heaven on earth’ motif and considers the remit of the discussion on healing. In addition, a brief overview of the important texts in the field is provided.

Chapter 2: This chapter will outline in detail the methodology that will guide the development of this research project. The discussion on methodology will consider the implications of undertaking qualitative research, a practical theological approach, and case study design. In addition this chapter will consider the importance of research ethics. In particular, ethical clearance and obtaining access to the site of study will be discussed as well as the limitations created by the refusal to engage in interviews.

Chapter 3: Before identifying specific theological beliefs and practices, this chapter will provide an historical and contemporary backdrop for the thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a context for the rest of the thesis. This chapter will relay the narrative of Bill Johnson's personal history, as well as the history of Bethel Church, emphasising the convergence between these two histories. In addition this chapter will identify the contemporary significance of Bill Johnson in relation to the local church, that is Bethel Church in Redding, California as well as the significance of Bill Johnson in relation to the global network. This chapter will identify the synchronous links that exist between Johnson and other contemporary healing ministries.

Chapter 4: This chapter identifies the range of theological issues that shape Johnson's theology of healing. As such this chapter considers how Johnson's Christological, soteriological and eschatological positions contribute to and interact with his healing theology. In terms of Christology, this chapter considers how Johnson's kenotic Christology is used to endorse his functional goal of empowering redeemed humanity to participate in bringing heaven to earth. This chapter also considers Johnson's merging of Wesleyan perfection with the Pentecostal Finished Work position such that healing can be experienced as both a crisis moment as well as through process. Eschatology is discussed with reference

to Johnson's modification of the now and not yet paradigm to create a now and mystery paradigm. In terms of healing theology, this chapter considers the premise that God always wants to heal and how Johnson responds when healing does not happen in reality. Attention is also given to the significance of wholeness, inner healing and deliverance.

Chapter 5: Having identified and discussed the beliefs that shape action, this chapter identifies the practices that embody these beliefs. The observational fieldwork facilitated the identification of three key practices amongst the Bethel Church community. Healing as a value is outworked and practiced in the context of Healing Rooms, and in the context of a service either in the form of congregational ministry or post service prayer. These three practices are expounded in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 6: The previous three chapters (3, 4, and 5) are exploratory in nature, describing the history, as well as the beliefs and actions that form the praxis of the case. In Chapter 6, the cycle moves from exploration to analysis. At this stage social scientific theories are brought into dialogue with the exploratory findings. In this case study, Randall Collins' interaction ritual chain theory is introduced as a means of understanding the significance of healing experiences not only in relation to the individual but as a means of creating momentum that builds chains and networks facilitated by brokers of social capital such as Bill Johnson.⁴¹ Interaction ritual theory has been applied and developed by others including Margaret Poloma in the 'Godly Love' project, Joel Robbins and Michael Wilkinson et al.⁴² In this chapter, interaction ritual theory is discussed in its original form as formulated by Collins and

⁴¹ Collins, R., *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁴² Poloma, Lee & Post, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*; Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism'; Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*.

in its applied form by Poloma, Robbins and Wilkinson.⁴³ Interaction ritual theory, in both its original and applied forms are considered in dialogue with the exploratory findings and used to illuminate these findings.

Chapter 7: In this reflection/construction chapter, the strengths and weaknesses of interaction ritual chain theory are considered, in particular in relation to the case study. While the theory is helpful in providing a lens through which to understand the praxis as a whole, it does not interact meaningfully with some of theological issues. This chapter also considers how the exploratory findings and case study in question inform and modify the theory.

Chapter 8: Chapter 8 is comprised of an engagement with the conclusions of the previous chapters in order to produce concrete recommendations for renewed praxis. As such there is a return to praxis with the goal of allowing the analysis, reflection and construction considerations to inform and shape this praxis. Chapter 8 therefore facilitates a conversation pertaining to the importance of theological engagement as well as raising awareness of the potential dissonance between high profile brokers of social capital/ leaders of healing networks and the goal of empowering all of redeemed humanity to participate in healing prayer as a means of bringing heaven to earth.

Chapter 9: The concluding chapter reiterates the task that has been undertaken in the course of this research project, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project itself.

This chapter also considers recommendations for future research. Given that this is the first research project to consider the case study of Bill Johnson, and indeed Bethel Church the potential for future research is vast and the need for such research is great.

⁴³ Brown, *Testing Prayer* - Candy Gunther Brown applies the 'Godly Love' model to healing and in doing so engages with IR theory indirectly.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss methodological issues and outline the methodology that will be employed throughout this study. The intricacies of qualitative research are described by Creswell:

I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads of many colours, different textures, and various blends of material. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general frameworks hold qualitative research together. To describe these frameworks, we use terms – constructivists, interpretivists, feminists, methodologists, postmodern thinkers, positivists ‘with a heart’, naturalistic researchers. Broader yet are the traditions of inquiry that overlay the frameworks and the studies. We conduct all ethnography, we engage in developing a grounded theory, or we explore an unusual case.⁴⁴

In order to outline the methodology, I will attempt to separate the various threads of this qualitative research, including practical theology methodology, case study design and the theories and philosophical positions that underpin these approaches. In addition this chapter will cover the more practical elements of qualitative research methods and ethical considerations in relation to this research. The distinction between methodology and method is such that,

Methods are specific techniques that are used for data collection and analysis. They comprise a series of clearly defined, disciplined and systematic procedures that the researcher uses to accomplish a particular task. Interviews, sampling procedures, thematic development, coding and recognised techniques and approaches to the construction of the research question would be examples of qualitative research methods.

Methodology is connected to method, but in a particular way. The term ‘methodology’ has a number of different meanings. Formally it relates to the study of methods. More broadly, the term methodology has to do with an overall approach to a particular field. It implies a family of methods that have in common particular philosophical and epistemological assumptions.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Creswell, J.W., *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (California: SAGE, 1998) p.13.

⁴⁵ Swinton, J., & Mowat, H., *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006) p.74-5.

While methodology addresses the research process, the methods are the means by which the research process is outworked in practice.

The methodology process can be imagined as a sphere with concentric circles marking the internal boundaries of the sphere. The outer boundary is the practical theology methodology, the next boundary in is the case study method, and the core of the sphere is the focus of the enquiry. Philosophical assumptions, research methods and ethics fall between the boundaries of these concentric circles. The methodological process is comprised of all of these elements and will be discussed in turn. While on the surface this chapter will appear to be discretely organised with distinct sections addressing different elements of methodology, it should be noted that beneath the surface these areas connect, feed into and impact one another.

2.2 Qualitative research

The other elements of the methodology driving this study will find their place within the broadest framework of qualitative research. This section will address qualitative research in general, recognising that more specific elements of qualitative research will be unpacked in subsequent sections.

Swinton and Mowat suggest that:

Qualitative research involves the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches which enable the researcher to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the unique ways that individuals and communities inhabit it. It assumes that human beings are by definition ‘interpretive creatures’; that the ways in which we make sense of the world and our experiences within it involve a constant process of interpretation and meaning-seeking. Qualitative research assumes that the world is not simply ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. Rather, it recognises ‘the world’ as the locus of complex interpretive processes within which human beings struggle to make sense of their experiences including their experiences of God. Identifying and

developing understandings of these meanings is the primary task of qualitative research.⁴⁶

This definition emphasises that qualitative research addresses the way in which people live in community, understand their world and attribute meaning to their experience. Qualitative research is therefore a means of seeing and discovering.⁴⁷

According to Creswell,

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.⁴⁸

The research project in question is evidently exploring a social and human problem as it is addressing a specific individual and church environment. The research questions are a strong indicator of whether the study is better developed with a qualitative or quantitative methodology. When compared with quantitative research, a qualitative approach is more concerned with understanding the ‘why’ that lies behind the ‘what’. This study is not asking for statistics on the numbers of those healed versus the numbers of those not healed through the prayers of Bill Johnson or members of Bethel Church. Neither is it a more sophisticated study that wants to identify stages of healing. Although a qualitative study may begin with a ‘what’, the purpose of which is to describe what is happening within a particular context, the qualitative study does not end there. The ‘what’ leads into the ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions that utilise qualitative research methods.⁴⁹ The research questions in this study begin by asking ‘what are the central elements of the espoused and operant healing theology?’ These questions are designed to lead into questions concerning the response given when healing

⁴⁶ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.29-30.

⁴⁷ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.31.

⁴⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.13.

⁴⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.17.

does not happen. In addition, these questions are positioned to develop into a discussion concerning the significance of Bill Johnson's espoused and operant healing theology. Qualitative research is used where a topic needs to be explored but variables required for a quantitative study are not readily identifiable. Qualitative research enables theories to be developed that explain behaviour.⁵⁰ Although research has been done on Pentecostal and Charismatic healing theology and practices, there has yet to be any research done that concentrates specifically on Bill Johnson or Bethel Church and thus it is a topic that needs to be explored.⁵¹ Due to the absence of academic research on this subject, there is a lack of systematic formulation of Bill Johnson's theology. The espoused theology is articulated in published literature and audio recordings, and this is as close to a formulated theology as can be found. The lack of a systematic or formulated espoused theology means that variables would be difficult to identify, thereby making a qualitative approach appropriate. Furthermore, a qualitative study facilitates the obtaining of a detailed view of a topic; this is important where 'the wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem or the close-up view does not exist'.⁵² The nature of this research will allow for a detailed view of the healing theology of Bill Johnson in the context of Bethel Church.

Qualitative research values the studying of individuals in their natural settings which requires visiting the field of study, gaining access and gathering material. This approach involves the expenditure of time and resources to allow for 'extensive data collection in the field and detailed data analysis of 'text' information'.⁵³ Empirical research methods will be used for data collection in this study and will be discussed as part of the qualitative research methods.

⁵⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.17.

⁵¹ Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*.

⁵² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.17.

⁵³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.17-18.

Finally, qualitative research is marked by the distinct role of the researcher; in a qualitative approach ‘the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participants’ view rather than as an expert who passes judgements on participants’ is valuable and significant.⁵⁴

Creswell further identifies the distinctive features of qualitative research:

First, the researcher plans a general approach to study; a detailed plan would not suffice given emerging issues that develop in a field study. Second, some issues are problematic for the qualitative researcher – such as how much literature should be included in the front of the study, how much theory should guide the study, and whether one needs to verify or report on the accuracy of his or her account. How one addresses these issues shapes the form of the qualitative narrative differently from traditional social and human science research. Third, the actual format for a qualitative study varies considerably from the traditional format of research.⁵⁵

It is therefore apparent that a qualitative study begins with open, loose research questions that can be shaped and developed as the research progresses. As the research questions are sharpened, so the issues of literature and theory are also sharpened. Nevertheless, it is important to outline the assumptions that lie behind a qualitative study.

The philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology).⁵⁶

The process of research or the methodological assumption as defined by Creswell, emerges from the positions held in relation to the other assumptions. The methodological assumption is understood as ‘how one conceptualizes the entire research process’.⁵⁷ At this point it is important to acknowledge that while these theoretical assumptions underpin the methodological assumption, they will be given attention at a later point in this chapter in

⁵⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.18.

⁵⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.18.

⁵⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.16.

⁵⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.77.

order that they may be understood within the broader frameworks of a case study design, and practical theology approach.

2.3 Practical Theology

The outer boundary of the sphere is the practical theological methodology. According to Swinton and Mowat, practical theology sits somewhere between the gospel in scripture and human experience. Experience is valued highly because ‘practical theology acknowledges and seeks to explore the implications of the proposition that faith is a performative and embodied act; that the gospel is not simply something to be believed, but also to be lived’.⁵⁸ In this study, where both the espoused healing theology and operant healing theology are explored, experience is integral.

Swinton & Mowat provide a comprehensive definition that will require unpacking:

Practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.⁵⁹

By the term critical, it is meant that practical theology regards Christian practices as meaningful and therefore ‘honest critical reflection’ is required in order to remain faithful to the revelation in scripture. By theological, it is meant that ‘theology is the primary source of knowledge which guides and provides the hermeneutical framework within which practical theology carries out its task’.⁶⁰ This definition also refers to the world, recognising that the practices of the world are important in relation to the practices of the church. The purpose of practical theology is ‘to enable faithful living and authentic Christian practice’.⁶¹ More specifically,

⁵⁸ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.5.

⁵⁹ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.6.

⁶⁰ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.7.

⁶¹ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.9.

Practical Theology is thus seen to be a theoretical enquiry, in so far as it seeks to understand practice, to evaluate, to criticise; to look at the relationship between what is done and what is said or professed. At the same time it is also a deeply practical discipline, which does not only seek to understand the significance of practice for theology, but also recognises as a primary goal the guiding and transforming of future practices which will inform and shape the life of faith.⁶²

The distinction between theory and action has been disputed; Browning identifies that all practices have theory – ‘we may not notice the theories in our practices. We are so embedded in our practices, taking them so much for granted, and view them as so natural and self-evident that we never take time to abstract the theory from the practice and look at it as something in itself’.⁶³ Practices are connected to values, beliefs and theologies; practical theology illuminates the connection and attempts to align the theological understandings of the church and interaction with the world.⁶⁴ As such this thesis engages heavily with the notion of praxis, understood as value-laden action.

There is no such thing as a value-free form of practice. Whether acknowledged or otherwise, all of our practices are underpinned with very particular theories and theologies. In a very real sense belief is within the act itself.⁶⁵

Praxis is defined as value laden action and as such this study is built on the premise that both theory and practice are valuable and interconnected.

There are different models that utilise practical theology methodology; both move from experience or concrete reality to theological reflection. The pastoral cycle as articulated by Emmanuel Larty asks questions about the content of faith and practice recognising that tradition, context and experience are influential.

Therefore Larty starts with concrete experience (1); and moves to a situational analysis of experience by means of sociological and psychological analysis that is multi-perspectival (2). This is followed by theological analysis where faith

⁶² Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.11-12.

⁶³ Browning, D.S., *Practical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) p.6.

⁶⁴ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.20-21, 25.

⁶⁵ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.20.

perspectives are allowed to question the encounter (3). These faith perspectives are themselves the subject of questioning of the encounter in the situational analysis of theology (4). Finally, a response is offered by the theologian and the group in which this process is set.⁶⁶

According to Ballard and Pritchard, the pastoral cycle is ‘at the heart of any contemporary perspective on practical theology’.⁶⁷ Traditionally and historically, practical theology has been the application of theology to church practice – the practical application of theoretical theology.⁶⁸ This reflection model is predominantly used within a church sphere to respond to issues that arise within a community. It has been the work of church leaders to employ the pastoral cycle in their own church context to critically reflect on situations and ensure there is change and growth. As such the action-reflection process was therefore more focused on action or techniques rather than theological content or intent.⁶⁹ However this cycle can form the basis of academic enquiry. The pastoral cycle begins with *experience*, either a present situation or interruption that requires a response. The next step then is *exploration* or analysis of what is going on in that situation with information coming from those involved. Subsequently there is *reflection* that allows for possibilities for change while giving consideration to beliefs and moral values. Finally the cycle finishes with *action* that is derived from the information and initiatives.⁷⁰ This cycle describes an everyday process and yet it functions as a useful checklist; however it is a limited, simplified tool that does not work automatically and should be used ‘as a guide not a chain’.⁷¹ In addition it is important not to become overly focused on the empirical findings – there should be a balance with assessing and critiquing the findings.

⁶⁶ Larty, E., ‘Practical Theology as a Theological Form’, in Willows, D., and Swinton, J., ed., *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in a Multidisciplinary Context* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000) p.73-4.

⁶⁷ Ballard, P. & Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (London: SPCK, 1996) p.74.

⁶⁸ Graham, E., ‘Practical Theology: An Introduction’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64:4 (2011) p.493.

⁶⁹ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.17.

⁷⁰ Ballard & Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, p.77-78.

⁷¹ Ballard & Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, p.79.

Ballard and Pritchard identify six key features derived from the pastoral cycle that help to define the discipline of practical theology. They assert that practical theology emerges from shared experience such that practical truth is a product of a common process of discovery. Practical theology is done from below, with a starting point of a current experience that is brought into question by an event or crisis.⁷² Practical theology is a process of dialogue which draws on the tradition as well as required change.⁷³ Furthermore, practical theology informs spirituality and acts as a 'unifying force'.⁷⁴

On the other hand, the five phase research model established by van der Ven is used at an academic level within practical theology:

The problem of the subject under investigation is chosen (1). This subject is investigated inductively by empirical research, either qualitative or quantitative methods. This is followed by the formulation of the research question and the design of the next phase (2). The theoretical and empirical concepts previously gathered are quantitatively modelled and operationalised if a questionnaire survey method is used. This is the method preferred by van der Ven and others, but a subsequent qualitative approach is also possible (3). A second engagement with a different empirical reality results in a new set of information about the area of study. This is subsequently analysed (4). The resultant material is interpreted and reflected upon theologically before recommendations are made (5).⁷⁵

While both are action-reflection models, and start with a concrete reality, the van der Ven model is often utilised where the subjects of research have been chosen by the researcher, uses quantitative methods and ensures thorough data analysis.⁷⁶ These heuristic tools enable the researcher to distance themselves from the empirical reality of the concrete setting.

Mark Cartledge in his work *Practical Theology*, proposes an alternative model based on the concept of dialectic which is in turn founded on the concept of dialogue.

⁷² Ballard & Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, p.79.

⁷³ Ballard & Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, p.83-4.

⁷⁴ Ballard & Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, p.85-6.

⁷⁵ Cartledge, M.J., *Practical Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock) p.21.

⁷⁶ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.21.

However, instead of the position which sees the dialogue move from thesis to antithesis and finally to synthesis (Aristotle and Hegel), I aim to suggest that the dialogue between polar opposites is to be held together in the response to faith (Barth).⁷⁷

He suggests that theological dialectics are based upon the dialogue between the creature and Creator, those 'saved' and the Saviour. On the other hand, understanding practical theology as dialectics requires recognising the engagement of the theologian with the twin poles of the 'life world' or the concrete reality, and the 'system' or theological identity. The system is constituted by a metanarrative, including a critical theory that grounds the metanarrative, and draws upon other disciplines for example social sciences.⁷⁸ Like van der Ven, an intra-disciplinary approach is utilised.⁷⁹ This model requires that 'theology itself become[s] empirical, that is, that it expands its traditional range of instruments, consisting of literary-historical and systematic methods and techniques, in the direction of an empirical methodology. The term intra-disciplinary refers to the idea of borrowing concepts, methods and techniques from other disciplines and integrating these into another science'.⁸⁰

While questions for investigation can surface within the lifeworld or system, a praxis oriented approach to practical theology requires that the question arises from within the life world or concrete reality. This reinforces the importance of experience:

The concern of practical theology with human beings in real-life human experiential reality is presuppositional. At this point the concern is engaged with by means of a variety of methods. The concern is the beliefs and practices of the subjects under study within a particular lifeworld. The obvious focus of practical theology is the life of the church in the world. This includes the internal life of the church in its worship and ministry, but also its life of witness and involvement in the world. Such an engagement will take seriously the concerns, perceptions, and expressions of belief and practice as demonstrated by the people themselves. Primacy will be given to their stories, symbols and praxis.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.22.

⁷⁸ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.27-28.

⁷⁹ Cartledge, M.J., *Testimony in the Spirit* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) p.15.

⁸⁰ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.15-16.

⁸¹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.29.

The data that is produced from studying the lifeworld is in dialogue with theological literature, including theory. As the empirical data is investigated and mapped, the themes and interests are highlighted – ‘this leads to a very creative part in the process as the oscillation between praxis and theory generates insights’.⁸²

The experience of the people in the concrete reality is brought into fruitful encounter with the academic literature on the subject. This encounter primarily includes theology. The beliefs and practices found in the lifeworld are made to encounter the beliefs and practices of the metanarrative. While the insights of experience can open up the horizons of Scripture, Scripture gives insight and meaning to experiential reality. Theological normativity is located in Scripture and can challenge and modify the values embedded in the theological praxis.⁸³

Once the oscillation comes to a natural conclusion, Cartledge employs the final stage of van der Ven’s empirical cycle which moves the study to the point of recommendation for renewed theological praxis. In *Testimony in the Spirit*, Cartledge advances this concept of renewed praxis in his discussion of rescripting.

The rescripting process produces neither a damaging revisionist account, which seeks to supplant (sic) Pentecostal presuppositions with alien ones, nor a re-envisioning of classical Pentecostal confessionalism. Rather, it seeks to maintain a tension between a revised script that is both in continuity with and discontinuity with the existing script. It seeks to move ordinary theology forward through a deeper analysis of its testimony mode and a broader dialogue with the Christian theological tradition, illuminated by the insights of the social sciences. Rescription in this practical-theological orientation aims to be careful in its representation, sensitive towards the denominational tradition, sympathetic towards Pentecostal spirituality, yet also critical in its analysis and constructive in its proposals.⁸⁴

Cartledge’s notion of rescripting draws on the concern of practical theology with praxis, or operationalized theology, as well as espoused theology in the form of sermons and literature. The script that is formed is constructed through an analysis of the sources, ‘and within Pentecostal discourse is encapsulated in the notion of testimony’.⁸⁵ The concept of rescripting

⁸² Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.29.

⁸³ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.29.

⁸⁴ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.18.

⁸⁵ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.18.

also values the authenticity of ordinary theology. The script or narrative is formed from a combination of personal values, corporate beliefs and particular circumstances.⁸⁶ Astley defines ordinary theology in the following manner:

Ordinary Christian theology is my phrase for the theology and theologizing of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind.⁸⁷

For Astley religious beliefs qualify as theology once articulated and reflected upon.⁸⁸ For Pentecostals, a significant medium of ordinary theology is the testimony because of Pentecostal oral culture. Pentecostal rationality is shaped by narratives rather than propositions and testimonies strengthen commitment and energise a community.⁸⁹ Cartledge affirms that the testimony can be utilised as a mode of theology and research strategy. For the case in question, the practical theology methodology that will be employed is primarily the pastoral cycle informed by the dialectic developed by Mark Cartledge. It is interesting that Ballard and Pritchard identify the significance of dialogue deriving from the pastoral cycle and in relation to practical theology as a whole. Although the pastoral cycle as a whole will guide the research process, the model developed by Cartledge will contribute to shaping the intricacies of this process. As such the notion of dialectic will shape the dialogue between the research findings and social scientific voices. In addition, the markers of narratives, praxis and symbols will be helpful in analysing the research findings. Cartledge's dialectic model also ascribes significance to testimony which is important given the Pentecostal/ Charismatic nature of the case. Finally the notion of rescription contributes to the final stage of the pastoral cycle which consists of proposing recommendations for renewed praxis.

⁸⁶ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.17-18.

⁸⁷ Astley, J., *Ordinary Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) p.56.

⁸⁸ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.16.

⁸⁹ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.17.

In terms of handling social science theory alongside theology, the inter-disciplinary approach will be employed. Dingemans identifies this approach as the one that gives ‘more room for discussion’ between the two parties of the research effort.⁹⁰ Religious educationalists Leslie J Francis and William Kay favour this approach that reassesses the content of discipline in relation to the other.⁹¹ In effect there is an amalgamation of two separate disciplines according to a new set of criteria. Cartledge explains that ‘if the multi-disciplinary model is viewed sequentially as a series of monologues, then an inter-disciplinary model is seen as a number of cooperative parallel dialogues’.⁹² It has been argued that this approach is most stringent, however it is equally unreliable as it requires of the researcher a level of competence in both disciplines.⁹³ It is important that in the engagement with the interdisciplinary approach sufficient time and attention is given to understanding the social scientific voice as well as the theological one in order that a meaningful dialogue is possible.

In his development of the dialectic model, Cartledge applies NT Wright’s worldview categories to spirituality:

A spirituality defined in this way contains (1) stories through which humans view reality. Narrative is the most characteristic expression of one’s spirituality. (2) In addition, symbols express the stories and the answers to basic existential questions. These can be artefacts such as buildings, or they can be events such as festivals. Symbols tend to function as boundary markers. They are actions and visible objects that express spirituality at the deepest level. (3) Finally, spirituality contains praxis, that is, a way-of-being-in-the-world. The real shape of a person’s spirituality can be seen in the actions he or she performs, especially from behaviour that is habitual. Thus spirituality literally gives a lens through which the world is viewed and gives to people a sense of identity and place which enables them to be the people they are.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Dingemans, G.D.J, ‘Practical Theology in the Academy: A Contemporary Overview’, *The Journal of Religion*, 76:1 (1996) p.91.

⁹¹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.13 referencing Kay, WK., & Francis, LJ., ‘The Seamless Robe: Interdisciplinary Enquiry in Religious Education’, *British Journal of Religious Education* 7.2 (1985) p.64-7; Francis LJ., & Kay WK., *Drift from the Churches: Attitude Toward Christianity during Childhood and Adolescence* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

⁹² Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.15.

⁹³ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.13-14.

⁹⁴ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.24 – referencing Wright, NT., *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1993) p.122-39 – ‘[Wright] uses four categories: narratives, questions, symbols and praxis. For

Cartledge uses the three markers of narratives, symbols and praxis to define and explore spirituality. This tool affords conceptual clarity to the terms used in the first order discourse and enables consistency of use, understanding and interpretation of these terms throughout this thesis. If narratives are the overarching stories, beliefs are the components that make up these stories. As such healing is identified as the narrative of this study, with beliefs that contribute to healing forming the components, or sub-narratives of the overarching healing narrative. As was discussed in the introduction, the term ‘value’ is used in a distinct way in the first order discourse.⁹⁵ This becomes problematic on the premise that this thesis concerns praxis, which is interpreted as value-laden action. In order to distinguish between first and second order usage of the term the term ‘belief’ will be used to indicate the values that shape action. Where the term ‘value’ is used in direct engagement with first order rhetoric this will be made explicit. According to Cartledge, symbols are identified as physical visible objects or actions. As such, practices may well be acknowledged as symbols. It is also important to distinguish between praxis and practices. If praxis denotes belief [value] laden action, then practices are the actions that manifest the beliefs. In summary, the term ‘belief’ will be used to indicate the values that shape praxis, and ‘practices’ will be used to indicate the action that forms the practical element of praxis; the term ‘praxis’ is therefore the combination of belief and practice. The separation of belief and action is an artificial one, employed for analytical purposes.

2.4 Case Study Design

In this qualitative study, it is the case study design that constitutes the process of research. Creswell suggests that the process of research when applying case study design is that,

the purpose of this discussion I have omitted the category of questions since the whole practical theological enterprise is based upon the notion of question raising’.

⁹⁵ See Appendix 2 – ‘core value’.

...the researcher details the description of the case and its setting or context before mentioning the more abstract themes. The investigator may 'layer the analysis', presenting numerous themes initially, followed by grouping these themes into broader and more abstract categories later.⁹⁶

Robert Stake introduces case study research:

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. A single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities – but rarely will we care enough to submit it to case study. We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.⁹⁷

While case studies have been viewed as only a preliminary research method, Yin upholds that every research method, including case studies can be used for all three purposes – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory'.⁹⁸ He suggests that how and why questions lend themselves to a case study research method 'because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence'.⁹⁹ It is possible to conceptualise this research project using case study design because the purpose of this project is to explore, describe and explain the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church. Furthermore, tracing operational links between espoused and operant theology, as well as between key players on the global Pentecostal and Charismatic scene and the small scale healing interactions and large scale formation of a network through healing interactions is an important element of this project. As such case study design effectively facilitates a response to these questions.

According to Yin, 'the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events'.¹⁰⁰ Case studies are often used to explore contemporary events, and use similar techniques as historical research methods, with the

⁹⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.77.

⁹⁷ Stake, R.E., *The Art of Case Study Design* (California: SAGE, 1995) p.Xi.

⁹⁸ Yin, R.K., *Case Study Research*, 4th ed., (California: SAGE, 2009) p.7-8.

⁹⁹ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.9.

¹⁰⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.4.

addition of direct observation and interviews.¹⁰¹ Schramm suggests that the purpose of case studies is to explore a set of decisions, however other cases may include individuals or organisations.¹⁰²

Yin offers a definition of a case study:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
 - investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
 - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.¹⁰³

The first part of this definition distinguishes case studies from other research methods. The second addresses the technical characteristics:

2. The case study inquiry
 - copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
 - relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
 - benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.¹⁰⁴

This comprehensive definition legitimises Yin's claim that case study research is more than just a preliminary method.

The focus of this case study is on the contemporary phenomenon of the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked within the context of Bethel Church. One of the foremost features of Yin's conceptualisation of case study design is that the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This is at odds with Creswell's definition of case study design addressing a 'bounded case'.¹⁰⁵ It will become evident that drawing boundaries around the phenomenon and context are difficult in this research project. The phenomenon, identified as

¹⁰¹ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.11.

¹⁰² Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.17 referencing Schramm, 'Notes on case studies of instructional media projects', *Working paper for the Academy of Educational Development* (Washington, DC).

¹⁰³ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.18.

¹⁰⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.18.

¹⁰⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.61 - 'bounded case'.

the healing praxis of Bill Johnson is primarily outworked within the context of Bethel Church but simultaneously has impact that extends beyond the local context. In addition Bethel Church itself has significance on the global Pentecostal and Charismatic scene both in relation to healing and beyond. Drawing clear boundaries around this case is a challenge and as such Yin's definition accommodates for a blurring of lines in relation to phenomenon and context. In addition, this study will follow Yin's guidance in relation to case study design through the use of multiple sources of evidence, as well as engaging with theoretical propositions to guide the research process.

Yin outlines five components of case study research design that cumulatively make up the blueprint for the research. Firstly, the first stage is to identify the research questions. The research questions in this case include:

- What are the central elements of the espoused healing theology?
- How is the espoused healing theology practised by Bill Johnson and outworked in Bethel Church?
- What is the relationship between the espoused and operant theology of healing?
- To what extent are the practices portable within Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity?
- What is the explanation when healing does not happen?

Secondly, propositions should be identified as they direct attention to points of interest within the study. In this case, propositions would relate to the personal narrative of Bill Johnson as well as the history and narrative of Bethel Church. In terms of the espoused theology, the important propositions relate to Christology, eschatology and soteriology, as well as healing theology itself. In terms of operant theology, the points of interest relate to the healing practices that are identifiable within the Bethel Church context.

Yin lists the third component as the ‘unit of analysis’ which refers to the need to define what the case is. This involves including and excluding individuals and groups in relation to the case. For the purposes of this study, the unit of analysis refers to the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church. Bethel Church as a whole entity harbours a variety of beliefs in relation to healing. Many of these beliefs will have shaped Bethel Church community in relation to the healing praxis of the church as a whole.

Identifying and exploring each of the beliefs and contributors to the healing praxis of Bethel Church proved too big a task for this research project. As such the unit of analysis in this case study refers to the healing praxis of Bill Johnson. It should be acknowledged however that Johnson’s healing praxis has impacted and shaped the Bethel Church community and as such Johnson’s operant theology is best identified within the context of Bethel Church.

A fundamental element of case study design is the need to include the four tests common to social science methods.

- Construct validity: identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.
- Internal validity (for explanatory or causal studies only and not for descriptive or exploratory studies): seeing to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.
- External validity: defining the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.
- Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results.¹⁰⁶

The test of construct validity is a difficult one to meet in case study research; case study researchers have been accused of being too subjective in judgement. This test can be met by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence and having the report reviewed by key informants.¹⁰⁷ In this case, the first two mechanisms can readily be employed to guarantee construct validity. Having the report reviewed by key informants has

¹⁰⁶ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.40.

¹⁰⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.41-42.

proved difficult given that data has been obtained through observation and there is therefore a lack of working relationship between important figures and myself as the researcher. Internal validity is called into question over the problem of making inferences, however this can be combatted by ensuring the inference is correct and by considering alternative possibilities. Internal validity as aforementioned is applicable to studies that are designed to establish and explain causal connections between events. This study is not designed to achieve this purpose. Nevertheless internal validity is relevant in terms of making inferences by way of explaining. Inferences are made every time an event is observed and as such it is important to acknowledge when an inference is made, check it is fair and correct, and consider other possible explanations in order to exclude them and affirm the validity of the inference. External validity is problematic because case studies do not lend themselves to generalization by virtue of their narrow focus; however analytic generalization is possible where a particular set of results can be connected to a broader theory. In this case, interaction ritual chain theory as well as theological discussion is engaged with to provide an explanation for the specific findings of the case and as such analytic generalization is employed. The test of reliability is to minimise errors and biases, and the goal is that another researcher could repeat the study and reach the same results. The key to meeting this standard is to document the research in detail.¹⁰⁸ For the purposes of this study, observational material was documented at the time of observation in note form and written up in more detail immediately after each service. Reliability is an interesting test when observing church services as the theological focus can shift over time. In addition, the substance of espoused theology is often inconsistent and contradictory. As such complying with the test of reliability so that if the study was repeated by another researcher the same results could be yielded is a challenge. In undertaking

¹⁰⁸ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.43-45.

observational research it has been important to understand context and identify the prevalent and therefore significant narratives and concepts.

An important distinction to be made in relation to case study research is between single case and multiple case approaches. A single case approach can be justified where it represents a critical case in testing a well formulated theory; where the case represents an extreme or unique case; where it is a representative or typical case; where the case is revelatory; or where the case is longitudinal.¹⁰⁹ For the case in question, a single case approach is appropriate because the case is unique, and revelatory in that there has been no research done on this individual or organisation as yet. In addition, a single case approach is suitable because of the global significance and influence of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. Single cases can be disadvantageous and ‘therefore require careful investigation of the potential case to minimise the chances of misrepresentation and to maximise the access needed to collect the case study evidence’.¹¹⁰ A further distinction is between embedded and holistic designs. ‘If the case study examined only the global nature of an organisation or of a programme, a holistic design would have been used’.¹¹¹ The holistic design can result in the research remaining abstract or the nature of the case study shifting. Subunits create an embedded design that allow for a more focused exploration of a particular area – ‘the subunits can often add significant opportunities to extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case’.¹¹² For this research, the single case is not being addressed using the holistic design, as specific attention is being given to the healing theology of Bill Johnson in the context of Bethel Church, rather than the organisation as a whole. Therefore, this research design utilises the embedded subunit of healing theology.

¹⁰⁹ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.47-48.

¹¹⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.50.

¹¹¹ Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.50.

¹¹² Yin, *Case Study Research*, p.53.

2.5 Theory and philosophical assumptions

As previously mentioned, the philosophical assumptions that ground this study require attention.

The philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology).¹¹³

2.5.1 Ontology

According to Creswell,

...the ontological issue addresses the nature of reality for the qualitative researcher; reality is constructed by individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist, such as the realities of the researcher, those of individuals being investigated, and those of the reader or audience interpreting a study. The qualitative researcher needs to report these realities, rely on voices and interpretations of informants and advance evidence of different perspectives on each theme.¹¹⁴

This research project employs a critical realist approach. Critical realism holds that reality is constructed but that there is something in reality that is objective. A critical realist position is ontologically constructivist, but epistemologically critical realist. Ontologically speaking, therefore, this project is underpinned by the philosophy that reality is constructed by the perception of individuals.

2.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and basis of knowledge. 'The term 'epistemology' relates to the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the theory of knowledge. In essence it seeks to ask and answer the question 'How do we know what we know?' indeed, 'How can we know at all?'¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.16.

¹¹⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.76.

¹¹⁵ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.32.

As has already been ascertained this project is guided by the philosophical position of critical realism. Critical realism is ontologically constructivist, but epistemologically critical realist. As such critical realism is distinct from constructivism by virtue of the epistemological position it holds. If realism as a process of knowing, acknowledges the reality of the thing known as something other than the knower, then critical realism argues that the only access we have to this reality is through dialogue between the knower and the thing known.¹¹⁶ ‘Knowledge, in other words, although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower is never independent of the knower’.¹¹⁷

This epistemological position implicates the researcher as someone involved with the research process and not as a distant observer.¹¹⁸ Traditionally quantitative research is grounded in the theory of positivism whereby the researcher is a distant, detached observer. Positivism is prevalent within the natural sciences and aims to enable value-free and objective research.¹¹⁹ To a greater degree than quantitative research, qualitative enquiry assumes that the researcher influences and is influenced by the process of research.

Rather than seeking after tools and methods that will distance her from the research process, the researcher becomes the primary tool that is used to access the meanings of the situation being explored. In other words, the researcher does not simply access methods and tools, but, as has been suggested, in fact is the primary research tool.¹²⁰

Given this implication, reflexivity becomes a vital process within the research.

Reflexivity is a mode of knowing which accepts the impossibility of the researcher standing outside of the research field and seeks to incorporate that knowledge creatively and effectively.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Wright, NT., *New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1993) p.35.

¹¹⁷ Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, p.35.

¹¹⁸ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.35.

¹¹⁹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.76-7.

¹²⁰ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.60-1.

¹²¹ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.59.

Personal reflexivity will be considered in relation to axiology, however epistemological reflexivity demands that the researcher reflects on assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge made in the course of the research and considers the implications of these assumptions.¹²² In employing a critical realist approach, it is necessary to be aware of the dialogue between the knower and the thing known while also acknowledging that knowledge is never independent from the knower.

While acknowledging that qualitative researchers are active participants in their own research, Robert Stakes explains that nonetheless, they are noninterventionists as they intend to observe what is going on as if they were not there.¹²³ Naturalism is important in this study as it is believed that individuals and communities are best understood and explored in their natural context.

Naturalism, in a qualitative research sense, reflects the view that research should remain true to the phenomenon under study. All phenomena being studied should be considered as naturally as possible... This means that researchers, instead of using distance as a research tool, should get close to the subjects under study and certainly not impose quantitative techniques upon them.¹²⁴

As Cartledge explains, qualitative research enables the researcher to engage in sustained contact and exploration of a community thus embracing naturalism.

Ultimately, a critical realist epistemology is employed in this study. The epistemological concerns are all rooted in Cartledge's dialectic between the two poles of the lifeworld and the system- 'knowledge is to be gained both by participation and reflection, by engagement and detachment'.¹²⁵

¹²² Willig, C., *Qualitative Research in Psychology: A Practical Guide to Theory and Method* (Buckingham: OUP, 2001) p.10.

¹²³ Stake, *The Art of Case Study Design*, p.44.

¹²⁴ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.79-80.

¹²⁵ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.82.

2.5.2.1 Theories of truth

The correspondence theory maintains that what is said about the world as true depends on how the world is – ‘true propositions ‘correspond’ with reality and they are truth in virtue of that correspondence’.¹²⁶ The coherence theory considers a statement true if it is in alignment with other statements of truth. The pragmatic theory of truth holds that truth has to be understood in the context of practice – ‘true propositions are also those that work by being successful in practice’.¹²⁷

Cheryl Bridges Johns buys into the correspondence and pragmatic approaches as she articulates an epistemology that recognises the experiential value of knowledge.¹²⁸ This is supported by the notion of ideographic knowledge that holds that ‘meaningful knowledge can be discovered in unique, non-replicable experiences’.¹²⁹ The cultural linguistic approach is reflective of the coherence model. This approach acknowledges the importance of community and corporate tradition; Shuman argues that knowledge is embedded in narratives, symbols and practices of Christian community.¹³⁰ Yong suggests a theory of truth based on the premise that ‘religious experience is made sense of by means of its signs or symbols, their referents, meanings and interpretation’.¹³¹

As has already been established, the notion of testimony is central to Pentecostal theology. Its centrality is hinged on its relationship with epistemology. The value of testimony is embraced

¹²⁶ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.43.

¹²⁷ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.43-44.

¹²⁸ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.45-47 referencing Johns, C.B., *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, JPTS 2, 1993) p.35.

¹²⁹ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.43.

¹³⁰ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.49 referencing Shuman, J., ‘Toward a Cultural-Linguistic Account’, *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 19.2 (1997) p.216-7

¹³¹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.50 referencing Yong, A., “‘Tongues of Fire’ in the Pentecostal Imagination: The Truth of Glossolalia in light of R.C. Neville’s Theory of Religious Symbolism’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 12 (1998) p.44-49.

by all the approaches to the theory of truth discussed here. Swinton and Mowat discuss the significance of narrative:

For the qualitative researcher, narrative knowledge is perceived to be a legitimate, rigorous and valid form of knowledge that informs us about the world in ways which are publicly significant. Stories are not simply meaningless personal anecdotes; they are important sources of knowledge.¹³²

For the purposes of this study, truth will be understood in relation to testimony as articulated by individuals and community. The contributions of Johns and Shuman, specifically their value of experience and community will be central to the epistemology that underpins this research.

2.5.3 Axiology

The axiological concerns in relation to qualitative research are connected to the previous epistemological discussion:

Undoubtedly, this role [of the researcher] and the close distance between the researcher and the participants have implications for the axiological assumption, the role of values in a study. In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field.¹³³

Another way of addressing axiology is to return to the idea of personal reflexivity.

Personal reflexivity' involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers.¹³⁴

In this vein, it is important to acknowledge that not only is my research undertaken as an insider due to qualitative research methods, but equally because I am a Charismatic Christian, belonging to a Charismatic church, originating from the Vineyard network and now connected through the relational network of Global Legacy to Bethel Church, Redding. My history and background have inevitably impacted my own construction of ontology and

¹³² Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.38.

¹³³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.76.

¹³⁴ Willig, *Qualitative Research in Psychology: A Practical Guide to Theory and Method*, p.10.

epistemology. I share the same worldview as those belonging to and connecting with the Bethel Church community which grants an advantageous sympathetic position, and simultaneously requires critical self-awareness. I am reflexive in this study in order to recognise my natural commitments and acknowledge that these will affect my perception of reality and knowledge. The benefit of my values however should not be undermined, as it is by virtue of personal proximity and experience of Charismatic Christianity that I can provide a unique perspective. During my time in the field, I recorded a research diary in order to aid reflexivity.

2.5.4 Rhetoric

Creswell outlines the specific issues concerning rhetoric:

Literary forms of writing such as the use of metaphors, the use of first-person 'I', and a focus on stories pervade qualitative inquiries.¹³⁵

It has already been asserted that the stories of those involved in this study will be of significance in constructing and interpreting the meaning of experience. Narrative will form an integral part of this research, and thereby the rhetoric used will be reflective of this. It is important to note that both Bill Johnson and Bethel Church use language in a particular and specific manner that reflects their culture and community. Appendix 4 is an index of key words and phrases, with explanations of how these words and phrases are used and understood. Engaging with the rhetoric of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church, and thereby the first order discourse enables me to understand the subjects on their own terms. Although the first order discourse will be instrumental in building and interpreting the reality of individuals in the case, the thesis will be written in second order discourse. The exercise of creating Appendix 4 was helpful in identifying the rhetoric of the first order discourse and formulating

¹³⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, p.77.

a second order discourse that engages meaningfully with the key terms while also maintaining distance.

2.6 Qualitative Research Methods

As previously mentioned, methods are the tools and processes used to collect and analyse data; methods include interviews, observation, thematic development and coding. By contrast, methodology relates to the study of these methods and how these methods are shaped by philosophical assumptions; the methodology defines the approach taken in relation to a particular research field.¹³⁶ While the rest of this chapter has dealt with the intricacies of methodology, this section specifically will deal with methods.

This study will employ empirical research methods as a means of obtaining data. These methods enable the researcher to view the beliefs of the subject from the perspective of the subject. As a result, qualitative research of this sort requires sustained engagement and interaction with the subject for a significant period of time. Cartledge summarises the integral elements of qualitative research:

In terms of an analogy, it is not so much a camera snapshot, but a video clip that enables the sequence of events to be understood chronologically. Qualitative researchers, wishing to focus on the worldviews of the subjects under study, tend to operate with an open and flexible research strategy rather than one which is overly prescriptive from the start. This means that research problems tend to be organised around more general and open questions rather than tightly defined and theory-driven questions. Qualitative researchers tend to favour a process that formulates and tests theories and concepts as they arise from within the data under collection.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.74-5; Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Method*, p.59 – ‘The themes of qualitative inquiry reviewed in this chapter are strategic ideals: real-world observations through naturalistic inquiry; openness through inductive analysis, contextual sensitivity, and a holistic perspective; personal contact and insight; attention to dynamic processes; appreciation of idiosyncrasies through a unique case orientation; and stance of empathic neutrality. These are not absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategic ideals that provide a direction and framework for developing specific designs and concrete data-collection tactics’.

¹³⁷ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.69-70.

Participant observation is a technique of obtaining qualitative data. ‘This usually entails the immersion of the researcher in and among those whom he or she seeks to study in order to generate an in-depth understanding of the group and its organization’.¹³⁸ Observation of this kind can operate with different levels of participation, however regardless of the degree of participation, the aim is to describe and analyse beliefs and behaviour of a particular community, at a particular time, within a particular place and culture. Participant observation is undertaken by means of interviews with various key players, and examining documents relating to the community and individuals therein whose histories and stories are essential to the broader narrative. Participant observation draws its strength from the combination of techniques; the ‘triangulation’ of different sources enhances the reliability of the conclusions drawn.¹³⁹

As has been ascertained, I am functioning as a researcher participant. Where a researcher would be present but distant from what is being observed, a participant would step back from their involvement to observe. By contrast, a researcher participant engages both with the social context and research interaction.¹⁴⁰ In the course of my empirical research I am engaging in the everyday life of Bethel church including meetings and gatherings, and yet simultaneously I am asking critical questions of the theology and practices.

According to Patton, ‘fieldwork is the central activity of qualitative inquiry’.¹⁴¹ The initial plan for this project was to obtain the majority of the data through empirical fieldwork with at least four months spent on site. However due to a prolonged process of obtaining access and permission I spent two non-consecutive months in the field, the first in 2013 and second in

¹³⁸ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.70.

¹³⁹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.70-1.

¹⁴⁰ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.71.

¹⁴¹ Patton, M.Q., *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Method*, 2nd ed., (California: SAGE, 1990) p.46.

2014. Furthermore I had hoped to interview Bill Johnson, as well as other key leaders, however permission to interview was declined. In Appendix 3 I discuss the plan I had for the empirical data collection for this project and reflect on the limitations created by the refusal of interviews and difficulty in gaining access.

During my time in the field, I immersed myself in the culture and life of the church in order to engage with the research process as a participant observer. I attended all the public church services held at College View campus.¹⁴² In addition, I spent time in HeBrews café located at College View campus during opening hours in the week. I visited the Prayer House and the Worship Room. I visited Healing Rooms that are open every Saturday morning at College View campus. I attended both first and second year classes of Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry. During the second visit in 2014, I attended Randy Clark's School of Healing and Impartation which was hosted by Bethel Church at the Civic Center in Redding and in which Bill Johnson was playing a key role in teaching.

In addition to the fieldwork, I also attended conferences that were held in the UK. In January 2013 I attended the Randy Clark School of Healing that took place in Cardiff, UK. I attended meetings held by Chris Gore, Director of Healing Ministries at Bethel Church, when he visited King's Church in Manchester. In July 2014 I attended the European Leaders' Advance conference in Harrogate, UK for which Bill Johnson, Kris Vallotton and Danny Silk were keynote speakers.

While on site in Redding and in attendance at conferences where Bill Johnson, or other significant leaders in relation to healing were speaking I recorded my observations in

¹⁴² Twin View Campus also held Sunday services simultaneously.

shorthand notes. I used attendance at services to write notes specifically relating to that particular event, and I used my time spent on campus during the week or before or after services to recorded general observations. These notes included reference to who was overseeing the service, who led worship and who spoke. In early observational material there are descriptions of the buildings, and main auditorium, known as the ‘Sanctuary’. The content of the preached message was notated as well as references to or practices of healing. In most meetings one of the leaders would instigate prayer for healing during the course of the service by way of ‘word of knowledge’ or other divine revelation. Overall, everything that could be observed was recorded in note form and written up immediately after. There are separate documents containing the observational notes from each service that was attended.

Although I approached this research project as a participant observer, it should be noted that I did not make personal contact with Bill Johnson beyond a brief conversation after a Sunday morning service during which I informed him of my project. There was therefore minimal personal interaction with church members/ leaders of Bethel Church. This was mostly due to difficulty in obtaining access outside of public settings such as weekly services, and the prolonged amount of time it took to obtain permission for empirical research.¹⁴³

In addition to obtaining observational material, I used documentary analysis of sources including the twenty books that Bill Johnson has written or contributed to. In addition, the website has been used to supply up to date information. Other publicly available resources including books written by other leaders at Bethel Church, workbooks produced by the church and podcasts have been used to corroborate research findings. iBethel.tv is a particularly useful resource that is to varying degrees publicly available for live streaming or

¹⁴³ On 10th April 2014 I received an email from Jennifer Miskov who had received an email from Michael Tinterin on behalf of Bill Johnson on 9th April 2014. In this email permission was granted to use material obtained through observing weekly services.

catching up on worship sets, preached messages, some conferences, and testimony videos.¹⁴⁴ Initially, documentary analysis was prepared by reading through and making notes on the twenty books published by Johnson. These notes were then organised according to theme and a thematic compilation of documentary material was created. Silverman suggests that documentary data is often regarded as secondary in importance to observational or oral data, and argues that this should not be the case – ‘they often enshrine a distinctively documentary version of social reality. They have their own conventions that inform their production and circulation’.¹⁴⁵

In this context, documentary data comprised mainly of published books is of great significance. In the absence of interview data, such documents carry a great and equal weight with observational material. Given that this research project is utilising a case study approach, multiple sources are beneficial. Triangulation is effective in bolstering the reliability of the results. As well as observational and documentary material, a reflective journal was kept throughout the field visit to provide a data contribution.

NVivo 10 has been used to compile and store the observational and documentary material.¹⁴⁶ This program was also used to codify the data according to theme to aid writing up the findings.

2.7 Research Ethics

Many of the ethical considerations are included in the Application for Ethical Review (Appendix 1). I received ethical clearance on 4th October 2013, application number ERN_13-0637.

¹⁴⁴ There are three tiers of accessibility at increasing cost; the greater the cost the greater the access to material.

¹⁴⁵ Silverman, D., ed., *Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2011) p.80.

¹⁴⁶ NVivo 10 – Qualitative Data Analysis Software

The Application for Ethical Review considered in detail the means of seeking access and permission to undertake this research project. Access to the field of study was sought via a gatekeeper in line with ethical clearance. I attempted to make contact with those who control access to the church both physically and pastorally – ‘the term [gatekeeper] is typically used in a metaphorical sense to suggest individuals who have management or administrative control in an organization, and who can decide in absolute to carry out your research’.¹⁴⁷ Initially I attempted to make contact via email with potential gatekeepers. Communication issues were experienced due to a lack of response from these individuals. I attempted to resolve these issues by personally visiting the field of study; although I had a brief conversation with Bill Johnson, this was deemed insufficient to qualify as permission. While present at the site of study in Redding I attended and observed public events only. After a continued effort at forging email contact with potential gatekeepers, I received permission to use observational material from weekly services on the 9th April 2014, via Jennifer Miskov and Michael Tinterin. Given that the gatekeeper, Michael Tinterin on behalf of Bill Johnson, confirmed the acceptability of using publicly available observational material without consulting the church community or requesting their permission, this was deemed sufficient for proceeding with this research project. Although much of the Application for Ethical Review concerned the protocol for selecting and interviewing members of the church, permission to interview was declined.¹⁴⁸ It is important to note that this study relies on material and sources that are available and accessible in the public domain.

It is important to consider the term used to describe the case in question. While the term subject implies that the object of study is inactive in the research process, participant indicates that they are involved and engaged in the process. It is important that the term used

¹⁴⁷ Oliver, *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*, p.39-40.

¹⁴⁸ Having received permission to use observational material, I contacted Michael Tinterin directly requesting permission to interview Bill Johnson amongst others. Permission to interview was declined.

to describe those involved in the research process values them as human beings and equal in the process to others involved.¹⁴⁹ In this case study, the term participant will be used to identify the person/s involved in providing qualitative data.

A final consideration in relation to research ethics is the distinction between confidentiality and anonymity in relation to the person/s providing data. These two concepts are related to privacy – while confidentiality limits the information that will be disclosed as part of the thesis and protected as part of the data, anonymity infers that the person disclosing data is not identifiable even to the researcher. In this case, confidentiality will be determined based on the individual in question. For high profile individuals, such as Bill Johnson confidentiality has been difficult to maintain. Given that all the material used as data for this project is available in the public domain, confidentiality becomes less of a crucial issue.

2.8 Focus of enquiry

At the core of the methodology is the focus of the enquiry. In this case study, the focus is the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church. The previously discussed methodological approaches are all employed to facilitate the investigation of this particular area of study. The methodology developed in this chapter serves to identify the healing theology espoused by Johnson and the operant healing theology of Bethel Church. The qualitative methods in conjunction with the assumptions of ontology, epistemology, axiology and rhetoric shape the means by which data is gathered. The methodology as a whole guides the process through which the data is brought into dialogue with and analysed in the light of social science theory. Furthermore, this methodology enables the reflection/construction exercise with the purpose of developing recommendations for renewed praxis.

¹⁴⁹ Oliver, *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*, p.5-6.

2.9 Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter the methodology for this project was conceived as a sphere with various layers. This research project is first and foremost utilising a qualitative approach, drawing on narratives and stories and seeking to answer the how and why questions, in addition to the what question. More specifically, a practical theological approach is being employed in order to engage with the praxis, that is the value-laden action, or espoused and operant theology of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church. Within the practical theological discipline in general, it is the pastoral cycle in particular that is being used to guide the research process. This action reflection model begins with an experience, that is then explored, analysed, reflected upon and concludes with recommendations for renewed praxis. The research process is also framed by case study design, with Yin's definition being used to enable the studying of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church as a case that is without clear boundaries. In terms of ontology, a relativist position is taken, along with a constructivist epistemology that attributes significance to a Pentecostal spirituality, personal testimony and the importance of understanding the first order discourse. Personal reflexivity is aided by a research diary and awareness of my own Pentecostal/ Charismatic experience. The empirical research is undertaken by the researcher adopting the role of participant observer, and the research methods include observation and documentary analysis. Finally, the Application for Ethical Review received clearance in relation to the observing and interviewing methods, however due to limitations of access and permission only the use of observational material was allowed.

3. The History of Bethel Church and its pastor Bill Johnson

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with the history of Bethel Church in relation to Bill Johnson's own personal history. The history will be discussed chronologically, with emphasis being given to significant events in the life of the church and the life of Bill Johnson that mark their joint histories. While the story of Bill Johnson and the story of Bethel Church can be understood as distinct entities, these stories are inextricably linked in such a way that it is not only important, but necessary that the connections are made points of interest. The history of Bethel Church will be limited to the historical relationship with or involvement of Bill Johnson. Attention will primarily be given to Johnson's history and Bethel Church will feature as and when their paths cross.

When gleaning information from primary source material, it seems to be of chief importance that he is identified as a 'fifth generation pastor'; he even goes as far as to distinguish his pastoral heritage from his mother and father – 'as a fifth generation pastor on my dad's side of the family, and fourth on my mom's'.¹⁵⁰ That Johnson attributes such significance to this heritage should come as no surprise given his emphasis on historical revivals and revivalist figures. His family history also holds great significance and much of his story is placed within this wider context, drawing on experiences of his parents and grandparents in order to explain his own story.

¹⁵⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.23.

Bill Johnson was historically an AG pastor, and Bethel Church was originally an AG church founded in 1954.¹⁵¹ What is significant here is that his background indicates a strong classical Pentecostal influence which is carried forth into and evident in his leading of Bethel Church. Randy Clark suggests however he carries the ‘DNA of John Wimber more than anyone else’.¹⁵² It should also be noted that Bill Johnson himself gives significant credit to the influence of Randy Clark and his ministry.¹⁵³ It is apparent that those who have had significant influence on Bill Johnson are those who have a prominent healing ministry. According to Brown ‘divine healing is the single most important category - more significant than glossolalia or prosperity - for understanding the global expansion of Pentecostal Christianity’.¹⁵⁴ The significance of healing theology and practice within the life of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church will become apparent as the story develops.

3.2 The heritage of Bill Johnson

The significance of Bill Johnson’s heritage, as has already been asserted, cannot be overlooked.

¹⁵¹ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healings*, p.164 - ‘In summary, the Assemblies of God began as an attempt at unifying independent ministers, many of whom had chosen not to be a part of already established Pentecostal denominations, for one reason or another. It has evolved into the largest predominantly white Pentecostal denomination in the world, with a congregational-Presbyterian ecclesiology, and with much of its theological definition resulting from its reaction to doctrinal controversy’.

¹⁵² Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.20 – quoting Randy Clark – At a later point in this chapter there is a historical connection between Bill Johnson and John Wimber, when Johnson visits a conference where Wimber is speaking. Although Johnson never formally meets Wimber, he acknowledges this conference as significant in his own experience of the supernatural and in the signs and wonders being experienced at Bethel Church. It is interesting to note that Clark would identify Johnson as closer to the Wimber/ Third Wave tradition than Pentecostal tradition; Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.33 Interestingly Brown states that ‘The Vineyard movement began as an association of churches with the same ‘spiritual DNA’, rather than as a traditional denomination’.

¹⁵³ Brown, C.G., ‘Global Awakenings: Divine Healing Networks and Global Community in North America, Brazil and Mozambique, and beyond’, in Brown, C.G., ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New York: OUP, 2011) p.355.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, C.G., ‘Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Healing’, in Brown, C.G., ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New York: OUP, 2011) p.14 - in contrast to Dayton, D., *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987) p.15 ‘The Pentecostal movement has –naturally enough, it must be admitted generally been interpreted primarily in terms of its most characteristic feature, glossolalia, or ‘speaking in tongues’. Dayton however does also address the significance of healing in Pentecostalism, p.115.

Johnson gives credit to his grandparents, Earl and Darliene who were senior pastors of Bethel Church during the 1970s and 1980s. He acknowledges the influence of their life message of worship – ‘they carried a love for worship and people that was contagious’.¹⁵⁵ During the Jesus Movement, Bill Johnson records that his grandparents on both sides took a bold stand against those who were rejecting newcomers to the church on the basis of them not fitting common expectations of behaviour and dress code.¹⁵⁶ It is significant that in a recent conversation with his grandmother when enquiring whether she was surprised by the revival taking place in Redding today she expressed that she knew it was going to happen. Johnson commends this ‘beautiful example of carrying an absolute resolve to stay true to the course, which eventually became a foundation for generations of people to experience an outpouring of the Spirit’.¹⁵⁷

He describes his father as ‘a great general in the army of God’ who paid a price during his lifetime that Bill Johnson as an individual, and Bethel Church as a community are reaping the benefit of. Bill Johnson recalls,

I watched him when I was a young man. I watched him push ahead as a forerunner, enduring so much criticism and rejection. He honourably displayed what it looked like to value the presence of God above the opinions and support of man. It cost him severely, but he left a rich inheritance for our family, as well as for the Church in our region.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Johnson and Johnson, *Momentum*, p.118-9.

¹⁵⁶ Bustraan, ‘Upon Your Sons and Daughters: An Analysis of the Pentecostalism within the Jesus People Movement and its Aftermath’ *PhD Thesis*, University of Birmingham, 2011, p.2 – ‘Very broadly speaking, this thesis assumes that the JPM was a religious movement among White American youth in which the participants wed certain values of the 1960s counterculture, in particular hippiedom, together with values of Christianity, in particular Pentecostalism. The JPM was not homogenous in nature, nor centred on an individual personality or founder, nor in a singular location. Instead, it would be more accurately described as a heterogeneous family or collection of smaller movements, polycephalous in leadership, polynucleated in multiple geographical centres, exhibiting a broad variance in the particulars of belief and praxis while being harmonised by a nearly universally shared set of charismatic and hippie characteristics. The heyday of the movement was from 1967 to the end of the 1970s and its aftermath has continued to grow, diversify, and influence American Christianity into the present day’; Johnson, *Momentum*, p.118-9.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson, *Momentum*, p.118-9.

¹⁵⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.167.

Upon the death of his father in 2004, Johnson commissioned his extended family to intentionally pick up the mantle left behind by his father. He states, ‘We have an obligation to build on his ceiling, not to defend and protect what he accomplished, but to take it to its natural conclusion and to walk in realms of dominion that have been made possible because of his sacrifice’.¹⁵⁹ He concludes that ‘he truly was the father of a family, a tribe – a movement’.¹⁶⁰

It is apparent that Johnson ascribes honour to his father and grandfather in a way that indicates his belief that they established something foundational in his own life and in Bethel Church. In the excitement of what is going on in Redding today, Bill Johnson repeatedly takes time to honour those who went before him and forged a path marked with a priority for revival that paved the way for the present revival being experienced in the local church in Redding and the wider Bethel movement.¹⁶¹

3.3 Bill Johnson’s younger years

Bill Johnson was raised in a Christian home, and in his own words, ‘forgiveness of sin was appealing to me, almost to the same degree that hell was unappealing’.¹⁶² While he was not rebellious during his childhood or youth, he could not be described as particularly passionate in his faith. Interestingly, while his brother was encouraged to pursue a leadership role in the church, Bill Johnson ‘did not care for crowds, and the thought of speaking in front of people

¹⁵⁹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.167; Johnson, *Momentum*, p.171.

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *Momentum*, p.171.

¹⁶¹ Johnson, *Momentum*, p.118-9; Johnson’s eldest son Eric also acknowledges the influence of his maternal grandparents on the current ‘revival’ experience: My mom’s parents, Gene and Nell, have been a part of Bethel for over 50 years. We often hear them say, ‘We prayed for over 50 years to see what we now see everyday here at Bethel’. It’s amazing to me to hear that, as well as all the stories of the really tough seasons Bethel weathered. They had many opportunities to leave this church, but through it all, they decided to believe in the prophetic words and the promises of God that the nations would be coming and revival would come. So they positioned themselves in such a way that would eventually help to create an environment where the nations of the world would come to encounter God.¹⁶¹

¹⁶² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.35

was frightening'.¹⁶³ He describes that his parents' goal for him was to make it to heaven.

After finishing high school in 1968 Bill Johnson's parents were appointed pastors at Bethel Church and thus he moved with his family from Los Angeles to Redding.¹⁶⁴

At this point, the Jesus People Movement and Charismatic movement were impacting the church in the US. Johnson describes how in 1970 'things started to break loose' as freedom was afforded to the Holy Spirit at Bethel Church. He speaks of the propensity to have many guest speakers visit. One of these visitors, Mario Murillo, struck a chord with Bill Johnson:

Mario's message was simple: Be absolutely abandoned to Christ. He provoked me in all the right ways. I never missed a meeting when he was in town. Even though I had not 'jumped' in all the way yet, he spoke to something deep within me. One Saturday night, alone, I finally said yes to God– the absolute yes. For me, everything changed that night. I showed up the next Sunday morning with Bible and notebook in hand, ready to learn. I began to devour the Scriptures, along with other books especially books on prayer. My friend and youth pastor, Chip Worthington, fed me with an endless supply. It was actually those books that created a hunger in me for the Word of God. When I read different author's insights, I thought, I must study the Bible, too, and learn to get what they get. I had known in my head that God talks to people through His Word, but now I was learning it in my heart.¹⁶⁵

Bustraan reports that Murillo was part of the Jesus People Movement at the University of California, Berkeley and in 1969, he opened Resurrection City there. His style was reminiscent of the 1950s healing evangelists and his ministry included large healing and evangelistic gatherings. He later launched an international evangelistic and healing ministry from an outreach in San Jose and he was known for his meetings that were reportedly similar to the Azusa Street visitation.¹⁶⁶ Mario Murillo exerted an influence on Bill Johnson; Johnson attributes this to the fact that Murillo was closer to him in age than other ministers. The

¹⁶³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.35

¹⁶⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.35–NB. It should be noted that both parents were appointed as pastors of the church; their theology on women is expounded by Danny Silk in the teaching 'And they were filled: Honouring Our Women' and his recently published text *Powerful and Free: Confronting the Glass Ceiling for Women in the Church* (Redding, California: Red Arrow Media, 2013)

¹⁶⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.36.

¹⁶⁶ Bustraan, 'Upon Your Sons and Daughters', p.69.

crowd that Murillo drew were a passionate catalyst for Johnson's ultimate commitment to God.

Johnson describes another experience he had in 1971 that shaped his priorities. He explains that having already given his life to the Lord at an earlier stage in life, he realised that 'I wasn't called to ministry, or to accomplish some great feat in His name. I was called to God Himself'.¹⁶⁷ While sitting under the ministry of his father who was teaching on Ezekiel 44 about ministering to the Lord in thanksgiving, praise and worship, Johnson was impressed with the proposition that 'there was no doubt that our ministry to God was the most important responsibility of all, and it was available to every believer'.¹⁶⁸ He acknowledged that while the message did not lend itself to an altar call, Johnson nevertheless prayed – 'Heavenly Father, I give you the rest of my life to teach me this one thing'.¹⁶⁹ He quickly learnt that this call was not in relation to music directly but about 'ministering to the Lord in His presence'. For Johnson, the 'presence of God' otherwise referred to as the 'presence' is understood as an increased measure of God being present in a specific place at a specific time, in a manner that is both experiential and subjective.¹⁷⁰ It was at this stage that worshipping God and experiencing His presence became of ultimate priority in his life.

¹⁶⁷ Johnson, B., *Face to Face with God* (Florida: Charisma House, 2007) p.6.

¹⁶⁸ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.6-7.

¹⁶⁹ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.6-7.

¹⁷⁰ Johnson, B., *Hosting the Presence* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012) p.99 – 'This is at least a partial list of these measures of His Presence; each one is an increase of the previous: God first inhabits everything and holds all things together (see Col 1:17). He is everywhere, the glue that holds His creation in place. A second dimension of God's Presence is His indwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of those who have been born again. He specifically comes to make us His tabernacle. A third dimension is seen when believers gather in His name. As He promised, He is 'there in their midst' (Matt 18:20). This is where the principle of exponential increase comes into play. A fourth measure or dimension occurs when God's people praise Him, for He says He 'inhabits the praises of His people' (see Ps 22:3). He is already in our midst but has chosen to manifest Himself upon us more powerfully in that atmosphere. A fifth measure is seen when the Temple of Solomon was dedicated: God came so profoundly that priests were incapacitated (see 1 Kings 8:10-11). No one could even stand, let alone play instruments or sin. They were completely undone at that measure of Presence. I mention these five levels only as principles, in an effort to give a snapshot of how He longs to increase His manifestation upon His people.'

A significant tributary in Bill Johnson's journey towards a life of pastoring was his involvement in a street ministry team that targeted youth and hippies; this team was led by Chip Worthington, another prominent and influential figure in Bill Johnson's life. This experience was coupled with his involvement in a discipleship ministry for the Jesus People Movement. Whilst part of these teams, he lived in the Salt House, a ministry centre that provided Bible studies and outreaches for these young people. While at the Salt House, he developed a lifestyle that prioritised time spent praying; in addition he was exposed to a great number of 'tormented and demonised' people and partnered with Chip and his wife in praying for deliverance and freedom. Of greatest impact perhaps is that his time spent in this environment developed a 'heart for people and... desire to learn and teach'.¹⁷¹ In his own words,

It took a while for me to admit it, but I realised that I had a pastor's heart. No one was more surprised at the discovery than me. I soon took on other responsibilities that gave me a chance to find out what I was called to do. Most of the responsibilities were in areas I was none too good at, but Bethel Church needed help and I was happy to try.¹⁷²

At this point it is interesting to note the impact of the Jesus People Movement upon Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. Poloma describes the effects of the movement on Pentecostalism:

It was the beginning of an underground movement that took a stream of Pentecostalism out of its staid churches and presented it with a fresh face throughout the globe. Through its religious music festivals, Jesus marches, hippies Christian churches, coffeeshouses, and communes, the Jesus movement sowed seeds for the 'third wave' of the Pentecostal movement.¹⁷³

Poloma explains that the Third Wave triggered by the Jesus People Movement blurred the lines between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal individuals and churches. Poloma and Green

¹⁷¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.39.

¹⁷² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.39-40.

¹⁷³ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.3.

argue that ‘relational networks’ rather than denominational affiliation became the modus operandi, and fresh experiences of the Holy Spirit rather than doctrine was the goal’.¹⁷⁴

Bustraan rebuts this proposition on the premise that ‘her comments minimise the movement to an insignificant level in comparison to Wagner’s Third Wave’.¹⁷⁵ He argues that the Jesus People Movement deserves more attention in the history of Pentecostalism and credit in the blurring of lines between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal streams. His thesis is that the Jesus People Movement exerted a greater influence rather than serving to trigger the Third Wave. The influence of the Jesus People Movement on Bill Johnson and Bethel Church affirms Bustraan.¹⁷⁶ While Bethel Church at this stage was still part of the American AG, it seems that the Jesus People Movement and subsequent Third Wave had a significant effect upon the church and individuals therein. Despite being impacted by and born out of a revival, the AG has been resistant and indifferent to subsequent revivals and movements. Bethel Church on the other hand seemed to embrace and actively seek such moves of God.

3.4 Before Bethel

Before embarking on the story of Bill Johnson in relation to Bethel Church it should be noted that Bill Johnson had been pastoring at Mountain Chapel in Weaverville for 17 years prior to moving to Bethel, the mother church.

I was invited to pastor Mountain Chapel in Weaverville, California in 1978. I told my dad, our senior pastor in Redding, that I would not accept such an invitation on the basis of it being a promotion. That had no appeal to me. The only important thing was to know that this was God’s assignment and have the leadership in Redding recognise

¹⁷⁴ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.3.

¹⁷⁵ Bustraan, ‘Upon Your Sons and Daughters’, p.213.

¹⁷⁶ Bustraan, ‘Upon Your Sons and Daughters’, – Bustraan discusses whether the JPM can be located within the Third Wave. According to David Barrett’s definition describes the Third Wave as Pentecostalism that emerged outside the classical/ traditional Pentecostalism. On the other hand, C Peter Wagner regards himself and Vineyard the source of the Third Wave and creates boundaries around the Third Wave based on tracing back to John Wimber’s classes at Fuller Theological Seminar at 1980. Therefore, according to Barrett JPM can be understood as part of the Third Wave.

and send me and my family – which they did. We served in Weaverville for seventeen wonderful years.¹⁷⁷

The time spent in Weaverville was marked by an increased interest in the history of revivals, particularly the life and works of John G Lake, as well as a desire to see the miracles of the Gospels become a reality today.¹⁷⁸

For years I was bothered by the fact that even though I preached that God was a God of miracles, I wasn't seeing the miraculous. I couldn't be satisfied with just having good theology because my experience denied what my theology said, I went from being bothered to being consumed with jealousy when I heard reports of healings breaking out in The Vineyard Movement through John Wimber and others. In the midst of this season, I received a prophetic word from my friend Mario Murillo saying that God was going to anoint me to walk in a ministry of healing and miracles. I took that word, wrote it down, and began to declare it over my life on a regular basis.¹⁷⁹

Johnson repeatedly speaks of an interest in revival figures and their ministries; he describes an encounter with Kathryn Kuhlman and his grandparents' memories of sitting under the ministry of Smith Wigglesworth and Aimee Semple McPherson. Oral Roberts is of major significance to Bill Johnson in terms of influence on a personal level as well as in relation to his leadership of the church. Hejzlar notes that, 'the Healing Revival generated independent ministries, - private enterprises led by individual healing evangelists. The participants in the revival opted for independence from Pentecostal denominations declaring their intention to proclaim a pure, non-sectarian gospel'.¹⁸⁰ This influence will be of particular pertinence at a later point in the story, when Johnson and Bethel Church chose to leave the AG.

¹⁷⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.40.

¹⁷⁸ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.40 – Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.22 - 'Someone gave me some books from John G Lake. Now you can get his books all together in one big volume that Robert Liardon put together. But these were little booklets, and they messed me up huge because I read them and realised, This is extreme, And it put such an appetite in me that I just couldn't stand it'.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.143-4.

¹⁸⁰ Hejzlar, P., *Two Paradigms for Divine Healing* (Leiden/ Boston: BRILL, 2010) p.5.

This interest notably increases over his lifetime, however at one stage in his life this increased desire was coupled with feelings of inadequacy; according to Johnson a typical experience of young pastors.

Betrayal, abandonment, rejection and accusation all seemed to come with the position. I often felt like there was a huge black cloud over me. I had enough sense to know that discouragement and depression were not good things. Although I managed to get victory before the next Sunday, because I did carry the conviction that our time together in the house of the Lord was to be a day of celebration, I didn't know how to live that way. Yet.¹⁸¹

These two strands of experience were conjoined in the realisation that – ‘I had surrounded myself with people of like passion – revival at any cost. I was weaned on this theme. I slept, ate, and prayed it constantly. But it was common knowledge to all of us who had studied the revivals of the past – we weren't holy enough’.¹⁸² Up until this point in his life, Bill Johnson had admired and studied the lives and ministries of revival heroes and even contemporary ministries, however he had regarded them as ‘extraordinary’ – ‘To my way of thinking, these ministers who were examples to me were extraordinary, whereas nothing qualified me for a life of miracles’.¹⁸³ In addition, not only did he regard himself as unqualified, he also distinguished himself from these powerful ministries on the basis that they had experienced some form of ‘power encounter’ and he had not.

Almost everyone I had ever heard of who had a miracle ministry could take you back to the time when they experienced their special moment with God. It was in that encounter with God that the call of God was given to them. I had never experienced anything like that. Nothing close. I was thankful for the still, small voice and thankful that He would speak to me from His Word. Yet there was nothing seemingly spectacular about my relationship with God.¹⁸⁴

Johnson remarks that change occurred not as a result of a single ‘power encounter’ but as a result of incremental growth. He emphasises the significance of repentance – ‘at some point I actually had to believe that what King Jesus did was enough. It sounds so simple now. My

¹⁸¹ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.66.

¹⁸² Vallotton, K., & Johnson, B., *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006) p.53.

¹⁸³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.38.

¹⁸⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.38.

shame quietly denied his atoning work. My discouragement dishonoured the sufficiency of the King's promises'.¹⁸⁵

At this point in the story, Johnson emphasises the importance of the inheritance his father had passed on. As has already been mentioned, Johnson's father had prioritised worshipping God and experiencing the presence of God. This priority became an anchor for Johnson in discouraging times. Johnson found his identity in being a worshipper of God; this was his primary ministry that shaped other means of serving God and pastoring the church.¹⁸⁶

In addition, Johnson comments on the strength of the manifest presence of God during his time in Weaverville. His response to this experience was to extend times of worship. It is clear that this was of great significance to him, and it should be noted that 'presence' theology becomes an increasingly important theme for both Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. 'That connection to the presence would later serve as a primary building block in my learning how the Holy Spirit moves in other contexts like healing and prophecy'.¹⁸⁷ The significance placed on worship is important, particularly as the worship ministry and music recordings are now driving forces in the globalizing influence of Bethel Church. Furthermore, the centrality of worship to the current revivalism is endorsed by Ward who notes that 'revivalism is selling worship and not evangelism, and intimacy rather than conversion'.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Vallotton & Johnson, *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty*, p.53-4.

¹⁸⁶ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.66.

¹⁸⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.41.

¹⁸⁸ Ward, P., 'Selling Revival as Worship', in Walker, A., & Aune, K., *On Revival: A Critical Examination* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.217; Bill Johnson and Bethel Church describe themselves as in or experiencing 'revival' since 1996; by way of acknowledging their understanding of their experience but still maintaining a level of objectivity, the term 'revivalism' will be used. According to Latham, S., 'God came from Teman', in Walker, A., & Aune, K., *On Revival: A Critical Reflection* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.171 - 'revivalism is the deliberate cultivation of and preparation for revival'.

During this time in Weaverville, Bill Johnson describes a breakthrough he experienced in 1987 having attended two conferences organised by John Wimber.

The first one actually discouraged me somewhat, I have attended many wonderful conferences through the years, but for the first time ever, at that one I heard nothing new. It was a divine setup. Every teaching I heard that week I had already done before, right down to some of the illustrations. That was strange. I had thought the illustrations were my own. The discouraging part drove me into a measure of breakthrough – I left with the realisation that I had good theology, but those speakers had experience for what they believed.¹⁸⁹

While Johnson states that the conferences did not involve any ‘laying on of hands’ for the purpose of impartation or the passing on of Charismatic gifts, he left knowing ‘it was time to ‘put a demand’ on what I believed’. He describes this experience as recognising that ‘my risk factor had to line up with the boldness of my beliefs’.¹⁹⁰ He speaks of a great indebtedness to John Wimber who demonstrated that a supernatural lifestyle was possible for anyone.¹⁹¹

While there was inevitably an impact from Wimber’s ministry, it is interesting to recognise that there is a distinction acknowledged between Wimber and Johnson’s theologies particularly with regards to healing. His distinguishing from Wimber is made by Mark Cartledge who utilises HH Knight’s continuum between two poles of God’s faithfulness and God’s freedom:

By God’s faithfulness I mean faithfulness to God’s promises. An extreme view would claim that, if God has promised healing, and God is faithful to that promise, one will instantly be healed. Healing is seen as somewhat automatic, and failure to be healed is due to our not meeting the conditions for healing.

By God’s freedom I mean God’s freedom to choose how and when and whether to act. An extreme view would see God’s activity as totally mysterious and unpredictable. There are not healing theologies adopting this extreme position, but there are some that do lean toward this pole.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.41.

¹⁹⁰ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.41.

¹⁹¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, Dedications & Acknowledgements – ‘I write with great indebtedness to John Wimber and Randy Clark.... But I never met John. All I learned was from a distance, until I met Randy Clark’.

¹⁹² Knight, ‘God’s Faithfulness and God’s Freedom: A Comparison of Contemporary Theologies of Healing’, p.65.

Cartledge identifies that Johnson leans more towards healing being rooted in God's faithfulness to fulfil the promises he has made, whereas Wimber leans more towards God's freedom in the healing of sickness.¹⁹³

This is the point at which Bill Johnson regards everything as different. He began teaching a class on healing which involved watching videos of various healing ministers and copying what they saw. He reports that 'for the first time in my Christian walk I saw miracles start to happen in our church'.¹⁹⁴ It is of importance that he explains, 'while I had never had the 'call of God' encounter that others had, I did have the command of Scripture to 'heal the sick' (Matthew 10:8). And that was enough'.¹⁹⁵ While still in Weaverville, Bill Johnson describes his first miracle God did through him:

The first major miracle God used me in was actually in a public place, a store in which I knew the owner. He told me he would be forced to retire because his arthritis was so bad... I told him that I thought God wanted to heal him and asked if I could pray. He agreed. I laid my hands on his hands and elbows, invited the Holy Spirit to come (as John Wimber modelled) and commanded the arthritis to leave. It did. The store owner was shocked – completely shocked. So was I! That was the beginning of the breakthrough.¹⁹⁶

From this point on, healing experiences increased. People would 'fall under the power of God' when prayed for which was a new phenomenon for Weaverville, and Johnson notes that those receiving healing included children.¹⁹⁷

Johnson explains that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would fluctuate between the years of 1987 and 1995; at that point he did not know what to do to maintain and increase what was going on.

¹⁹³ Knight, 'God's faithfulness and God's freedom', & Cartledge, M.J., 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom: understanding different theologies of healing', *New Wine*, Central and South West, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.42.

¹⁹⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.42.

¹⁹⁶ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.42.

¹⁹⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43.

I did not realise then that it was always God who lit the fire on the altar, but it was the priests who kept it burning – that all revivals start because of God, but end because of man. It never occurred to me that I had a role in maintaining and increasing a move of God. Somehow I thought things ended out of God’s sovereign choice. Since then, I have learned that the sovereignty of God gets blamed for the end of many great things.¹⁹⁸

Utilising the continuum as defined by HH Knight, which places God’s faithfulness to fulfil His promises at one end of the scale and God’s sovereignty to act at the other, it is possible on the basis of this insight to place Johnson more towards the faithfulness end of the spectrum.¹⁹⁹ While this scale deals specifically with healing miracles, it can be broadened to encompass divine intervention in the form of revival. In relation to revival, Johnson may acknowledge that metaphorically speaking God lights the fire, but his emphasis remains on the fact that people are responsible for the continuation of the fire burning. It seems that for Bill Johnson, the fire is kept burning not by the sovereignty of God, but by people holding God to his faithfulness to fulfil promises that perpetuate revival, such as healing miracles. Johnson outlines how the church in Weaverville increased in ‘anointing’ for healing and other kinds of ministry. In addition, he notes that times of worship became more intense and there developed a strong prophetic gift amongst the church body attributed to Kris Vallotton’s personal discovery of his gift of prophecy.²⁰⁰

3.5 The Toronto Blessing

While still pastoring in Weaverville, Bill Johnson had an experience with God that is given a significant degree of attention by him in his written publications.²⁰¹ Having heard that God was moving powerfully in Toronto Airport Fellowship, Canada, Johnson arranged a trip in

¹⁹⁸ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43.

¹⁹⁹ Knight, ‘God’s Faithfulness and God’s Freedom’, & Cartledge, ‘God’s Faithfulness and God’s Freedom: understanding different theologies of healing’.

²⁰⁰ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43.

²⁰¹ This account is recorded in full in *When Heaven Invades Earth, The Essential Guide to Healing and Healing Unplugged* amongst others.

February 1995. He remarks on seeing the same phenomena as what had previously been experienced in Weaverville in 1987 but on a much larger scale. He records his prayer, ‘God, if you will touch me again, I will never change the subject. I will not add to what You’re doing to what we’re doing. I will make what You’re doing the only thing we do’.²⁰² While in Toronto, Johnson responded to every appeal for prayer that he could – a sign of his desperation to have ‘God touch him again’. Despite all the praying, and despite the testimonies of others who were having profound experiences of God, Bill Johnson commented that he did not have any notable experiences. However it was proven to be enough when on his return to Weaverville, an outpouring began. He notes that the increase of God moving was subtle, but marked in his own life by the beginning of eight months of crying out to God for more.²⁰³ The climax of this cry came towards the end of 1995 and is best expressed by Bill Johnson himself: ‘My prayer was, ‘God, I want more of You at any cost! I will pay any price!’ Then, one night in October, God came in answer to my prayer, but not in a way I had expected’. He describes being awoken by a feeling of electricity, ‘raw power’ flowing through his body, leaving him paralysed. Johnson records that it was the ‘most overwhelming experience of his life’ and believes it was the answer to his prayer.²⁰⁴

Of significance is that the previous evening had been spent under the ministry of Dick Joyce. During this meeting, Johnson had encouraged his friend that he could receive from God at any time of the day or night. The meeting with Joyce did not end until 1:00am. Having gone to bed, Johnson himself was woken at 3:00am – in his own words, ‘God had set me up with the prophecy I had given to my friend’.²⁰⁵ He notes that he had previously experienced this kind of power but only in his legs and with much less intensity; he had not previously

²⁰² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43-44.

²⁰³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.45.

²⁰⁴ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.8-9.

²⁰⁵ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.9.

recognised that it was God's doing.²⁰⁶ This occasion, however, he recognised as his 'moment', he felt he was God's target. Johnson describes it as intense, but not pleasant experience. The physical effect of the experience caused him embarrassment despite being alone and he was unsure whether the physical effect would end. Referencing Jacob's limp after wrestling with God he acknowledged that his request to experience more of God came with a price. In the account recorded in *Healing Unplugged*, Bill Johnson notes that on the third night of this experience, Johnson's wife Beni was also affected by the power of God – 'we both were laying there just absolutely being electrocuted'. Johnson explains that for the first time he became aware of the presence of God for the purpose of power ministry rather than in worship.²⁰⁷

While this experience is inherently subjective and highly personal to Johnson himself, it is necessary to note the parallel breakthrough that was experienced by the church. Bill Johnson marks his trip to Toronto as the beginning – 'because I came home and never one minute from that moment in 1995 to this, have I ever even deviated from what God has called me to do, from what He's given us to do'.²⁰⁸ It is clear that he perceives his own journey as affected by and having an effect upon the church in Weaverville. He describes that they 'started seeing stuff happen in the church again' in February at a similar time to his increased hunger and crying out to God for more. In March/ April there was further breakthrough experienced on a corporate level, and again in August there was an increase in the presence of God in the meetings of the church.²⁰⁹ In tandem with Johnson's personal encounter, October 1995 also marked a significant breakthrough in the life of the church:

In October of that year, the Spirit of God fell with power in our church, like in Toronto. Bodies were everywhere, and we experienced a sustainable outpouring. The

²⁰⁶ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.9-12.

²⁰⁷ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.59.

²⁰⁸ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.59.

²⁰⁹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.32.

seed had been planted in February, but we reached a measure of maturity, or a birthing of it, in October. From that point on, there was no stopping it whatsoever. We had a continuous outpouring of the Spirit. We kept pastoring it.²¹⁰

It was the February after this October that Bill Johnson was asked to pastor Bethel Church, Redding.²¹¹ Nevertheless the significance of this series of events cannot be underestimated. This intensification of the experience of God that occurred in the life of Bill Johnson and in the life of the church in Weaverville was the first of many to come, subsequently also including and affecting the life of the church in Redding.

Latham explains that ‘evangelicals see revival as God’s activity: a visitation or manifestation of his presence’.²¹² However what is meant by the term revival or what is desired by a specific individual or group varies. At this point it would be helpful to identify what is desired by Bill Johnson and Bethel Church in their pursuit of revival. Adopting Walker’s categorical distinctions, Latham identifies six forms of revival, ranging from R1- R6.

R1: a spiritual quickening of the individual believer.

R2: a deliberate meeting or campaign especially among Pentecostals to deepen the faith of believers and bring non-believers to faith.

R3: an unplanned period of spiritual enlivening in a local church, quickening believers and bringing unbelievers to faith.

R4: a regional experience of spiritual quickening and widespread conversions, e.g. the Welsh, Hebridean, East African and Indonesian revivals, and possibly Pensacola in the 1990s.

R5: Societal or cultural ‘awakenings’, e.g. the transatlantic First and Second Awakenings.

R6: the possible reversal of secularisation and ‘revival’ of Christianity as such.²¹³

According to these categories, R1-3, and potentially R4 are of relevance to this study. It is apparent that Bill Johnson’s personal story is indicative of an R1 experience, and can be understood as a trigger or motivation for the R2 type of revival experienced at Weaverville and subsequently at Bethel Church. It is possible to categorise the experience of revival at

²¹⁰ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.32-33.

²¹¹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.33.

²¹² Latham, ‘God came from Teman’: Revival and Contemporary Revivalism’, p.171.

²¹³ Latham, ‘God came from Teman’: Revival and Contemporary Revivalism’, p.172.

Bethel Church as an R3 experience on the premise that in response to the planned meetings purposed to cause God to send revival, there was a period of spiritual enlivening among the community where the experience of miracles, signs and wonders increased. Johnson acknowledges the tension between God causing revival, and human responsibility to steward revival.²¹⁴ The assimilation of R2 and R3 is perhaps the means by which to understand the tension between planned meetings in response to God sending revival and planning meetings to cause God to send revival. In addition, given the impact that Bethel Church is having on the region of Redding it is possible to consider the revival as an R4 form. The experience of miracles, signs and wonders outside of the church building is an important factor in facilitating a regional experience of spiritual quickening. It could be argued that the revival being experienced in Redding is the beginnings of an R4 type of revival.

Cartledge suggests that Latham's typology is heavily focused on conversion and societal change, emphasising an Evangelical understanding of revival. A more Charismatic understanding of revival should take account of spiritual empowerment, ecstatic phenomena, healings and miracles, and should consider the globalising impact of networks in facilitating revival outside of geographical boundaries.²¹⁵ As such, Cartledge proposes a revised version:

R1: a spiritual enlivening and empowering of the individual believer.

R2: a deliberate meeting or campaign to deepen the faith of believers and bring non-believers to faith and experience the power of God in their lives.

R3: a period of spiritual intensity that enlivens a congregation such that the body of believers is empowered and witnesses claim to experience mass conversions, healings and miracles.

R4: news of the enlivening spreads such that the congregation becomes a site of spiritual pilgrimage, nationally and internationally.

R5: the congregation expands, becomes an international denomination or network or both.

R6: the network collaborates internationally with other similar networks to spread revivalist spirituality globally.

²¹⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43 -'I did not realise then that it was always God who lit the fire on the altar, but it was the priests who kept it burning – that all revivals start because of God, but end because of man'.

²¹⁵ Cartledge, 'Catch the Fire': Revivalist Spirituality from Toronto to Beyond', p.13-14.

R7: the network impacts the political and cultural influence of Christianity locally, nationally, regionally, globally.²¹⁶

In relation to this revised typology, it is again possible to identify Johnson's personal experience of spiritual enlivening as an R1 form of revival, with forms R2 and R3 following in quick succession as meetings were planned to facilitate revival and there was a subsequent increase in the number of healing and miracle experiences. Given that Bethel Church has become a site of pilgrimage both nationally and internationally it is apparent that this revival qualifies as an R4 form. The decision to leave the AG and establish a relational network marked the transition to an R5 experience of revival. Furthermore, the collaboration of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church with other revivalist leaders and their networks indicates an R6 form of revival. It is apparent that the goal of Bethel Church is to transition to R7: 'Bethel Church's mission is revival: the personal, regional, and global expansion of God's Kingdom through His manifest presence'.²¹⁷ Johnson and Bethel Church comply with Warner's suggestion that Charismatics and Pentecostals are on the 'quest for ultimacy' - by this he means the drive towards a greater revival.²¹⁸ Bill Johnson's personal experiences certainly indicate this desire, and his vision for Bethel Church seems to corroborate this notion.

3.6 Pastoring Bethel Church

In February 1996, Bill Johnson was asked to pastor Bethel Church in Redding, California. He was aware this was a result of the 'wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit' that they were experiencing in Mountain Chapel, Weaverville - 'I came because of a cry for revival by the leadership of the church'.²¹⁹ After 17 years of leading in Weaverville, Bill Johnson and his family moved to Redding and he became the senior pastor of Bethel Church. From the outset

²¹⁶ Cartledge, 'Catch the Fire': Revivalist Spirituality to Toronto and Beyond', p.24-25.

²¹⁷ <http://bssm.net/about/bethelchurch> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²¹⁸ Warner, R., 'Ecstatic Spirituality and Entrepreneurial Revivalism: Reflections on the 'Toronto Blessing'', in Walker, A., & Aune, K., *On Revival: A Critical Reflection* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.230.

²¹⁹ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.72.

Johnson knew the purpose of his leadership commission in relation to this specific appointment and church community.

When I spoke to the new congregation about my coming, I told them that I was born for revival; if they didn't want the move of the Spirit of God, along with the messes that come from such an outpouring (see Prov 14:4), they didn't want me, because this was not negotiable!²²⁰

It was of paramount importance that the church longed for revival as much as Johnson himself did, and thus when support was almost unanimous – a significant achievement for such a large church – he willingly took the post.²²¹ He claims the revival outpouring began immediately. After being without a pastor for eight months, Bethel Church was feeling strained. In a Sunday evening meeting, Johnson invited those who were tired and wanted prayer to come forward for ministry. He invited the Holy Spirit to move powerfully on the crowd, and Johnson notes that in that moment 'He fell powerfully on one person'.²²² In *Healing Unplugged* he reflects that this was the 'crack in the dike' that they needed and from that point on 'it exploded'.²²³

Johnson explains 'lives were changed, bodies were healed, divine encounters increased in amazing proportions, along with the unusual manifestations that seem to accompany revival.'²²⁴ He records that this period was also marked by approximately 1000 people leaving the church.²²⁵ Johnson accounts for this exodus by stating that 'this wasn't the kind of revival they wanted'.²²⁶ He acknowledged that it was understandably difficult for people when 'what was happening was outside their point of reference and off the map of their own

²²⁰ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.72.

²²¹ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.13.

²²² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.48.

²²³ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.33.

²²⁴ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.13.

²²⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.72.

²²⁶ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.13.

experience'.²²⁷ Interestingly, while he acknowledges that people leaving a church is always a challenge for pastors who tend to take this as personal rejection, he and Beni Johnson were 'immune to the devastation' and he attributes this to a 'supernatural grace to joyfully live opposite to circumstances'.²²⁸

What seemed to be of greater importance was the revival the church was experiencing. Healing miracles became increasingly common – both as a result of ministry such as words of knowledge, laying on of hands or prophetic decrees, and the sovereignty of God. Johnson defines sovereign healings as those which 'happen without our involvement – in the atmosphere of God's manifest presence'.²²⁹ Bill Johnson testifies to healing miracles that included the blind seeing and cancer disappearing during times of corporate worship. He explains,

These kinds of things started happening with regularity. At one time we had six cases of cancer or tumours disappear in eight weeks. That was huge for us, especially considering that we were not focusing on healing.²³⁰

Having seen the initial stages in Bethel Church of what Bill Johnson would describe as revival, considerable acceleration of this movement occurred while Randy Clark visited in 1997. Prior to Clark's visit, Johnson reports that healings were occurring approximately every other week, however during Clark's four day visit there were four hundred recorded healings – 'that was the most you had seen in North America in one place in one service'.²³¹ Bill Johnson regards this visit from Randy Clark as a major contributory factor to the increase in

²²⁷ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.72.

²²⁸ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.72 – 'It was the generosity of God that made this possible. Along with the increased manifestation of His presence, He made His will too obvious to ever miss. God often spoke to us in a dream, a vision, or a clear impression in our minds. Sometimes He brought forth a prophetic word that confirmed or added understanding to a direction we were to take. There was never a question. The fruit of the increased measure of His presence, along with the bounty of transformed lives, was all we needed to smile in the face of such apparent loss. To this day, we've considered it a privilege to gain that kind of increase through such a loss'.

²²⁹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.33.

²³⁰ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.48-49.

²³¹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.34.

healing experiences occurring in and around Bethel Church. He believes that something was deposited in the whole church during that trip – ‘we already had the momentum, but when you came, it was like pouring gasoline on a fire’.²³² Johnson notes that this visit from Randy Clark caused a shift in the atmosphere of Bethel Church and that it established a trajectory in the life of the church that has never wavered since. Healing miracles became one of the most prominent theological and practiced beliefs of the whole church.

At this point, it would be pertinent to pause in the telling of this story to reflect on some of the aspects of the journey. It is interesting to note that the healings taking place were occurring not just in meetings, or in the church building but in the community wherever the members of the church were active. Meic Pearse would dispute the defining of a revival as such when it is limited to renewal within the church; by his definition the Toronto Blessing could not be regarded as a revival.²³³ He also maintains that revival is more than just meetings with a speaker on a platform ministering to a crowd; revival is about the congregation getting out of the building and seeing non-Christians impacted.²³⁴ William Kay explains that ‘the social aspect of revival is demonstrated by the public behaviour of those caught up within the phenomenon. The public behaviour may be in religious places or during religious services, or it may be extended beyond these on to the streets and into places of work’.²³⁵ Given that the revival at Bethel is typified by the ordinary church member seeing healings in their workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities it fits with the definitions provided by Pearse and Kay. While Johnson will use a meeting forum to minister to large numbers of individuals, he equally values the ability of the average church member to pray

²³² Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.35.

²³³ Pearse, M., ‘Revivals as Historically Situated Events: Lessons for the Future’, in Walker, A., & Aune, K., *On Revival: A Critical Examination* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.159.

²³⁴ Pearse, ‘Revivals as Historically Situated Events: Lessons for the Future’, p.162.

²³⁵ Kay, WK., ‘Revival: Empirical Aspects’, in Walker A. & Aune K., ed., *On Revival: A Critical Examination* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.196.

for healing. Bethel Church services will regularly close with those who want prayer, being ministered to by the church around them. This empowerment of the laity supports the premise that ministry should occur outside of the four walls of the church as well as inside the building.

Furthermore, the influence of the Toronto Blessing on both Bill Johnson and Bethel Church should be acknowledged. The influence may seem easily identifiable in the form of the Charismatic experience described by Johnson on his return from his visit to Toronto, however it is possible to trace a broader trajectory between the movement in Canada and the revival in Redding. Martyn Percy, having studied the Toronto Blessing in 1996 during the height of the outpouring, revisited both the church and his study in 2002 to compare his findings. His findings, while directly related to Toronto, shed light on aspects of Bethel Church that are beginning to be discovered in the telling of their story. Percy draws on Hopewell's proposition that revivalists find meaning to their existence in the romantic genre that favours the supernatural over reality and understands God's love as the climactic experience and driving force. Percy expands this proposition to categorise those involved and impacted by the Toronto Blessing as romantic adventurers:

In a romantic worldview (i.e. a congregation's perception of how things should or could be), the primary motif is adventure. Individually, the response to weakness is tarrying, and the resolution is empowerment. Corporately, conventionality is overcome by charism, which leads to transformation. Cosmically, perpetuity is usually addressed by signs and wonders, which will then lead to the coming of the day of the Lord. In the world of adventure, authority is discovered in the evidence of God's immanence, the continuity of God's providence, and the recognition of God's blessings. Critically, a romantic worldview understands that spiritual adventure is the context in which the strength of the romantic relationship with God is discovered, tested, and refined. The heroes of romantic stories are those who persevere through trials and tribulations and who remain constant and faithful in the midst of adversity.²³⁶

²³⁶ Percy, M., 'Adventure and Atrophy in a Charismatic Movement: Returning to the 'Toronto Blessing'', in Lindhardt, M. *Practicing the Faith* (New York, US: Berghahn Books, 2011) p.167.

Bethel Church can be understood to fit this mould; there are elements of their theology, both espoused and practised that allow them to sit comfortably within this ‘romantic adventurer’ category. Empowerment and charisma are important motifs in the rhetoric of Johnson and Bethel Church, and signs and wonders are a common practice and occurrence. Engaging in spiritual adventure and romantic relationship with God is a prominent means of understanding the journey of the individual and corporate community. This concept of journeying proves influential in their decision to move forward from the AG towards their own calling.

3.7 The Assemblies of God

A significant event in the life of Bethel Church was their decision to leave the AG. While little attention is given in the literature to this transition from being under the American AG organisation to being an independent church, what can be asserted is that Bill Johnson believed in good conscience that Bethel Church needed independence in order to pursue and fulfil the unique vision God had given them.

A letter written by Bill Johnson dated 17th January 2006 that addresses this relationship is available on the church website. This letter opens with the following statement:

On January 17, 2006, the membership of Bethel Church of Redding voted to withdraw from our affiliation with the Assemblies of God (AG). However, our heart to bless and celebrate the AG as they continue in their vital role in God's kingdom hasn't changed. The Assemblies has been, and continues to be, one of the great champions of the Gospel in the earth today. We have enjoyed a long and fruitful connection with this organization. Our decision to withdraw from the Assemblies is not due to conflict or broken relationship, but rather because of what we understand to be the call of God on our church and movement.²³⁷

Interestingly this letter explains that the decision to leave the AG was made on 13th November 2005. A unanimous vote was made to withdraw from the AG without first inviting

²³⁷ www.ibethel.org/bethel-and-the-assemblies-of-god [accessed 01.02.2013].

the District Leadership to speak to the church as per the AG by-laws. Having recognised their mistake, on 15th January 2006 they rescinded their withdrawal and invited the District Leadership to speak to the membership on 17th January. After District Superintendent Jim Braddy ‘made a loving, grace-filled appeal for us to reconsider and/or delay our decision to withdraw’, the membership again voted to withdraw with over 90% in favour.²³⁸ This incident is demonstrative of Bill Johnson’s and Bethel’s desire to honour the AG in their parting. He believes his goal in this transition was to value relationship over belonging to an official organisation, and not in any way to cause a breakdown in relationship through dishonour. Candy Gunther Brown describes the transition as one moving from denominational to relational connection.²³⁹ In Johnson’s own words, the decision is in response to calling rather than conflict. Furthermore, this transition marked a change in direction for the church.

Though we haven't yet articulated it very clearly, we feel called to create a network that helps other networks thrive - to be one of many ongoing catalysts in this continuing revival. Our call feels unique enough theologically and practically from the call on the Assemblies of God that this change is appropriate.²⁴⁰

The call on Bethel Church identified by Bill Johnson is to facilitate and strengthen networking between existing churches crossing denominational and international boundaries. To date this can be seen evidenced in their relationships with Randy Clark and Global Awakening, Heidi Baker and Iris Ministries and John and Carol Arnott and Catch the Fire Ministries, in addition to forums such as Revival Alliance which allows apostolic leaders and networks to collaborate.²⁴¹ As Brown explains, ‘each member of the Revival Alliance constitutes the axis of its own relational network’.²⁴² Brown goes onto discuss that,

²³⁸ www.ibethel.org/bethel-and-the-assemblies-of-god [accessed 01.02.2013].

²³⁹ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.41.

²⁴⁰ www.ibethel.org/bethel-and-the-assemblies-of-god [accessed 01.02.2013].

²⁴¹ As mentioned before, the influence of the Third Wave on Bethel Church extended to an increase in inter-church relations. This influence can be traced to C Peter Wagner’s New Apostolic Networks as providing a model for this; Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.39 – for more on Revival Alliance.

²⁴² Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.40.

Pentecostals, even more than other evangelicals, envision themselves as members of a church universal that not only unites co-religionists across linguistic, cultural and rational barriers, but also transcends perceived boundaries between earth and heaven – as individuals speak with the ‘tongues of men and of angels’ and envision themselves as pulling down the resources of heaven to heal earthly ills.²⁴³

It is clear that in responding to the call to create and sustain networks, Bethel Church aligns with the Pentecostal tendency towards globalization.

Critiquing this move requires an exploration of the context of the AG. Margaret Poloma’s work *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* employs Max Weber’s routinization theory to discuss the routinization of the AG over and against the primacy of charisma.

According to Weber, spiritual experiences are at the root of the origin of new religions; these experiences often morph into religious doctrine that gives meaning to the original experiences, and into religious rituals that commemorate them. In this process of routinization, the actual spiritual experiences of the visionary founders and early followers are eclipsed by religious institutional developments that focus on institutionalized beliefs and practices. While making room for angelic rumours about revitalization through accounts of historic revival experiences, the cold sociological facts pointed to the AG being on a journey from its early ‘charismatic moment’ toward a routinization similar to that experienced by countless other sects and denominations in modern history.²⁴⁴

As Poloma outlines, ‘The Assemblies of God, as part of a larger Pentecostal revival in Christianity, was birthed in a unique charismatic breakthrough’.²⁴⁵ While Pentecostalism seemed to buck the routinization trend, resisting institutionalisation in an effort to protect charisma, Weber was proved right in his recognition that routinization and organisation inevitably follow Charismatic breakthrough. What Poloma disputes is the premise that routinization kills charisma:

Charisma, if it is to endure over time in modern society, will be bureaucratized in some form. It may lead to bureaucracy that subserves the original spirit (in which case charisma is fostered by the organization) or it may lead to an organization that uses

²⁴³ Brown, ‘Global Awakening’, p.374.

²⁴⁴ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.2.

²⁴⁵ Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, p.207.

charisma to further the organization (in which case charisma is overpowered by rationality and efficiency).²⁴⁶

What is of significance in this discussion, is the interplay between routinization and charisma. Poloma suggests that while routinization might be seen more in the national bureaucracy, charisma may be more evident in the local congregational setting. This may be true, however it is also inevitable that each congregation will allow for a differing degree of charisma dependent on the leadership of that congregation. It seems that Bethel Church moved towards placing an increasing value on charisma over the routinization typical of the AG.²⁴⁷ Indeed, ‘renewalist (revival/charismatic) congregations are less interested in Pentecostal identity than they are in Pentecostal experience and empowerment’.²⁴⁸ The decision to part from the AG can be understood within the context of charisma being afforded primacy over routinization in all levels of church life, including both meeting style and leadership.

Poloma and Green in *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* reassess the previous study on routinization and AG in light of periodic revivals. Revivals as a means of revitalizing the AG have been understood as centred around ‘Godly Love, a dynamic that is rooted in perceived experiences of the divine that deepen a person’s love for God and in turn empower acts of benevolence’.²⁴⁹ While routinization remains inevitable, Poloma suggests that revitalization is an equally significant dynamic process that will continue to take place alongside routinization in the reforming of congregations. It is possible that the revival being experienced at Bethel Church can be seen

²⁴⁶ Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, p.208.

²⁴⁷ If routinization is inevitable, perhaps Bethel Church would rather a routinization unique to them rather than conforming to the routinization mould of AG.

²⁴⁸ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.34.

²⁴⁹ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.14.

as an example of revitalization.²⁵⁰ The impact of ‘Godly Love’ will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

As previously mentioned, the AG ‘fear of falling into the abyss of ‘carnal’, unregulated experience’ has led to a rejection of revivals outside of themselves. ‘Within the AG... churches actively seeking revival are few in number and generally short-lived in that form, tending to shift into... a revival network outside the denomination’.²⁵¹ Bethel Church falls neatly into this category of an AG church that pursued Charismatic experience at the expense of belonging to the traditional denomination. The revival triggered by prioritising Charismatic experience has resulted in the formation of a relational network designed to facilitate global revival.

3.8 The present ‘revival’

Presently, the revival being experienced in Redding, California is understood to be at its peak. Since its beginnings the notoriety of this small city in Northern California has spread across the global Pentecostal/Charismatic scene. The distinction between the local church and global movement continues to evolve and to date remains loosely defined. Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge the difference between the local church community situated in the city of Redding and the global movement spearheaded by the leadership of Bethel Church, and facilitated through the relational revival network Global Legacy.

²⁵⁰ Compare with Stackhouse, I., ‘Revivalism, Faddism and the Gospel’, in Walker, A., & Aune, K., *On Revival: A Critical Examination* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.239-251 – what is deemed revitalization may equally be a fad!

²⁵¹ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God, Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, p.46.

Eric and Candace Johnson have taken over leadership of the local church, Bethel Redding, releasing Bill Johnson to engage more with the global movement.²⁵² The local church exists independently of this global interaction. There is a community of believers living in Redding who consider themselves members of Bethel Church, and who participate in the life of the church.²⁵³ However, the local church is impacted by the global movement due to the annual influx of students to Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry and by virtue of the local church being a site of pilgrimage for Pentecostal/Charismatic believers attending conferences and visiting the church.

In 2012/2013 Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry trained in excess of 1800 students.²⁵⁴ These students are integrated into the daily life of the church including participating in areas of service.²⁵⁵ The high volume of students interacting with the church as a local entity makes the church community a transient one however it also boosts the presence of the church in the local community of Redding. The students are arguably the greatest contributor to signs, wonders and miracles being experienced on a regular basis outside of the church building.²⁵⁶ Redding as a region becomes the training ground for the students to practice what they have been taught.

The local/global dichotomy is manifested in the various ministries that have been born out of Bethel Church. Many of the leaders are known and familiar within the local environment and simultaneously are famous on the global Pentecostal/Charismatic scene. Bill Johnson is the senior pastor of Bethel Church and yet also functions on a global level on his own as Bill Johnson Ministries, with other Bethel Church leaders through Global Legacy, and with other

²⁵² <http://www.ibethel.org/users/ericjohnson> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵³ <http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵⁴ <http://bssm.net/about/mission> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵⁵ <http://bssm.net/student-life/revival-culture> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵⁶ <http://bssm.net/student-life/revival-culture> [accessed 30.04.2015].

revivalist ministries through Revival Alliance.²⁵⁷ Kris Vallotton, another senior pastor at Bethel Church pioneers Kris Vallotton Ministries, and Danny Silk, who despite moving to Sacramento to help lead Jesus Culture Sacramento with Banning Liebscher, continues to contribute in a leadership capacity to the life of Bethel Church and Loving on Purpose ministries.²⁵⁸ Both Kris Vallotton and Danny Silk also participate in Global Legacy events. As well as sowing into the local church in Redding, these three senior pastors travel extensively across the globe promoting their publications and delivering their teaching series. Global Legacy is the relational network that was established after Bethel Church left the AG.²⁵⁹ It facilitates connection between churches across the globe and with Bethel Church, with the express purpose of encouraging global revival. The website affirms the mission of Bethel Church – ‘Global Legacy is dedicated to revival: the personal, regional and global expansion of God’s kingdom through his manifest presence’.²⁶⁰ Through this website churches are able to create a profile and affiliate with the network. The primary outworking of Global Legacy is through gatherings and conferences.

Revival Alliance is the means through which relationships between Pentecostal/Charismatic revivalist leaders are formalised; this alliance includes Bill and Beni Johnson, John and Carol Arnott, Randy and DeAnne Clark, Georgian and Winnie Banov, Che and Sue Ahn and Rolland and Heidi Baker.²⁶¹ These revivalist leaders are to varying degrees associated with the New Apostolic Reformation which affirms revival as a ‘core value’, practically

²⁵⁷ <http://www.ibethel.org/users/billandbenijohnson> [accessed 30.04.2015].
; <http://bjm.org/>; <http://globallegacy.com/> [accessed 30.04.2015].
; <http://revivalalliance.com/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵⁸ <http://www.ibethel.org/users/krisandkathyvallotton> [accessed 30.04.2015]; <http://www.kvministries.com/>;
<http://www.ibethel.org/users/dannyandsherisilk> [accessed 30.04.2015]; <http://www.lovingonpurpose.com/>
[accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁵⁹ <http://globallegacy.com> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶⁰ <http://globallegacy.com/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶¹ <http://revivalalliance.com/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

outworked in heaven being established on earth through the visionary leadership of apostles.²⁶²

The global dimension of Bethel Church is carried in part by the prolific publication of books that translate the espoused theology into a written form. All of the aforementioned senior leaders are regularly writing teaching series and books that are made available for purchase across the globe. In addition, music and worship has contributed to the fame of the church. Jesus Culture, originally the youth band of Bethel Church has become a global movement in itself with Banning Liebscher at the helm and with Kim Walker Smith and Chris Quilala growing in fame through their worship leading and song writing roles.²⁶³ Jesus Culture, as of 2014 established a local church community in Sacramento.²⁶⁴ Jesus Culture may have been an access point for a younger generation of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians. In recent years Bethel Music has enjoyed an increased profile.²⁶⁵ Led in a local and global capacity by Brian and Jenn Johnson, the output of music and worship from Bethel Church includes those involved with leading musical worship during weekly services as well as the production and release of worship albums. Bethel Music has released a significant number of studio recorded and live albums containing songs that have become popular in Pentecostal/ Charismatic churches across the globe. Bethel Music facilitate the fame of individual worship leaders who are part of the local church. More recently, Bethel Music has begun to formalise connections with the likes of other worship leaders including Jonathan David and Melissa Helser and Josh Baldwin.²⁶⁶ Bethel Music regularly tour across the globe; in 2012 they toured in the UK, and more recently have toured in South Africa, as well as both the East and West coasts of the US. The local weekly services are available through iBethel.tv, an entity which in itself

²⁶² Lee, M.T., Poloma, M.M., & Post, S.G., *The Heart of Religion* (New York: OUP, 2013) p.175.

²⁶³ <http://new.jesusculture.com/music/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶⁴ <http://new.jesusculture.com/sacramento/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶⁵ <https://bethelmusic.com/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶⁶ <https://bethelmusic.com/artists/> [accessed 30.04.2015].

contributes to the increased profile of the global movement.²⁶⁷ iBethel.tv is the media resource which allows those who subscribe to live stream and continue to access weekly services as well as some conferences held in Redding. This media resource allows anyone from across the globe access to experience the local church life via online video streaming.

As it stands the local church of Bethel in Redding, California interacts heavily with the global movement which it has spawned. The present day revival is very much shaped by the globalisation of Bethel Church, enabled by the growing profile of the local church on the global Pentecostal/ Charismatic scene.

3.9 Conclusion

By way of conclusion, Wacker proposes that Pentecostalism has survived by virtue of its ability to embrace and pursue both primitivism and pragmatism.²⁶⁸ By primitivism he means a return to the New Testament order which values charisma and by pragmatism, he is referring to the ability to adapt and address practical needs. The story of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church can be viewed within this framework; their success and growth could be attributed to their ability to hold onto both primitivism and pragmatism. Primitivism for Bill Johnson however relates less to the New Testament and more to a return to the norms of past healing revivals, or perhaps a pursuit of the greatest revival yet.²⁶⁹ Pragmatism on the other hand is arguably illustrated by Johnson's ability to relate to other ministries and networks, and strategically build the global movement. The narrative of Johnson, and to the degree that it is influenced by Johnson, the narrative of Bethel Church are heavily shaped by the concept and experience of revival. For Johnson this concept and experience is understood through the

²⁶⁷ www.iBethel.tv [accessed 30.04.2015].

²⁶⁸ Wacker, G., *Heaven Below* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2001) p.12-14.

²⁶⁹ Warner, 'Ecstatic Spirituality and Entrepreneurial Revivalism: Reflections on the 'Toronto Blessing'', p.230 - fitting with the concept of the quest for ultimacy.

lens of Matthew 6, 'on earth as it is in heaven'. This lens will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. Healing Praxis: Theology

4.1 Introduction

The healing praxis of Bill Johnson will be addressed by teasing out the healing theology and healing practices. Given that praxis refers to beliefs [value] laden action, the belief element of the healing praxis will be identified through a discussion of Johnson's theology, and the action element of praxis will be identified by a discussion of healing practices in the next chapter. According to Swinton and Mowat,

There is no such thing as a value-free form of practice. Whether acknowledged or otherwise, all of our practices are underpinned with very particular theories and theologies. In a very real sense belief is within the act itself.²⁷⁰

It is apparent that understanding the beliefs that lie beneath practices is crucial to understanding the practices themselves. Distinguishing between the belief and the practice can seem an artificial task as the belief is itself embedded within the action. Discussion may indeed oscillate between both beliefs and practices even after an attempt to separate the two. Nevertheless, it is important to identify both the belief and the practice in order to understand the interaction between the two. This chapter will therefore consider the beliefs that directly and indirectly contribute to Johnson's healing theology, including Christology, soteriology and eschatology as well as origin of sickness, the nature and will of God, the importance of testimony and the sub-narrative of wholeness.²⁷¹

4.2 On earth as it is in heaven.

Johnson's theology as a whole is underpinned by the biblical text, Matthew 6:9-13:

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

²⁷⁰ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.20.

²⁷¹ Some parts of this chapter have been recently published in the *Journal for European Pentecostal Theology*. Shuttleworth, Abigail, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: A Critical Discussion of the Theology of Bill Johnson', *JEPTA* 35:2 (2015) pp.1-14.

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
¹³ And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.²⁷²

On this text is hung an array of ideas owned by Bill Johnson and the Bethel church community at large. For Johnson, this text, in particular the statement – your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven - sums up the ultimate will of God.²⁷³ He goes on to conclude that if this is the will of God, then it is therefore the mission of the church – ‘our co-mission comes from sub-mission to His primary mission’.²⁷⁴ This will or mission of God understood through the lens of heaven on earth is explained by Johnson,

When we pray for His Kingdom to come, we are asking Him to superimpose the rules, order and benefits of His world over this one until this one looks like His. That’s what happens when the sick are healed or the demonized are set free. His world collides with the world of darkness, and His world always wins. Our battle is always a battle for dominion – a conflict of kingdoms.²⁷⁵

The centrality of the collision of heaven with earth is reflective of the influence of John Wimber’s kingdom theology and likewise reflects the Pentecostal dualistic worldview of a battle between God and Satan.²⁷⁶ The concept of heaven on earth is one that underpins the theology espoused by Bill Johnson and embodied by Bethel Church, and is the practical outworking of revival as understood by Johnson.

²⁷² Matthew 6:33 – NKJV as used by Bill Johnson and Destiny Image Publishers.

²⁷³ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.32.

²⁷⁴ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.38.

²⁷⁵ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.63.

²⁷⁶ Percy, *Words, Wonder and Power*, p.86 – ‘Writing in The Kingdom of God, he notes that Jesus offers a pattern for working against demon-possession, disease, aspects of nature, and ultimately, death. Jesus performed these works as necessary demonstrations of power, since believers themselves will have to deploy this same power if they are to further the work that Jesus began, namely defeating Satan: The Kingdom will arrive on a worldwide basis when the worldwide power of Satan is broken at the Second Coming of Jesus. Until then the battles go on, even though the decisive battle has been won at the cross. The call of the army is to rout Satan and his demons’.

In revival, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit brings an invasion of the presence of the King of Heaven, which displaces the prince of darkness. The result of this displacement is that people experience the life and power of the Kingdom. Bodies are healed, souls are delivered and saved, believers grow in unity, and ultimately, society and the earth are transformed.

True revival not only calls people to pursue God, but also to pursue their purpose in history and to partner with Him in establishing His dominion over all things.

True revival is an outpouring of the Spirit that brings the Kingdom until there is transformation unto reformation. The nature of the Kingdom is continual advancement. It follows, then, that revival is meant to be sustained through the generations, until 'the knowledge of the glory of God' covers the earth 'as the waters cover the sea' (Hab 2:14).²⁷⁷

Revival is the term used by Johnson to describe what is happening in Bethel Church and in Redding. For Johnson revival indicates the establishment and continual increase of heaven being experienced on earth. Revival is understood as the heaven coming to earth and the establishment of the kingdom. Revival is evidenced in global, societal transformation as well as in personal salvation experiences and healing miracles. The personal experiences of revival are building blocks for cultural transformation. It is apparent that healing miracles are a significant indicator of revival, or heaven being established on earth. The healing theology of Johnson is built upon revival being understood through the lens of Matthew 6 – 'on earth as it is in heaven'. This chapter will identify the central elements of Johnson's healing theology.

4.3 Christology

Johnson's position on Christology is summarised in the statement below:

Jesus reflected perfect theology both in what He showed us of the Father and what He showed us about carrying out the Father's will. Jesus emptied Himself of divinity and became man. While He is eternally God, He chose to live within the restrictions of a man who had no sin and was empowered by the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁸

This initial statement indicates a strong leaning towards a kenotic model of Christology as derived from a particular reading of the Pauline passage - Philippians 2.

²⁷⁷ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.49.

²⁷⁸ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.125.

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death—
 even death on a cross.²⁷⁹

This tendency towards a kenotic Christology is representative of the Pentecostal tradition - 'they take seriously the incarnation and notion that Jesus 'emptied' himself, identifying that process as 'divesting himself of the glory and privileges he enjoyed with the Father in past eternity'.²⁸⁰ In this respect it seems that Johnson's AG background carries a significant influence.

For Johnson, the divesting of glory and privileges extends to the divesting of divine power.²⁸¹ 'Jesus so emptied Himself that He was incapable of doing what was required of Him by the Father – without the Father's help'.²⁸² The Greek word *kenoō* which infers to make empty or void is a derivative of the root term *kenos* which likewise is indicative of emptiness or being devoid of truth.²⁸³ While Johnson correctly identifies that *kenos* refers to becoming nothing, it is unclear what nothing means in relation to the Son's self-emptying. Johnson's Christology denies Christ any divine power:

Jesus Christ said of Himself, 'The Son can do nothing'. In the Greek language that word nothing has a unique meaning – it means NOTHING, just like it does in English! He had NO supernatural capabilities whatsoever!²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV)

²⁸⁰ Warrington, K., *Pentecostal Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2008) p.34.

²⁸¹ Jacobsen, D., *Thinking in the Spirit* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003) p.93; quoting Boyd, F.M., *The Kenosis (Self-Emptying) of the Lord Jesus Christ* (San Francisco: Frank M. Boyd, 1947).

²⁸² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.50.

²⁸³ <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G2758&t=KJV>;

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G2756&t=KJV>.

²⁸⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.29.

It is important to acknowledge at this stage that Johnson brings a Johannine text into dialogue with the Pauline text. In referencing John 5:19, Johnson is referring to the Greek term *oudeis* which does indeed mean nothing.²⁸⁵ The distinctive features of Christ's humanity are noted by Johnson: he was without sin, and he lived in dependency on the Holy Spirit- 'everything He did, He did as a man, completely dependent on the Holy Spirit'.²⁸⁶ According to Johnson, Jesus was able to perform supernatural signs and wonders because of the Holy Spirit anointing on Him. 'It was the Holy Spirit upon Jesus that enabled Him to know what the Father was doing and saying. That same gift of the Spirit has been given to us for that same purpose'.²⁸⁷ By asserting that Jesus was empty of divinity and capable of nothing without the Holy Spirit suggests that Johnson holds onto an essential Spirit Christology, thus affording a constitutive role to the Holy Spirit in the person and work of Christ.

It should be noted that this Spirit Christology, built on the notion of Jesus as a man dependent on the Holy Spirit, is derived from a Lukan perspective, which Johnson conflates with the Johannine material. Johnson draws on Pauline, Lukan and Johannine texts without acknowledging the distinctions in these Christological perspectives. In particular, Johnson holds a Luke-Acts Christological position, while importing and reading Johannine texts through this Luke-Acts lens. Johannine texts are referenced but without an appreciation of Logos Christology. David Brown acknowledges that for many who defend kenotic Christology, evidence is drawn not only from the Pauline passage, but also from the Gospels. Even though John's Gospel presents Jesus with a higher awareness of his divinity, Godet

²⁸⁵ <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3762&t=KJV>.

²⁸⁶ Loren, J.C., Chavda, M., & Johnson, B., *Shifting Shadows of Supernatural Power* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006) p.183.

²⁸⁷ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.136.

argues that Jesus' own words in John are fundamental to a kenotic Christology.²⁸⁸ In his holding to and defending a kenotic Christology, Johnson is drawing on the same material. Johnson also maintains that while still fully God, Christ became fully human and chose the 'self-imposed restriction to live as a man'.²⁸⁹ Johnson justifies his position:

Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He is not a created being who somehow ascended to divinity, as some cults claim. He is entirely God, entirely man. But both His life and death were lived as man. What that means is that He set aside His divinity to live as a man. He was without sin and was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁰

While not explicitly referencing the Logos, it seems there is an attempt to hold onto the pre-existent Logos. Nevertheless what is unclear is what Johnson means when he states that Jesus is 'fully God' and how he understands divinity being set aside. For Jesus to be fully Logos and for his divinity to be set aside is a contradiction in terms. For Johnson, the anointing is what linked Jesus the man, to the divine, enabling Him to destroy the works of the devil.²⁹¹ It seems that the dominant Christological model for Johnson is centred on kenosis, with elements of Spirit Christology and Logos Christology woven through. Spirit Christology has a place by virtue of Johnson's desire to empower redeemed humanity to do the works that Jesus did.²⁹² The underlying justification for the elevation of Spirit Christology is functional; however every functional Christology presupposes an ontological Christology. His ontological Christology may reference and hold onto divinity but his functional Christology significantly downplays it.

²⁸⁸ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.4 referencing Godet, FL., *Commentary on John's Gospel* (3rd ed., (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1892) (translated MD Cusin L).

²⁸⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.29.

²⁹⁰ Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, p.40-1.

²⁹¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.79.

²⁹² Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.38 - 'The anointing that empowers us to be like Christ and do good works is not an impersonal force. The anointing is a Person. It is the Holy Spirit Himself, and He is passionate to accomplish something very specific in us –to conform us to the image of Christ. The more room we make for Him in our lives, the more He puts His power and revelation to work for that purpose. He is the One who reveals what the Father is doing and saying and then equips us to do and say it'.

4.3.1 Discussion of Christology

As Ralph del Colle suggests,

The primary issue is how to acknowledge the pneumatological dimension of Christology without utilizing it to displace logos- Christologies and their trinitarian outcome. It is a question of complementarity and enrichment rather than wholesale reconstruction and revision of traditional Christology.²⁹³

Kenotic Christology, in its basic form, understands the ‘incarnation as the self-limitation by the Son of his divine mode of existence’.²⁹⁴ It emerged in the nineteenth century as a response to the challenge of scientific rationalism which objected to any dogma claiming an authority which rested solely on revelation. In its extreme form, kenotic Christology denies the hypostatic union which directly negates the pre-existent, eternal Logos and directly conflicts with the classic definition of Chalcedon. The hypostatic union is the union between the humanity and divinity of Christ in the one hypostasis or individual of Christ. While Chalcedon affirmed that Christ is of one substance (*homoousio*) with the Father in his divinity, Johnson gives no attention to the way in which he understands the human and divine to be one in Christ. He fails to identify with *anhypostasia* whereby the human self-conscious *homoousios* has no existence on its own but only within the hypostatic union with the Logos, or with *enhypostasia* where Christ has full humanity but essential self-hood is rooted in the Logos.²⁹⁵ The problem with kenotic Christology is that it does not consider how divinity and humanity co-exist in the person of Jesus; this absence of consideration results in the divine Logos being overlooked when in classical Christology the Logos is the subject of the incarnate Christ.

²⁹³ Del Colle, ‘Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality’, p.98.

²⁹⁴ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, p.2.

²⁹⁵ See discussion in 7.4.1.

The significant element of Logos Christology pertains to the pre-existence of Christ; John is the first to articulate Jesus' divine sonship as stemming from his personal pre-existence as a divine being, in continual relationship with his Father.²⁹⁶

For just as John is clear that the Word belongs wholly to the realm of the divine, is theos (God/god), so is he clear that flesh belongs wholly to this world, transient and corruptible and antithetical to the other.²⁹⁷

Logos Christology, in holding on to the pre-existence of Christ, gives emphasis to the hypostatic union.²⁹⁸ Where kenotic Christology displaces the divine Logos, Logos Christology restores this element. Logos Christology allows for all members of the Trinity to be present and active; in doing so Logos Christology requires that Spirit Christology be drawn into the mix. If the eternal pre-existent Logos becomes flesh, the discussion must then turn to the way in which the Spirit and Christ are distinct yet complementary.

Ralph del Colle defines Spirit Christology:

The most succinct definition of Spirit-Christology is that the Holy Spirit is attributed a constitutive role in the theological and soteriological reality that we identify as the person and work of Jesus Christ.²⁹⁹

Del Colle contributes to the discussion by valuing Logos Christology while also emphasising the constitutive role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation. Likewise Del Colle draws on Tom Smail who states that Jesus' humanity was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and made effective by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁰ However, he is careful to not displace the Logos by the Spirit in the incarnate Christ. What is of importance is that Logos Christology and Spirit Christology are held in tension together.

²⁹⁶ Dunn, *Christology in the Making, Second Edition*, p.59.

²⁹⁷ Dunn, J.D.G., *The Christ and the Spirit, Vol 1 Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) p.45.

²⁹⁸ Colyer, E.M., ed., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2001) p.59.

²⁹⁹ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.95-6.

³⁰⁰ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.109 referencing Smail, T., *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) p.64.

In valuing Spirit Christology and holding onto a Pentecostal kenotic position it may be that dismissing kenotic Christology altogether is unnecessary. David Brown posits that such a kenotic Christology may be possible if sufficient consideration is given to the hypostatic union, namely the co-existence of and relationship between the divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus. By an analogous reference to ‘method acting’ based on the theories of Russian theatre director Konstantin Stanislavsky, Brown formulates a kenotic Christology that gives consideration to how divinity and humanity may be understood to co-exist. Brown is a potential dialogue partner and his dialogue provides an opportunity for the modification of Johnson’s Christology.

Kathryn Tanner in her review of Brown’s work also suggests that the hypostatic union can be maintained by virtue of distinguishing between the divine and human nature in Christ. She suggests that Christ was divine not because of divine power but because he was divinely purposed and the incarnation was divinely orchestrated. This Christological position affords Johnson the potential to pursue his functional goal.³⁰¹

Offering a different perspective, Oliver Crisp discusses the hypostatic union in relation to asymmetrical penetration and nature-perichoresis. He argues that in this penetration of the divine nature with the human nature there is a communication of attributes that occurs without predicating the properties that properly belong to the other, and without transference of properties or confusion between the two natures.³⁰² Crisp employing the *extra calvinisticum* formulates a ‘krypsis’ Christology whereby the Word becomes incarnate and assumes human nature, but continues to exercise divine properties in abstraction from the

³⁰¹ Tanner, K., ‘David Brown’s *Divine Humanity*’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68:1 (2015) p.110-2. It should be noted that Kathryn Tanner’s contribution is not kenotic but classical Christology. Tanner’s contribution will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

³⁰² Crisp O., *Divinity and Humanity*, p.19-25.

incarnation. As such there is no relinquishing of divine properties except through the human nature of Christ between the Virgin conception and resurrection.³⁰³ The human nature of Christ has restricted access to divine attributes and therefore it cannot be said that Christ performed miracles in his divinity. To this end, Crisp offers a potential means of engaging with and reforming Johnson's Christological position.³⁰⁴

Johnson is driven by the need to create a model for Christian discipleship. In living with the limitations of any redeemed human, 'Jesus became the model for all who would embrace the invitation to invade the impossible in His name'.³⁰⁵ The critical point for Johnson is that redeemed humanity is enabled to live like Christ. If Jesus performed supernatural signs, wonders and miracles as a man empowered by the Holy Spirit, as opposed to performing supernatural works as God, then redeemed humanity is enabled to do the same. In emphasising the universality of Christ by the Spirit he undermines the particularity and uniqueness of Christ. Johnson conflates sons of God with the Son of God in terms of power and authority; his Christological position is shaped by his desire to see the universal church function more successfully in divine healing.

4.4 Soteriology

The Church has largely replaced the gospel of the Kingdom with the gospel of salvation. The gospel of salvation is focussed on getting people saved and going to Heaven. The beauty of that message makes it very easy to miss the fact that it is only a part of the whole message that Jesus gave us. The gospel of the Kingdom is focused on the transformation of lives, cities, and nations, bringing the reality of Heaven to earth.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.150-1.

³⁰⁴ Oliver Crisp, like Tanner is not employing kenotic Christology in his contribution. Crisp's contribution will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

³⁰⁵ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.29.

³⁰⁶ DeCenso Jr., ed., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.259 – quote by Johnson; Johnson is referring to the universal church.

Johnson's soteriology is underpinned by the goal of broadening the understanding of salvation beyond gaining access to heaven, to include the commission of bringing heaven to earth. Johnson's holistic soteriology emphasises the life of Christ as well as the work of Christ on the cross. It seems that for Johnson the climax of the salvific work of Christ is his ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit to enable believers to live as He did.³⁰⁷ He justifies this position by elevating the significance of the cross as the turning point for human history:

The Christian life is not found on the Cross. It is found because of the Cross... WE HAVE NOTHING WITHOUT THE CROSS! Yet, the Cross is not the end- it is the beginning, the entrance to the Christian life.³⁰⁸

While the cross is significant, Johnson's desire to redress the balance means that his emphasis is placed more on the effects of the cross and the embracing of the fullness of salvation for humanity. This is corroborated by a senior leader of Bethel Church, who asserts that in reference to Romans 3:23, we often deal with 'all have sinned' but we ignore that 'all have fallen short of glory'. The context of this statement inferred that the repentance from sinning is not enough, but that repentance towards glory is the goal.³⁰⁹

The atonement theology that lies parallel to Christology coheres with the kenotic approach:

He laid his divinity aside as He sought to fulfil the assignment given to Him by the Father: to live life as a man without sin, and then die in the place of mankind (sic) for sin. This would be essential in His plan to redeem mankind. The sacrifice that could atone for sin had to be a lamb, (powerless), and had to be spotless, (without sin).³¹⁰

Johnson connects the kenosis of Christ with his atoning work – by emptying himself of divinity, he lived fully as a man and by living a sinless life as a man, his atoning sacrifice provided redemption for humanity. Having already addressed the issues of kenosis, the question of whether Jesus as a man, with unspecified hypostatic union, could provide the

³⁰⁷ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.71.

³⁰⁸ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.46.

³⁰⁹ Comment recorded from Sunday service, College View Campus, 6pm, 09.02.2014.

³¹⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.79.

atoning sacrifice for all of humanity will be set aside. What is clear is that Johnson subscribes to a substitutionary theory and in doing so he holds that Christ died in the place of humanity:

Think about it: Jesus not only died for us, He died as us. He became sin, our sin, so that we might become the righteousness of Christ. With that being the case, His victory is our victory.³¹¹

It should be noted that for Johnson the atoning work of Christ on the cross is understood within the context of victory over the enemy whereby Christ conquers death, the grave and Satan. This model is preferred over the penal substitutionary theory that places God as presiding judge requiring Christ to bear his wrath. The atonement model adopted by Johnson closely aligns with the *Christus Victor* model. According to Gregory A Boyd,

The *Christus Victor* view of the atonement cannot be appropriately understood without an appreciation for the broader spiritual warfare motif that runs throughout Scripture... God's ongoing conflict with and ultimate victory over cosmic and human agents who oppose him and who threaten his creation.³¹²

Boyd suggests that the primary activity of Jesus was destroying the works of the devil. He argues that the cosmic significance of Christ's victory outweighs the soteriological significance of the cross – 'the cosmic significance of Christ's work is ontologically more fundamental than its soteriological significance'.³¹³ For Boyd, *Christus Victor* is pivotal: 'our personal and social victories participate in Christ's cosmic victory'.³¹⁴ The *Christus Victor* model coheres with Johnson's attempt to promote a holistic approach to salvation that goes beyond forgiveness of sin to include victory and the establishment of a new kingdom.

In addition, it seems that Johnson's atonement theology also fits with the therapeutic model, in which Christ deals with sin sickness.

³¹¹ Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, p.42-3.

³¹² Boyd, G.A., 'Christus Victor View', in Beilby J. & Eddy P.R., ed., *The Nature of the Atonement* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006) p.25.

³¹³ Boyd, 'Christus Victor View', p.33.

³¹⁴ Boyd, 'Christus Victor View', p.34.

How much did God hate sickness? As much as He hated sin. They are dealt with almost as one and the same. What sin is to my soul, sickness is to my body. He hated sickness enough to allow His Son to experience such a brutal whipping. The blood covers our sin, but the wounds paid for our miracle.³¹⁵

Another primary source states ‘everything that is a consequence of your sin, because of what you've done, was put on the cross’.³¹⁶ Bruce R. Reichenbach builds on the notion of healing and restoration in Isaiah.³¹⁷ Reichenbach identifies that sickness describes not only the spiritual condition of humanity but also physical, economic, social and environmental.³¹⁸

According to Reichenbach,

Isaiah describes the human predicament. We suffer from sickness (pain) and sorrows (mental and physical suffering) brought on by our sins and transgressions. We are sinners who because of our punishment need to be made well (*shalom* – Is 53:5): our sins removed and our sickness healed.³¹⁹

Atonement through this lens restores the separation between God and humanity; ‘his absorption of both our sin and punishment is the means to healing and restoration’.³²⁰ For Johnson, that healing is in the atonement is a given; indeed it could be argued that healing is the lens through which salvation is understood. Christ’s atoning work provides healing for sin’s sickness, as well as physical sickness, and the sickness that pervades the fallen world. For Johnson, salvation is holistic – Christ’s work on the cross. ‘In the New Testament, the very word for salvation means healing, deliverance, and forgiveness of sin. The Kingdom brings the complete solution to the whole man, and we have access to that reality even now, just as Jesus did throughout His life’.³²¹

³¹⁵ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.426 – Matthew 6:13.

³¹⁶ Comment recorded from Friday service, College View Campus, 7pm, 24.01.2014.

³¹⁷ Reichenbach, B.R., ‘Healing View’, in Beilby, J.& Eddy, P.R., *The Nature of the Atonement* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006) p.142.

³¹⁸ Reichenbach, ‘Healing View’, p.120.

³¹⁹ Reichenbach, ‘Healing View’, p.128.

³²⁰ Reichenbach, ‘Healing View’, p.130.

³²¹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.50.

This theological position is congruous with the Pentecostal AG background of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church, however an interesting difference is Johnson's acceptance of process.³²²

One of the areas we need to look at is gaining a healthy understanding of process. This can be theologically challenging for many reasons. The argument is that when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, there was a complete shift from an old covenant to a new covenant, so we no longer have to do anything to get what He has made available. With this reasoning, we have removed process from the equation. Process helps prepare us and our hearts to recognise what we have and to use it in a way that honors the King.³²³

While one Pentecostal approach to healing in the atonement prefers healing to be received immediately and in fullness, Johnson gives room for the outworking of healing. While he maintains that Christ's finished work on the cross is sufficient for healing, he nevertheless holds this in tension with the process of healing being outworked and experienced in reality.

4.4.1 Discussion of Soteriology

Johnson's soteriological position is liable to cause controversy given that he is addressing a perceived imbalance in popular theology that emphasises salvation being limited to forensic justification over and above a holistic approach. One of the speakers at Bethel Church identified the work of Christ on the cross as justification, reconciliation and participation, however participation is emphasised over and above other factors.³²⁴ In his attempt to broaden out the understanding of salvation, Johnson views the significance of the cross in light of what it achieved for humanity. Thus the significance of the cross itself is downplayed, and emphasis is attributed to what the cross made available, specifically the sending of the Holy Spirit to empower humanity. Johnson promotes the need to recognise the restored position of right relationship with God that is made accessible for humanity through the cross. His goal is to ensure that the church acknowledges this position, and appropriates

³²² Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.166; http://ag.org/top/beliefs/our_core_doctrines/healing/ - Doug Clay identifies healing in the atonement as one of the core beliefs of the Assemblies of God.

³²³ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.138-9.

³²⁴ Comment recorded from Friday service, College View Campus, 7pm, 24.01.2014.

what the cross achieved. While a holistic soteriology is intrinsic to Pentecostal theology, Johnson's reduction of the purpose of the cross to the Holy Spirit being sent to empower redeemed humanity is not true to a holistic approach to soteriology.

Pinnock, through the lens of recapitulation, identifies holistic soteriology as encompassing all aspects of salvation including the climactic union with God:

Obviously salvation is multifaceted and has many dimensions – conversion, new birth, justification and sanctification – but the goal is surely glorification and union with God. Luther fixed on something very important – the removal of our condemnation. But this is but a facet of salvation, part of a much larger scenario.³²⁵

Pinnock's holistic soteriology seeks to expand salvation beyond acquittal and justification, to include being conformed to the image of Christ and sharing in the glory of God. While legal justification before God is a moment in salvation, a holistic approach requires that justification is not the fullness of salvation. The central motif of salvation for Pinnock is union. Indeed, the Orthodox influence determines his understanding of atonement as unity between God and humanity. By way of articulating the holistic nature of his soteriology Pinnock suggests that:

Christian experience is more than just a feeling of relief at having evaded divine retribution. Justification is a step along the road of salvation, but it points forward to transformation and union. It is not the principal article of all Christian doctrine, as Luther claimed. It captures a truth – the truth of God's unmerited favour – but it cannot be the model of salvation as a whole. Being saved is more like falling in love with God.³²⁶

Pinnock's holistic soteriology does not undermine the significance of the cross, but recognises that the cross made possible salvation that is fully outworked through union between humanity and God. It seems that Pinnock has achieved the goal of theologically embracing the fullness of salvation sought after by Johnson.

³²⁵ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p.150-1.

³²⁶ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p.155-6.

Given the importance of a holistic soteriology, it should be noted that for Johnson healing is rooted in the atonement. As Althouse outlines,

Bodily healing was and is an integral part of Pentecostalism's full gospel, believed to bring physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual wholeness. Inheriting its theological position from the nineteenth century healing movement, and contextualised in diverse forms throughout the twentieth century, early Pentecostals believe that healing is made universally available in the atonement as a soteriological benefit of the work of Christ or that healing is available but may not be actualised until after death.³²⁷

What Johnson understands or means by his allusions to healing being in the atonement is unspecified. Wimber would have understood healing to be experienced as a result of the coming Kingdom of God. Wimber distinguishes between healing being *in* the atonement and healing *through* the atonement:

Baxter is not splitting hairs when he differentiates between healing in the atonement as opposed to healing through the atonement. Because our sins are forgiven at the cross and our future bodily resurrections are assured through Christ's resurrection, the Holy Spirit can and does break into this age with signs and assurances of the fullness of the Kingdom of God yet to come. By asserting that physical healing is an outcome of the atonement rather than in the atonement, Baxter and Brown avoid drawing erroneous conclusions.³²⁸

David Petts would support this position as he 'reject[s] any suggestion that healing is a part of salvation in the sense that healing, like the forgiveness of sins, is understood by some to be 'in the atonement' however he does hold that healing is made available through the overall salvific work and can be understood as part of ultimate salvation.³²⁹ Baxter maintains that 'forgiveness of sins and cleansing from guilt are offered through the cross freely and certainly and at the present moment to all who sincerely believe, whereas healing for all our infirmities and sicknesses is not offered freely and certainly at present to all who believe'.³³⁰

Whether the difference between healing in and through the atonement is deemed substantial enough to warrant distinction, it seems that Johnson coheres with the Pentecostal position of

³²⁷ Althouse, 'Pentecostal Eschatology in Context', p.211-2.

³²⁸ Wimber, J., *Power Healing* (Kent, UK: Stodder & Houghton, 1986) p.167.

³²⁹ Petts, D., 'Healing in the Atonement', *PhD Thesis*, University of Nottingham, 1993, p.222.

³³⁰ Baxter, J Sidlow, *Divine Healing of the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979) p.137.

healing being in the atonement. Nevertheless, his belief in process as referenced above suggests an alliance with Wimber's position.

Wesleyan 'perfection' strikes a tension between crisis and process. For Wesley, perfection was not exemption from sin or temptation but rather a growth towards choosing not to sin.³³¹ For those within the Wesleyan tradition, entire sanctification came as the result of a long quest, however it would come in a crisis moment equivalent to conversion.³³² While he acknowledged that within the process of sanctification, there was a moment of sanctification, Wesley did not assimilate this moment with baptism in the Holy Spirit.³³³ Due to the emphasis on process, Wesleyan Pentecostals would partake in persistent prayer for healing recognising it as communion with God. Kimberley Alexander argues that on Henry Knight's continuum between faithfulness (God always heals if you do these things) and freedom (God is sovereign and free to heal whom he chooses to heal), Wesleyan Pentecostals would sit comfortably at the freedom end of the spectrum.³³⁴ Dayton discusses the transition from Wesleyan thought to the formulation of Pentecostal entire sanctification, and suggests that this shift is triggered by the resolving of the tension between process and crisis in favour of crisis.³³⁵ According to Alexander, 'this new Pentecostal soteriology, disclaimed sanctification as a second definite work of grace, seeing justification and sanctification as occurring at the moment of conversion' – this theology was termed the Finished Work of the Cross.³³⁶

This decisive action by Jesus was viewed as perfect, in the sense of complete and final. It was a finished work. Jesus was seen as a substitute for condemned humanity,

³³¹ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p.47.

³³² Bebbington, D., *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2000) p.62-3.

³³³ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p.48.

³³⁴ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.208.

³³⁵ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p.69.

³³⁶ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.150.

paying the penalty price for redemption. This was a once-and-for-all act which had eternal effect.³³⁷

Finished Work Pentecostals of the early twentieth century maintained that healing was provided in the atonement, the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Just as one reckoned that their salvation was accomplished on the cross, so one looked back to the cross and reckoned one's healing accomplished.³³⁸

It is apparent that Johnson draws from both of these traditions in his understanding of salvation. While his AG background carries with it a leaning towards the Finished Work position, there is equally a Wesleyan influence that values the tension between process and crisis.³³⁹

It is abundantly clear that Johnson's soteriological thoughts feed directly into a distinct understanding of healing. The therapeutic and *Christus Victor* atonement theories that interplay within Johnson's theology demonstrate the significance of healing. While the *Christus Victor* model endorses victory over sickness, the therapeutic model encourages salvation to be viewed through the lens of healing. Furthermore, it has been made clear that Johnson's theology is underpinned by a holistic approach to soteriology even if this is not always explicit. This holistic approach elevates all component parts of the salvation experience so that justification is not primary, but that the whole person is restored to union with God which intrinsically includes physical restoration or healing. Healing in the atonement is also a major contributor to healing theology as it carries an explanation for why healing is possible. Alignment with the healing in the atonement school of thought is indicative of an alliance with traditional Pentecostalism, however, the emphasis on process demonstrates a breaking away from the Finished Work school. It seems that Johnson draws on a variety of streams, models and approaches to formulate his soteriological position, all of which impacts and feeds into a unique understanding of healing.

³³⁷ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.210.

³³⁸ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.215.

³³⁹ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.160.

4.5 Eschatology

Johnson's eschatology builds on the concept of a collision or interaction of two worlds: heaven on earth, light and darkness, the visible and the invisible. It is here that the 'on earth as it is in heaven' motif is most strongly evident. The more of the Kingdom of God that is contended for and received, the more extreme the collision of two worlds, with more of heaven, light and the invisible becoming visible and manifest.

When we do the will of God, we bring Kingdom reality crashing into the works of the devil. We initiate conflict between earthly reality and heavenly reality, becoming the bridge and connection point that makes it possible through prayer and radical obedience to assert the rulership of God.³⁴⁰

For Johnson, miracles, signs and wonders are one of the most significant ways in which what is in heaven becomes an operational, experiential reality on earth.

Johnson does not subscribe explicitly to premillennialism, postmillennialism or amillennialism. Given his traditional Pentecostal heritage this is noteworthy however, he does object strongly to the notion of the demise of the church in anticipation of Christ's coming – 'a cornerstone in this theology is that the condition of the Church will always be getting worse and worse; therefore, tragedy in the Church is just another sign of these being the last days'.³⁴¹ Johnson is less concerned with schema and more with the practice of establishing the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless he maintains that as the Kingdom of God is extended so the true church will be strengthened. It is apparent that without subscribing to a postmillennial position explicitly, Johnson maintains a postmillennial optimism.

For Johnson, eschatology is only relevant and meaningful when discussed in the context of the now and not yet of the Kingdom.

³⁴⁰ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.39.

³⁴¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.34.

Some people teach that the Kingdom of God is for some time in the distant future or past, not here and now. Some consign all the promises of God in the Bible to the millennium or to eternity because the accepted wisdom is that we're going to barely make heaven. But Jesus taught and demonstrated that the Kingdom of God is a present-tense reality – it exists now in the invisible realm.³⁴²

This statement indicates that Johnson is concerned with the now of the Kingdom. His attention is mostly on how much of the Kingdom can be experienced on earth today. While it has been suggested that Johnson has been influenced by John Wimber's kingdom now and not yet theology, it is important to note that when used by Wimber, the phrase now and not yet was a 'statement of promise'.³⁴³ Johnson identifies the potential for the now and not yet concept to contain either promise or limitation. Johnson disagrees with what he identifies as the restrictive and limiting use of the phrase which emphasises the not yet over the now – 'I teach our people that if now, but not yet is used to define promise and potential, accept it. If it is spoken to build awareness of our limitations and restrictions, reject it'.³⁴⁴

Johnson is very wary of creating a theology about what is not yet or has not yet been experienced.³⁴⁵ It can therefore be argued that Johnson does not so much endorse the theology of the kingdom being now and not yet, but rather that the kingdom is now and that which is not a reality now is relegated to the realm of 'mystery'. Johnson's attention is given to what can be experienced now and contending for breakthrough for more of the kingdom of God on earth today; where this breakthrough or experience is not realised he deems this a mystery.

³⁴² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.41.

³⁴³ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.65 – Johnson interprets Wimber's now and not yet as a statement of promise of what is available i.e. healing, rather than an explanation for why healing may not be experienced in the present; Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.169 - 'The fact that we are living between the 1st and 2nd comings of Christ, what George Ladd calls living between the 'already and the not yet', provides the interpretive key for understanding why the physical healing that Christ secured for us in or through the atonement is not always experienced today.

His sovereignty, lordship and Kingdom are what bring healing. Our part is to pray, 'Thy kingdom come' – and trust him for whatever healing comes from his gracious hands. And if in this age it does not come, then we still have assurance from the atonement that it will come in the age to come'.

³⁴⁴ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.65.

³⁴⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, 123.

4.5.1 Discussion of Eschatology

Johnson's postmillennial leaning is congruous with the aforementioned soteriological model of *Christus Victor* as postulated by Johann Blumhardt and Christoph Blumhardt, son of Johann - 'the victory of Christ on the cross was to conquer the full power of darkness, including both sin and sickness'.³⁴⁶ The victory of Christ was also prefigured in his ministry before the cross in the form of miracles of healing. Indeed, for Johann Blumhardt the significance of the victory at the cross is found in the availability of healing.³⁴⁷

Similarities can be found in the eschatological understanding of the Blumhardts and Johnson's approach. Like Johnson, both Blumhardts understood the kingdom of God not as a physical place of occupation but as the dynamic and liberating reign of God.³⁴⁸ 'The Kingdom was interpreted as any place where this 'victory' becomes actualized 'on earth', in history'.³⁴⁹ It is important to note that,

For Christoph, who, as we have seen, rejected a traditional conception of heaven in favour of a fulfilled Kingdom of God on earth, the final fulfilment and universal extension of the Kingdom is his conception of the Eschaton – the future moment when Jesus' 'victory' becomes complete once and for all.³⁵⁰

Of significance here is the extent to which the Kingdom is or can be a present reality. While Christoph Blumhardt accepts that the Kingdom is already present to some degree as evidenced by glimpses where Jesus is Victor for a moment in specific situations, his emphasis remained on what was not yet. His distinguishing between various stations in the progression towards the 'fulfilled Kingdom' is helpful. 'The most dangerous theological mistake in his view is to confuse a penultimate 'station' of the Kingdom with the final 'Ziel

³⁴⁶ Macchia, F.M., 'Jesus is Victor', in Althouse, P. & Waddell, R., *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2010) p.384.

³⁴⁷ Macchia, 'Jesus is Victor', p.384.

³⁴⁸ Macchia, 'Jesus is Victor', p.398.

³⁴⁹ Zahl, S., *Pneumatology and Theology of the Cross in the Preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt* (London: T&T Clark, 2010) p.63.

³⁵⁰ Zahl, *Pneumatology and Theology of the Cross in the Preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt*, p.63.

[fulfilled Kingdom]’.³⁵¹ For Christoph the coming Kingdom was understood as increasingly progressing whereas Johann understood it as simultaneously already here and not yet.

Johnson would most likely cohere with Johann’s model over Christoph’s due to his aversion to the not yet.

Zahl discusses Thiselton’s distinguishing between overrealized and underrealized eschatology. Overrealized eschatology ‘describes the belief that the last days have come, that there is a revealed knowledge to which believers have special and immediate access and that sanctification-transformation has already taken place in Christians to such a degree that they are nearly ‘invulnerable’ to normal pressures and temptations’.³⁵² On the contrary, ‘underrealized’ eschatology would refer to an emphasis on how far away the end of days remains, how unsanctified and untransformed Christians still are, and how the decisive eschatological event or events are future rather than present or past’.³⁵³ Johnson’s eschatology would fit comfortably within Thiselton’s overrealized eschatological category.³⁵⁴

Given Johnson’s redressing of Wimber’s position, it is necessary to discuss further that which Wimber contributed to eschatology. Wimber articulates his eschatological position based on Ladd’s now and not yet theology:

The Kingdom will arrive on a worldwide basis when the worldwide power of Satan is broken at the Second Coming of Jesus. Until then the battles go on, even though the decisive battle has been won at the cross. The call of the army is to rout Satan and his demons.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Zahl, *Pneumatology and Theology of the Cross in the Preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt*, p.65.

³⁵² Zahl, *Pneumatology and Theology of the Cross in the Preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt*, p.82; referencing Thiselton, A., ‘Realised Eschatology at Corinth’, *New Testament Studies* 24:4 (1978) p.510-26.

³⁵³ Zahl, *Pneumatology and Theology of the Cross in the Preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt*, p.83; referencing Thiselton, ‘Realised Eschatology at Corinth’, p.510-26.

³⁵⁴ Thiselton, ‘Realised Eschatology at Corinth’, p.510-26.

³⁵⁵ Wimber quoted in Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, p.86.

For Wimber, although victory obtained at the cross provided access to the kingdom, the fullness of the kingdom will only be available at the eschaton. He perceives the time between the first and second coming of Christ as a battleground on which more and more of the kingdom is brought into earthly reality. Martyn Percy critiques Wimber's *The Kingdom of God* as being over-realised – 'the present church becomes synonymous with the power of the Kingdom in an age to come, and apostles seek to adopt a first-century world-view and replicate the kind of signs, wonders and experiences that might have occurred then'.³⁵⁶ However, while Wimber's theology makes the kingdom accessible today, it equally maintains that it will not be fully experienced until Christ returns.

In addressing healing, Wimber expands on the not yet element of this dynamic:

The fact that we are living between the 1st and 2nd comings of Christ, what George Ladd calls living between the 'already and the not yet', provides the interpretive key for understanding why the physical healing that Christ secured for us in or through the atonement is not always experienced today.

His sovereignty, lordship and Kingdom are what bring healing. Our part is to pray, 'Thy kingdom come' – and trust him for whatever healing comes from his gracious hands. And if in this age it does not come, then we still have assurance from the atonement that it will come in the age to come.³⁵⁷

This position coheres with what many have argued is the correct balance for Pentecostal eschatology. While Johnson's now and mystery dynamic stems from a call to contend for what can be realised in the immediate, it risks erring towards promoting an over-realised eschatology. The tension between what will be experience in the now and what will be experienced in the future must be embraced.

Johnson's eschatological position makes healing available now. Even where healing is not immediately experienced, Johnson holds onto the prayer that heaven can be realised on earth.

³⁵⁶ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, p.105.

³⁵⁷ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.169.

While the realisation of heaven on earth precludes a variety of realities, it seems that the reality of healing is synonymous with the reality of heaven. For Johnson, when the two worlds collide and heaven comes to earth, the primary shift will be in the experiential reality of healing. Contending for breakthrough is a motif that endorses the now and mystery model as it focuses attention on the now.

4.6 Healing theology

Having explored three significant theological areas that impact Johnson's healing theology, it is now important to hone in on the specific pillars that uphold this healing theology. This section will address the beliefs that directly contribute to this theology including the origin of sickness, the nature and will of God, the importance of testimony and the sub-narrative of wholeness.

4.6.1 The origin of sickness

A major change in theology has taken place over the past two thousand years. When Jesus walked the earth, all sickness was from the devil. Today a large part of the Body of Christ believes God either sends sickness or allows it to make us better people by building character and teaching us the value of suffering. If God allows sickness, can we still call the devil a thief? After all, if the thief has permission to steal, it is no longer called stealing. Yet Acts 10:38 tells us 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.'³⁵⁸

This statement is underpinned by the premise that the devil comes to kill, steal and destroy.³⁵⁹

Johnson seeks to redress the perceived misconception that suffering and sickness are caused by God. He identifies the subtle difference between God allowing sickness or suffering and God using sickness and suffering for good. Johnson would not allow God to be portrayed as causing or allowing sickness, but he would acknowledge that God can use it for good. It

³⁵⁸ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.126.

³⁵⁹ John 10:10 (NJKV) - The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

should be noted again that in formulating theology Johnson is driven by a functional goal of encouraging redeemed humanity to heal the sick.

Faith lives within the revealed will of God. When I have misconceptions of who He is and what He is like, my faith is restricted by those misconceptions. For example, if I believe that God allows sickness in order to build character, I'll not have confidence praying in most situations where healing is needed. But, if I believe that sickness is to the body what sin is to the soul, then no disease will intimidate me. Faith is much more free to develop when we truly see the heart of God as good.³⁶⁰

In identifying that sickness is 'from' the devil, Johnson is actually rooting sickness in the effect of sin – 'sickness entered the world when sin did'.³⁶¹ This perspective is in line with the traditional Pentecostal position as outlined by Alexander, 'sickness, ultimately, is a result of sin entering the world through Adam'.³⁶² This sin entered the world at the Fall, and it is sin in the generic sense that is the root of sickness: 'now that sin has entered the world, creation has been infected by darkness, namely: disease, sickness, afflicting spirits, poverty, natural disasters, demonic influence'.³⁶³ For Johnson sickness may be experienced in natural reality and this would be primarily due to sin entering and affecting the world. However, Johnson also holds onto the significance of personal sin in causing sickness – 'sin takes its toll on everything and everyone it touches'.³⁶⁴ Much of the reasoning behind this stems from the understanding of and emphasis attributed to 'wholeness' which will be dealt with later. At this stage it is important to acknowledge that for Johnson, 'sin destroys both emotional and physical strength, which opens the door for many physical problems'.³⁶⁵ 'Secret sins devastate. They are like holding poison close to us until all in us is poisoned'.³⁶⁶ Johnson further identifies that anxiety, regret, hatred, unforgiveness, and jealousy can all be

³⁶⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.45.

³⁶¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.180.

³⁶² Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.165.

³⁶³ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.32.

³⁶⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.174.

³⁶⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.175-6.

³⁶⁶ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.178.

contributory factors to sickness.³⁶⁷

In holding that sickness is not caused or allowed by God, but that personal sin can be the cause of sickness, Johnson creates an interesting tension. David Petts suggests that ‘the view that personal sickness is caused by personal sin rests largely on the assumption that God sometimes punishes sinners by inflicting them with sickness’.³⁶⁸ This tension is further expounded in the discussion on wholeness.

4.6.2 It is God’s will to heal

Building on the premise that ‘Jesus Christ is perfect theology’,³⁶⁹ Johnson maintains that Jesus healed all who came to him.³⁷⁰ ‘To accept any other standard is to bring the Bible down to our level of experience, and deny the nature of the One who changes not’.³⁷¹

How many people came to Jesus for healing and left sick? None. How many came to Him for deliverance and left His presence still under torment? None. How many life-threatening storms did Jesus bless? None. How many times did Jesus withhold a miracle because the person who came to Him had too little faith? None. He often addressed their small faith or unbelief, but He always left them with a miracle as a way to greater faith. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, perfectly illustrates the will of God the Father. To think otherwise is to put the Father and the Son at odds.³⁷²

The belief that Jesus healed all who came to him, underpins the crucial belief that it is always God’s will to heal. One of the leaders of Bethel Church stated that ‘healing is his hobby’ referring to both Jesus’ practical healing ministry and the Father’s desire to heal through redeemed humanity.³⁷³ For Johnson it follows that if we believe that the Father’s will is to heal, then Jesus had to have healed all that came to Him and conversely, given that Jesus

³⁶⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.175.

³⁶⁸ Petts, ‘Healing in the Atonement’, p.230.

³⁶⁹ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.184.

³⁷⁰ Comment from Friday service, College View Campus, 7pm, 24.01.2014. This statement is drawn from Acts 10:38 (NKJV) - how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

³⁷¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.115.

³⁷² Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.184-5.

³⁷³ Comment from Sunday service, College View Campus, 6pm, 02.02.2014.

healed all who came to Him, we can be assured that the Father's will is always to heal. The response to healing not being experienced will be addressed later in this chapter, but it is important to note that Johnson's approach to suffering is that God does not cause it but can use it for our good and His glory:

Not everything that happens is God's will. God gets blamed for so much in the name of His sovereignty. We have concealed our irresponsibility regarding the commission that Jesus gave us under the veil of God's sovereignty for long enough. Yes, God can use tragedy for His glory. But God's ability to rule over bad circumstances was never meant to be the evidence that those circumstances were His will. Instead it was to display that no matter what happens, He is in charge and will rework things to our advantage and to His glory. Our theology is not to be built on what God hasn't done. It is defined by what He does and is doing. The will of God is perfectly seen in the person of Jesus Christ. No one who ever came to Him was turned away.³⁷⁴

It is evident that Johnson's pragmatism continues in that his goal in establishing these theological foundations is to promote the ability and mandate on redeemed humanity to heal the sick in the same way that Jesus did. He recognises that it is far easier to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom than it is to heal the sick.

Johnson holds that God desires to heal everyone regardless of how insignificant the condition. When asked by those who are suffering with a minor condition to pray for someone with a major condition, Johnson will challenge the belief system of that individual.³⁷⁵ Those who approach healing in this way, according to Johnson, fail to grasp the unlimited power that God possesses. He challenges the idea that God would run out of power, or that God heals according to a priority list based on the severity of a condition. Interestingly Johnson would suggest that it is often the minor conditions that experience healing first; according to Johnson healing experiences give rise to increased faith for healing of other and perhaps more severe conditions.³⁷⁶ For Johnson, although 'a person is as likely to see cancer healed in his or her first healing miracle as a simple headache' there is nevertheless a

³⁷⁴ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.185.

³⁷⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.114-5.

³⁷⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.115.

principle of incremental growth towards greater miracles.³⁷⁷ Johnson identifies that the spiritual gift of healing is often embryonic and needs to be used in order for it to mature and for greater levels of breakthrough to be achieved in order that more significant and difficult conditions can be healed.

The smallest measure of faith can move a mountain. By embryonic, I simply mean that these gifts are alive, but they're small and not fully formed. The Lord wants us to fan them into flame and to become mature. Gifts are free, but maturity is expensive.³⁷⁸

This principle of increasing breakthrough is supported by the notion that you can only keep what you give away; in order to mature the spiritual gift of healing, it should be given away through praying for the sick.³⁷⁹

Candy Gunther Brown identifies that the term 'divine healing' is privileged over 'faith healing':

... it emphasises that God's love, rather than merely human faith or an impersonal spiritual force, is the source of healing; it underscores the perceived need for supernatural intervention instead of implying that faith is a natural force that can be manufactured by human will; and it emphasises that the object of faith, not simply the degree of faith or spirituality, matters in receiving healing.³⁸⁰

While Johnson is relationally connected with those who exhibit the 'Godly Love' model as the driving force for healing, his emphasis on healing the sick rather than praying for the sick shifts the balance towards human responsibility.³⁸¹ Johnson distinguishes between praying for the sick and healing them,

Jesus didn't say to pray for the sick. He said to heal them. Radical obedience refuses to change what God says and instead addresses the area in which our lives do not yet express God's standard by contending through prayer and stepping out in faith to do what God said.³⁸²

³⁷⁷ Johnson, et al., *Spiritual Java* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010) p.77.

³⁷⁸ Johnson, et al., *Spiritual Java*, p.77.

³⁷⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.115.

³⁸⁰ Brown, 'Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Healing', p.4-5.

³⁸¹ Johnson is formally associated with Rolland & Heidi Baker of Iris Ministries through their membership of Revival Alliance, www.revivalalliance.com

³⁸² Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.120-1.

For Johnson, this distinction hinges on the knowledge and acceptance of God's will to heal. Praying for the sick seems to imply pleading and persuading God to do something that he is already willing to do, whereas healing the sick involves believing that God wants to heal.

Although Johnson would hold that healing is always divinely instigated and executed, the emphasis on incremental progress in healing experiences of increasingly severe conditions is indicative of the importance of the sub-narrative of 'breakthrough'. 'Breakthrough' is understood as an increased success in experiencing healing, often in relation to particular conditions or sickness. Language such as 'contending for breakthrough' is prevalent and is indicative of the active process of praying until breakthrough is experienced.³⁸³ For Johnson his personal experience of losing his father to cancer was a trigger for deliberately and actively praying for healing of cancer in others, this was understood as pursuing breakthrough in this area.³⁸⁴

The Wesleyan Pentecostal emphasis on tarrying sheds light on Johnson's emphasis on breakthrough in relation to healing prayer

...this persistence in prayer, tarrying, protracted prayer [prayer over a long period of time] or praying more than once was understood as transformative in and of itself. It was considered to be communication with, by and through God the Spirit. Like all of God's gifts, reception could be instantaneous but could also require process.³⁸⁵

Johnson encourages persistent prayer for a specific person or condition and the practice of tarrying can be seen in the sub-narrative of 'breakthrough'. Tarrying in this sense is persistent prayer to see greater levels of breakthrough in healing. 'Contending for breakthrough' is an important demonstration of the belief in process.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.66.

³⁸⁴ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.153-4.

³⁸⁵ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.208.

³⁸⁶ Johnson, *Momentum*, p.167 – 'A promise from God is not a magic coin for us to cash in at will. It is an invitation to a process. And whether that promise is concerning our inheritance or is in simple response to our

4.6.3 God is always good

That God always wants to heal is built on the promise that God is good. Bill Johnson and Bethel Church would go as far as to say ‘God is always in a good mood’. This belief stems from the desire to address the misconception of Father God as an angry, punishing, distant God.

The bedrock of an automatic response from us is the burning conviction that God is good, always good! Doubting His goodness, making up explanations for things we don’t understand (the source of a lot of bad theology), or falling into anxiety and disappointment won’t be options for us. It’s like knowing exactly what to do when the oil light goes on in our car. When the truth of God’s goodness is not firmly anchored in our hearts, we are not only dislodged from our purpose in conflict, but we don’t possess the sensitivity of heart, the faith, to perceive the tools God gives us to prepare us before we encounter a challenge.³⁸⁷

Johnson is consistent in reinforcing the goodness of God, and in emphasising the importance for believers to have a right understanding of who God is. For Johnson the ultimate standard of God’s goodness is demonstrated in Jesus’ life primarily through his practical ministry of healing. Johnson believes this same standard is attainable for redeemed humanity.

Believing that God is good is absolutely vital to becoming effective in the ministry of the gospel. Without that foundation, it’s not possible to develop the clear focus and the strength of faith to pursue the breakthroughs that the earth aches for. The way we understand Him is the way we will present Him. How we see Him defines how we think and how we live.³⁸⁸

According to Johnson, God is good all the time, regardless of circumstance or experience.

‘The cornerstone of our theology is the fact that God is always good and is the giver of only good gifts. He is always faithful, and always keeps His promises. There is no evil or darkness in Him’.³⁸⁹ Johnson is keen to not allow present earthly realities to define God or what God is

petitions, God gives it to us because He is good and He loves us. It is His nature to give. When we embrace His promises, we say yes to a process that prepares us for the answer. Some promises reach maturity rather quickly. In those moments, it usually only requires us to say yes to God and express a confidence that what God has said will come to pass. And quickly it does. But other promises are much bigger – bigger in the sense that they require more from the person on the receiving end. They require that we offer God a bigger container of character, one that is refined and developed so that the answer will not be lost through immaturity. For only with character can blessing be managed well. Gifts are free, but maturity is expensive’.

³⁸⁷ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.42.

³⁸⁸ Johnson, *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.216.

³⁸⁹ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.152.

capable of. The goodness of God is a principle that runs consistently through all of Johnson's theological propositions. His goodness is the reason why He could not cause or allow sickness. At this point it is possible to hold Johnson's theology up against HH Knight's continuum between God's faithfulness to his promises and God's sovereignty to heal according to his will.³⁹⁰ It is apparent that Johnson sits in alignment with the belief that God is faithful to fulfil his promises. For Johnson, the goodness of God is the uncompromising truth that qualifies this belief.

4.6.4 When healing is not experienced

The foundation of this theological principle lies in the eschatological discussion above and as such this section develops further these eschatological issues. As previously mentioned, Johnson resolves the now and not yet tension in favour of the now, and gives little time or attention to when miracles or healing is not experienced.

The Kingdom culture celebrates what God is doing without stumbling over what God didn't do. We must resist the temptation to build our theology around what didn't happen. The world around us cries for an authentic display of Christ. And we become that answer if we don't stumble over what didn't happen.³⁹¹

It is of pivotal significance to Johnson, that theology or explanation of why healing is not experienced does not detract from the fact that it is always God's desire to heal. The tension between the belief that God always wants to heal and the reality that not everyone receives healing raises questions that Johnson does not engage with – 'to have questions is healthy, to hold God hostage to those questions is not'.³⁹² Johnson reconciles the gap between this belief and reality as mystery:

An intellectual gospel is always in danger of creating a God that looks a lot like us; one that is our size. The quest for answers sometimes leads to a rejection of mystery.

³⁹⁰ Knight, 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom'.

³⁹¹ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.458.

³⁹² Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.56.

As a result mystery is often treated as something intolerable, instead of a real treasure. Living with mystery is the privilege of our walk with Christ.³⁹³

Johnson emphasises both revelation and mystery and insists that they should be held together:

To embrace revelation with one hand, and embrace mystery with the other, forms a perfect cross. This is a cross that everyone who is hungry to do the works of Jesus will have to carry. God must violate our logic to invite us away from the deception of relying on our own reasoning.³⁹⁴

For Johnson, the biggest test of this tension came through praying for the healing of his own father, who subsequently died of cancer. After diagnosis in 2003, Johnson felt moved to ask for Hezekiah's miracle in his fathers' life.³⁹⁵ In telling the story, Johnson identifies that cancer has been specifically targeted by his own ministry as well as Bethel Church:

Cancer has become the Goliath that taunts the armies of the living God and I have a righteous anger over the violation of the name of the Lord. We refuse to show any respect for the name of cancer, as it is inferior to the name of Jesus. Through the years, we have seen a great number of cancer cases healed in and through our church. In fact, someone in our town actually started a rumour after their own healing: 'Go to Bethel; they don't tolerate cancer!' while we have not seen everyone healed who comes to us, we are in pursuit, believing that God will give us that kind of breakthrough and ultimately release to us a 'cancer free zone'.³⁹⁶

The language in this narrative further endorses the significance of the 'breakthrough' motif. Targeting a particular sickness, labelling it 'Goliath', and pursuing a 'cancer free zone' builds upon the idea of progressive breakthrough in healing. For Johnson, it seems that while God desires to heal all sickness, there are nevertheless various degrees of breakthrough to be achieved, depending on the strength or severity of the sickness.

Despite praying and despite experiencing breakthrough in healings, Johnson's father died after a six-month battle. Johnson describes the experience – 'it was as though I pushed

³⁹³ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.55.

³⁹⁴ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.59.

³⁹⁵ Hezekiah had 15 years added to his life – 2 Kings 20.

³⁹⁶ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.150.

against a thousand-pound rock for six months; it never budged'.³⁹⁷ Through this process, Johnson chose not to blame God or question His goodness. The story is told in the context of the importance of 'strengthening yourself in the Lord'.

Strengthening myself in the Lord helped me to stay away from anxiety long enough to make an important discovery: next to the thousand-pound rock is a five-hundred pound rock that I couldn't have moved before the battle for my dad's life. Pushing against the rock that never moved actually strengthened me by reinforcing my resolve to live in divine purpose and to establish the backbone of perseverance. By refusing to change my focus, I discovered that I can now move the five-hundred pound rock that I couldn't have moved before the battle.³⁹⁸

In personally handling the tension between believing for a healing miracle, Johnson accepted that the world is sinful and in conflict, but that God is not deficient. Johnson's embracing of mystery could be summed in this statement;

After my dad's death, I discovered the privilege of giving God a sacrificial offering of praise that I will never be able to give Him in eternity. My offering was given in the midst of sadness, disappointment, and confusion – none of which will I ever experience in Heaven. Only in this life will we be able to give an offering with that kind of 'fragrance'.³⁹⁹

It is important to note that Johnson's personal life demonstrates that the tension between the now and not yet is an existential reality. However, if pushed to reconcile the gap between the belief that God always wants to heal, and the reality that healing is not always experienced, Johnson would root the problem in humanity rather than God – 'if we fall short in our pursuit of a miracle, the lack is never on God's side of the equation'.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, Johnson suggests that the issue lies in the need for redeemed humanity to experience a renewing of the mind through the Holy Spirit.

The lack of miracles isn't because it is not in God's will for us. The problem exists between our ears. As a result, a transformation – a renewing of the mind – is needed, and it's only possible through a work of the Holy Spirit that typically comes upon desperate people.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.151.

³⁹⁸ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.151.

³⁹⁹ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.152.

⁴⁰⁰ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.152.

⁴⁰¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.27.

This position corresponds with the emphasis on breakthrough, and personal responsibility of tarrying for breakthrough, however this places a heavy burden on redeemed humanity.

Land suggests that this tension can be understood through pneumatology: 'Pentecostal eschatology needs to be reinterpreted as a spiritual passion for the Kingdom of God, which is 'already' present in the Spirit's activity inside and outside the Christian community, but 'not yet' fulfilled in the Kingdom of God'.⁴⁰² For Land, what is experienced now is understood to be the work of the Holy Spirit, and what is not yet experienced is understood as part of the fullness of the kingdom of God. He employs the inbreaking kingdom metaphor in order to hold the two elements together and avoid forsaking one at the expense of the other:

To resolve it in favour of the 'not yet' results in a form of escapism, where social issues are left unaddressed. To resolve it in favour of the 'already' results in social accommodation, where there is little distinction between the beliefs and values of the world and those of the church.⁴⁰³

Here Land identifies that Johnson's intention of motivating and empowering the church to action is a much needed call, however assimilating earthly reality with kingdom reality risks disappointment. Kärkkäinen acknowledges:

What has been much more problematic to Pentecostals/ Charismatics is the negative side of the Christian life: disappointments when the healing did not come, agony when one faces the death of a loved one despite prayers of faith, the tragedy of financial breakdown, and so on. In fact, many Pentecostals and Charismatics have been left with few options: deny experiences that seem to shatter one's faith, blame oneself or other persons involved for the lack of faith, or give up one's faith.⁴⁰⁴

Johnson recognises this problem:

Disappointment with God is a trap that will effectively suck the strength and courage from us and invite destruction into our lives. And disappointment almost always gets in when we allow what isn't happening to arrest our focus.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p.55.

⁴⁰³ Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p.107.

⁴⁰⁴ Kärkkäinen, V-M, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology* (Maryland: University of America Press, 2002) p.167.

⁴⁰⁵ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.125.

Johnson also recognises the need for healthy processing in relation to disappointment:

Some people just need to weep before God in an honest baring of their souls. This kind of openness before the One who never rejects us is vital. Make sure to block out enough time for this process.⁴⁰⁶

Responding to this disappointment is important and this is where Johnson's now and mystery dynamic is insufficient. While the now and not yet tension provides space for disappointment, the now and mystery tension regards disappointment as dangerous.

Furthermore, Johnson's emphasis on human responsibility for pursuing breakthrough, means that a lack of experienced healing, or disappointment is a result of human failure.

If one looks at healing from an eschatological perspective, then the Pentecostal conundrum of the universal application of healing as a provision of the atonement, and the reason why some are not healed, is overcome. Why are some healed and others not? Simply, we have not experienced the eschatological resurrection yet. Healing is a partial realization of the new creation, anticipatory signs of the cosmic reign of Christ.⁴⁰⁷

By utilising the notion of resurrection, Althouse is able to reconcile the tension between the now and not yet. On the premise that full resurrection cannot yet be experienced, then it follows that full healing has not yet been experienced; when healing is not experienced as a reality it can be accepted on the basis that the resurrection has not yet been experienced.

On the other hand, Daniel Castelo appeals to the virtue of patience in his encouragement of the recasting of Pentecostal eschatological expectation.⁴⁰⁸ It is here that with some adjustment, Johnson's now and mystery paradigm may be utilised. While he accepts that Pentecostal expectation of the inbreaking kingdom is legitimate, he maintains that 'the kingdom is God's and its presence and manifestation are divinely initiated, thereby occasioning moments of ambiguity, tension, confusion, and frustration when believers fail to see God's manifest activity'.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.157.

⁴⁰⁷ Althouse, 'Pentecostal Eschatology in Context', p.213.

⁴⁰⁸ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.233-4.

⁴⁰⁹ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.235.

For Castelo, the tension between the now and the not yet should be bridged with patient hope. 'Patience is crucial when the 'not yet' aspect of kingdom living is outright and burdensome for communal life'.⁴¹⁰ Castelo argues that Pentecostal impatience has resulted in a thwarted perception of human responsibility that has displaced divine sovereignty.⁴¹¹

Perhaps illustrative of this theological danger is the assumption that one can expect a miraculous intervention of healing or blessing if one fulfils the assumed requirements. Yet disappointment ensues when the expected miracle does not occur. Overlooked in this scenario is God's sovereignty. The theological risk of ritualizing God's activity according to human 'faith requirements' is that it represents an attempt to control God and to elevate the role of human activity.⁴¹²

Castelo challenges Pentecostals to hold onto their eschatological fervour and expectation while embracing the call to wait patiently. He suggests that in practising patience it is important to acknowledge where expectancy has not been fulfilled. By identifying where someone has not been healed, there is identified the promise of hope and transparency and vulnerability are valued. In addition, Castelo promotes the Wesleyan value of active forms of waiting on the presence of God.⁴¹³ Finally, Castelo suggests that:

Pentecostals would do well to operate with a reverent sense of the mysteries of God in such a way that patience takes the form of practising silence. Specifically, the tendency to explain ought to be muted when clear and definitive answers are not available in attempting to understand how God works in the world. The double-edged sword of Pentecostal belief in the imminence of God's presence carries with it the pressure to explain God's apparent absence.⁴¹⁴

It is here that the element of mystery so valued by Johnson is endorsed by Castelo. Johnson's reluctance to justify when healing does not happen is supported by Castelo in contrast to the Pentecostal tendency to explain. Castelo encourages Pentecostals to embrace both the visibility and hiddenness of God and His work, and to practice patient waiting in the mystery.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.239.

⁴¹¹ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.240-1.

⁴¹² Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.241.

⁴¹³ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.243-4.

⁴¹⁴ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.245.

⁴¹⁵ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.245.

4.6.5 Testimony

Johnson places great emphasis on the importance of testimony in relation to healing experiences. Although the notion of testimony resonates with the broader concept of revival, or seeing heaven established on earth it is most commonly ascribed significance in the context of healing.⁴¹⁶ For Johnson, testimony is important on two levels – the first being that testimonies reveal the nature of God and cultivate the remembrance of what God has done and the second being that a story of healing has the potential to act as a stimulant for a healing miracle in another situation.

First, when we fill our hearts and minds with the record of what God has done through conversation and meditation, we sustain a constant awareness of the God who invades the impossible. This posture of awareness and expectation creates the hope, faith, courage, and hunger that we need in order to respond to the impossibilities around us.

But the second thing is that, by in effect prophesying over ourselves with the testimony, we release something in the unseen realm that actually draws us into real experiences where we see the impossibilities around us transformed by the God of the testimony.⁴¹⁷

The first effect of ascribing significance to testimony is the increased awareness of what God is capable of. Remembering what God has done and can do is, according to Johnson, necessary in ensuring the continuation of revival and increase in miraculous experience.⁴¹⁸

In relation to the second way in which testimony is important, Johnson explains,

The testimonies of God are an invaluable inheritance because in each story of what God has done, there is a revelation of His nature... A revelation of God through a testimony is always an invitation to know God experientially in that revelation.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.164 - 'Multi-generational revival, along with societal transformation (the Kingdom coming 'on earth as it is in heaven') are at the top of God's agenda. It must be what drives everything I do. Keeping the testimony releases the revelation of God's nature into the earth, which in turn releases the power of God into the specific calamities of humanity. This is what helps to sustain revival by unlocking the heavenly resources of prophetic anointing and divine wisdom. It must become the intentional focus of the church worldwide'.

⁴¹⁷ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.87.

⁴¹⁸ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.26-7; Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.149 – 'I truly believe that the sustained outpouring of the miraculous in which we have been privileged to participate is directly connected to the value we place on the testimony'.

⁴¹⁹ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.36.

Johnson holds that testimonies provide access to an experience of God, this allows an individual to position themselves to have that same experience. Each testimony contains revelation of who God is and therefore testimonies function as invitations to experience God in the way that the testimony or story has described. Johnson understands that testimonies act as prophecies – someone’s healing miracle story can be appropriated into another’s experience in order that they too receive the same healing miracle.⁴²⁰

Such is the importance of testimony that weekly staff meetings and monthly board meetings at Bethel Church begin with the sharing of testimonies.⁴²¹ Johnson explains that at least half of the meeting is devoted to the sharing of testimonies with the goal of encouraging the team members with the increased experience of heaven on earth.⁴²² During each weekly service there would be a testimony video played demonstrating the significance of testimony within the wider community.⁴²³ In addition, during one observed service the leader indicated that the testimony video that had been shown could be received as a prophecy to those who were struggling with the same situation; as such the testimony became an invitation for those who wanted to respond to experience the same miracle.⁴²⁴ Most opportunities to receive healing prayer were coupled with the opportunity to share testimony and recount healing experiences.

⁴²⁰ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.38.

⁴²¹ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.115.

⁴²² Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.150.

⁴²³ Information from Sunday service, College View Campus, 10.30am, 26.01.2014– Seth Dahl, the Children’s Ministry Pastor shared his testimony of salvation following a history of drug addiction.

⁴²⁴ Information from Sunday service, College View Campus, 10.30am, 26.01.2014 - Kris Vallotton gave an opportunity for those who were struggling with addiction to drugs to respond to Seth Dahl’s testimony video, claiming the testimony as a prophecy over their own situation.

4.6.6 Wholeness

The final element, wholeness, permeates the rest of Johnson's theology. Referring back, it is apparent that according to Johnson, sin not only impacts spiritual wellbeing, but also physical and emotional wellbeing: 'sin destroys the health of a person's body, mind, emotions and spirit, brings devastation to a city and forever scars a family'.⁴²⁵

Within the Bethel Church community, wholeness theology is built on Kris Vallotton's reading of Acts 3:1-8 which identifies the importance of being physically, emotionally and spiritually healed. When the lame beggar is healed by Peter, he responds by 'walking, leaping and praising God'. According to Kris Vallotton's reading of this passage, walking refers to physical healing, leaping to emotional healing and praising God to spiritual healing.⁴²⁶ In line with this, Johnson and Bethel Church emphasise the importance of the Greek term 'sozo' and in doing so develop a distinctive anthropology. 'Sozo' is translated into salvation in Romans 10:9, healing in Matthew 9:22 and deliverance in Luke 8:36.⁴²⁷ In their understanding, 'sozo' refers to the tripartite person – body, soul and spirit and these verses indicate God's desire to restore and for salvation to impact the whole person. At the Randy Clark School of Healing, Vallotton was asked by Johnson to teach during the first session on wholeness, emphasising the significance of this notion for Johnson's healing theology – 'Jesus always healed multidimensionally'.⁴²⁸ Once again, Johnson is stretching the notion of salvation beyond right standing with God and access to heaven, even beyond physical healing, to wholeness:

God's intended realm of health is more than being able to get healed it involves a realm of mental and emotional health that was seen clearly in the person of Jesus. He lived without regret, hatred, selfish ambition, greed, unforgiveness, anxiety, shame or guilt. He lived with the ability to bring a heavenly answer to every earthly problem.

⁴²⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.174.

⁴²⁶ Comment from Kris Vallotton's message 'Healing the Whole Person', at Randy Clark School of Healing, 31.01.2014.

⁴²⁷ <http://bethelsozo.com/about/> [accessed 07/06/2014]

⁴²⁸ Comment from Kris Vallotton's message 'Healing the Whole Person', at Randy Clark School of Healing, 31.01.2014.

He spoke, changing the atmosphere and reality that surrounded the hearer. His miracles spoke of His nature and His intentions for the earth. He is still the Creator, carrying the perfect sense of purpose for every situation, knowing that heaven indeed must come to earth. He brokered another realm, another world into this one. He provided an example that went beyond avoiding sin. He revealed purpose and destiny. He revealed the unlimited resources available to anyone who would embrace this assignment. Jesus alone illustrated life in the black as His great purpose was to reveal the Father, the source of all these things.⁴²⁹

Vallotton asserts that often when sickness returns after an experience of healing, this is due to a lack of wholeness; while physical healing may have been obtained, wholeness was not sought after.⁴³⁰ Johnson agrees that ‘there is an intrinsic connection between health of a person’s soul and his or her overall physical health’.⁴³¹ Furthermore, Johnson suggests that when wholeness is pursued over and above only salvation or physical healing, ‘an alignment takes place that gives permission for the body to experience health. A healthy spirit makes for a healthy soul. A healthy soul makes it much more likely that we will enjoy physical health, too’.⁴³² In referencing the miracle in John 9 where Jesus healed the blind boy, Vallotton identifies that Jesus pursued wholeness; by redeeming what had cursed him (spitting) and using it for his healing, Jesus not only healed the physical affliction but also healed the emotional hurt.⁴³³ Fullness of health, for Johnson, is rooted in a prosperous soul. It is this that is evident in Jesus’ life and it is this that is made available through the work of Jesus.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered how Johnson’s Christological, soteriological and eschatological positions have informed and shaped his healing theology. In addition, beliefs concerning the

⁴²⁹ Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.181-2

⁴³⁰ Comment from Kris Vallotton’s message ‘*Healing the Whole Person*’, at Randy Clark School of Healing, 31.01.2014.

⁴³¹ Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.178

⁴³² Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.179

⁴³³ Comment from Kris Vallotton’s message ‘*Healing the Whole Person*’, at Randy Clark School of Healing, 31.01.2014.

origin of sin and the nature and will of God in relation to healing have been discussed to the extent that they have contributed to a theology of healing. Finally, the concepts of testimony and wholeness have been discussed as sub-narratives that underpin the healing theology of Johnson. As each of these beliefs or systems of belief have been explored, considerations concerning strengths and weaknesses have been raised. Many of these beliefs raise questions for further discussion however only certain issues will be analysed in Chapter 7.

5. Healing Praxis: Practices

5.1 Introduction

In addressing the healing praxis of Bill Johnson, the previous chapter explored the beliefs held by Johnson with regards to healing. Building on the foundational discussion of the beliefs that are embedded within the practices, this chapter will discuss the practical ways in which these beliefs are outworked.

Practices, then, contain values, beliefs, theologies and other assumptions which, for the most part, go unnoticed until they are complexified and brought to our notice through the process of theological reflection. Importantly, practices are also the bearers of traditions and histories. They are not therefore simply individual actions. Rather they are communal activities that have developed within communities over extended periods of time. Even though they may be manifested in particular instances, Christian practices always relate to particular communities; communities with specific histories and traditions which give meaning, value and direction to the particular forms of practice.⁴³⁴

Practices flesh out the beliefs and demonstrate the significance and weight of the belief. It is important to note that practices are often outworked within the context of community. Such practices are also best understood in the context of the community from which they have emerged and are experienced within. In this case, while the beliefs have been traced back to Bill Johnson, the one individual, albeit the senior pastor of the church, the practices are always outworked within the wider community. Indeed Percy notes the importance of the practice of healing over the theology of healing:

... 'healings' are part of the overall performative experience within the revivalist context. Their efficacy lies not in being proven, but in their power to persuade and perform within the divine dramaturgy that unfolds each day within the sanctuary.⁴³⁵

Having spent time in the field of study, I have identified three practices that are the actions of the corresponding beliefs outlined in the previous chapter. The first practice is the Healing

⁴³⁴ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.20-21.

⁴³⁵ Percy, 'Adventure and Atrophy in a Charismatic Movement', p.166.

Room ministry directed by Chris Gore and run by Bethel Church on a weekly basis. The second is the practice of the speaker during a service run by teams from Bethel Church using words of knowledge to identify a sickness or need and then employing the church members in close proximity to pray for those who responded. The third is the practice of post service prayer that is available after every gathering at Bethel Church through trained ministry teams; while it is acknowledged that this prayer can be for anything and is frequently related to the preached message, it is heavily emphasised that prayer for healing is always available.

While healing is undoubtedly practically outworked beyond the three categories, these are common and consistent practices within the Bethel Church community that are demonstrative of the beliefs held with regards to healing. It should be noted that Bill Johnson and Bethel Church place a great emphasis on marketplace ministry, where prayer for healing takes place outside of the four walls of the church building. Bethel Church is renowned within the local area due to members of the church practicing the ministry of healing as they go about their everyday lives – ‘our church and ministry school is most often known for its overt ministry – outward and aggressive. We have seen hundreds of people healed and delivered in public places’.⁴³⁶ This correlates with their belief in and priority of revival and ‘cultural transformation’ as pursued by Kris Vallotton.⁴³⁷ It is a strong belief within Bethel Church that all members of the church should be bringing heaven to earth by praying for the sick outside of the church however such a practice is hard to quantify or qualify. For this reason, although it should be acknowledged that healing is practiced beyond the three practices identified, these will nevertheless form the majority of this discussion.

⁴³⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.90.

⁴³⁷ Vallotton, *How Heaven Invades Earth*.

5.2 Healing Rooms

Healing Rooms is a ministry that is pursuing the Holy Spirit and His healing power. We are creating a place for Him to bring life, wholeness and love to those who are suffering from physical ailments. It is a place where passionate, joy-filled believers gather to host the presence of God and see Him bring complete restoration and healing.⁴³⁸

This is the statement issued on the Bethel Redding website that explains the purpose of Healing Rooms. Healing Rooms is arguably the most important outworking of the belief in healing as it is accessible to anyone and is solely run with the intention of pursuing healing experiences. As the statement indicates, one of the central tenets of Healing Rooms is that ‘laying on of hands’ may not be required, it is possible that being ‘in the presence of God’ could result in healing.

Healing Rooms is run at College View Campus at Bethel Church every Saturday morning. Each week is operated by a different team on rotation over the course of the month, and over the month, thousands of volunteers participate in this ministry. On arrival the visitor is asked to complete a form that briefly explains his/ her condition. This form also requires that the individual sign to indicate their acknowledgement that Bethel Church or any member of the ministry therein will never advise anyone to stop taking medication without first consulting a medical professional.

As clusters of visitors arrive, they are grouped with 20-30 others and led to an introductory session. During this session, those who require prayer are encouraged that they may receive their healing at any point. While someone is coaching the class, other members of the team engage in intercessory prayer for the class as a whole, and specific individuals if they feel ‘led by the Holy Spirit’.

⁴³⁸ <http://bethelredding.com/ministries/healing-rooms> [accessed 27.06.14].

The group is then led into the main auditorium, known as the 'Encounter Room'. Those requiring prayer are encouraged to worship and actively rest 'in the presence of God'. In this room chairs are loosely arranged in concentric circles. At the centre of the room is a group of artists; on the stage is a band playing music to facilitate worship; and dancers move around the room. Those visiting Healing Rooms for prayer could be in this room for between ten minutes to over an hour.

In order to facilitate a steady flow of people, each group is called through to the next room as space allows. At the door, each individual hands over his/ her form and is asked to wait. Once a team of two or three team members are available, they will collect a form and call for the individual. The room is covered in clusters of people made up of team members and those being prayed for. Led by one member, the team enquires into the details of the condition and then they begin to pray individually and quietly, often speaking in tongues. Often the team will wait for what is regarded as supernatural insight into the cause of the condition, and may even give prophetic encouragement received from God rather than praying towards God. The team members practice the laying on of hands, and if appropriate will touch the affected area of the body. The most common cycle of prayer practice involves waiting to receive insight, sharing received insight, responding with verbal prayer; this cycle may be repeated a few times.

Once healing has been experienced or both parties feel they have prayed sufficiently, they move on to the next stage. This is a thirty minute class that gives advice on 'stewarding healing'. Emphasis is placed on wholeness, and the interconnection between Spirit, soul and body. Individuals are advised to consider the health of their soul and Spirit, as well as their physical body. It should be noted that Healing Rooms mainly targets physical healing, and

those needing emotional healing or spiritual deliverance are advised to contact the Transformation Center for a ‘Sozo’ inner healing experience. Inner healing and deliverance are considered in more detail later in this chapter.

It has already been noted that Healing Rooms format demonstrates a belief that God can heal at any stage of this process, indeed at any time, in any place. Johnson himself explains that ‘one of the most exciting things for me personally, is to see people healed without prayer’.⁴³⁹ When using the term ‘prayer’ Johnson is most likely referring to a spoken prayer as is used in the final stages of the Healing Room experience. However, Candy Gunther Brown considers the variety of prayer techniques employed by Pentecostals:

The concept of prayer, even if restricted to Christian prayer, encompasses a wide variety of practices. For example, prayer may be liturgical, conversational, meditative, or petitionary. Pentecostals (like other Christians) may spend time quietly ‘soaking’ in God’s presence or contemplating Bible verses or may combine prayers of adoration and thanksgiving with petitions on the worshipper’s own behalf, intercession for other people, and even commands issued to physical conditions or spiritual entities. A basic theological premise held by many pentecostals is that a personal God responds to prayer in the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit - although certain individuals and ways of praying are widely considered more effective than others (varying, for instance, by degrees of ‘faith’, or expectancy).⁴⁴⁰

Brown may conclude that all the stages of the Healing Room experience qualify as ‘prayer’, as even during the classes there are team members engaging in intercessory prayer and the time in the Sanctuary is spent in ‘soaking prayer’. Regardless, it is important that Johnson maintains that God can heal at any stage.

It is important to comment on the influence of the Toronto Blessing on Bethel Church in terms of ‘soaking’ or ‘resting’ prayer. Wilkinson and Althouse explicitly identify Bethel Church as a site where soaking prayer is practiced.⁴⁴¹ Johnson’s narrative identifies the

⁴³⁹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.39.

⁴⁴⁰ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.24.

⁴⁴¹ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, p.5.

influence of Toronto on himself and Bethel Church as a whole.⁴⁴² Furthermore, Revival Alliance is demonstrative of the informal relational connection between Johnson and John and Carol Arnott.⁴⁴³ Johnson identifies the connection between the events of the Toronto Blessing and the present revival he perceives to be happening in Bethel Church.

According to Wilkinson and Althouse, soaking prayer is an adapted form of Pentecostal/Charismatic prayer. They identify influences on soaking prayer including the Pentecostal ritual of being 'slain in the Spirit' in the early twentieth century where Pentecostals believed God's presence to be so strong that they fell to the floor as if dead. This experience came to be known by some mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics as 'resting in the Spirit'. Francis MacNutt linked 'resting prayer' with healing and borrowed the term 'soaking' from Tommy Tyson who engaged in prolonged healing prayer, with the effect of soaking the person in need with healing love. Wilkinson and Althouse suggest that MacNutt influenced the practice of soaking prayer at the Toronto Blessing by virtue of his visiting and speaking at Toronto meetings. They record Carol Arnott's experience of being invited by God to rest in the Spirit and be renewed; subsequently Arnott believed God was to encourage people to rest in the Father's love.⁴⁴⁴

Soaking prayer is claimed by charismatics to facilitate and expand the reception of divine love in order to give it away in acts of forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, and benevolence. Soaking is a metaphor that supports charismatic spirituality and practices like resting in the Spirit, prayer for spiritual gifts, healing, prophecy, and impartation...⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Johnson & Clark, *Healing Unplugged*, p.59; Comment from Sunday service, College View Campus, 10.30am, 26.01.2014.

In 2014, I was present in Redding while the 20th celebration of the 'Toronto Blessing' was taking place in Toronto. During the Sunday service (10.30am) on 26th January 2014, Johnson having returned from the celebration referred to the Toronto Blessing as 'one of the most significant moves of God ever' and emphasised the importance of the Toronto Blessing in relation to the current 'revival' being experienced in Redding and across the world.

⁴⁴³ www.revivalalliance.com [accessed 02.05.2015].

⁴⁴⁴ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, p.4

⁴⁴⁵ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, p.4.

Soaking prayer is a means by which Pentecostal/Charismatics can receive both divine love and healing. For Johnson, there is an excitement over healing occurring without active, spoken prayer and there is perpetual encouragement that God can heal, especially when one is worshipping or soaking in the ‘presence’ of God. In *Power Healing*, Wimber identifies that worship increases faith for healing:

As we draw close to God his Spirit works in us. Because church gatherings include open, corporate worship, they can be powerful environments for healing. We invite the Holy Spirit to come and minister to us. The Holy Spirit makes us more spiritually sensitive and we sense his powerful presence.⁴⁴⁶

Wimber identifies that worship increases the likelihood of healing and this motivation is evident in the healing practices at Bethel Church, in particular in Healing Rooms. The music, dance and art is purposed to facilitate ‘soaking prayer’. Poloma discusses the impact that music can have on healing; she suggests that not only is music culturally universal but also universally possesses curative powers.⁴⁴⁷ Poloma cites an article written by Andy Park, a leading composer of the AVC Music Group, who suggests that God designed music as an agency of healing:⁴⁴⁸

Music has the effect of bypassing our human defence mechanisms. Our hardened hearts soften up as we let melodies and harmonies wash over us. Music disarms us and taps into the sensitivities of our soul. Under the influence of songs of praise, our anxiety lifts, our mood changes, and we get in touch with our inner person and feelings. As we yield to the Lord and behold his beauty, we invite the Great Physician to come to us...

As we worship the Lord, the healing power of God’s kingdom comes upon us. God-inspired art impacts the emotions and feeds the spirit. And I’ve seen God heal physical ailments in the midst of worship.⁴⁴⁹

Music and worship are not considered a preparatory stage before the healing can happen, but it is considered a mediator of healing. In reference to the narrative-symbol-praxis definition of spirituality, music particularly could be identified as a symbol within this context by virtue

⁴⁴⁶ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.186-7.

⁴⁴⁷ Poloma, M.M., *Main Street Mystics* ((Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2003) p.107.

⁴⁴⁸ Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, p.107.

⁴⁴⁹ Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, 107 – referencing Park, ‘The Mysterious Power of Music’ www.vmg.com/resources [accessed 14.05.2003].

of it being an important practice. With an entire stage of the Healing Room experience being dedicated to ‘soaking prayer’ it seems that music, as well as other expressions of worship, are deemed important to the practice of healing at Bethel Church.

It is notable that another practice identifiable from Healing Rooms experience is the significance given to waiting for spiritual or prophetic insight. In order to explore this practice, Johnson will be discussed in relation to those who are acknowledged by himself as having significant influence over his healing beliefs and practices.⁴⁵⁰ While many Pentecostals would be quick to say a prayer of faith, in this case the time dedicated to praying is begun by waiting for divine guidance. Wimber endorsed this approach by emphasising that hearing and seeing are the two foremost practices when praying for healing. For Wimber these practices are fundamental to healing because they require being rooted in relationship with God rather than following a formula. In this period of waiting, Wimber asked questions of God relating to what to pray for and how to pray. Hearing and seeing enables the pray-er to recognise what God wants to do and work with God in the healing process.⁴⁵¹ This is reminiscent of Francis MacNutt’s approach to healing prayer:

⁴⁵⁰ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, Dedications & Acknowledgements - ‘I write with great indebtedness to John Wimber and Randy Clark. When I heard John Wimber speak in 1987, I realised that a supernatural lifestyle was possible even for a normal person. That gave me the courage to try to minister to the sick outside the context of a church service or crusade, so public places became the setting in which I learned about the miracle of power Jesus. But I never met John. All I learned was from a distance, until I met Randy Clark. Randy has been largest contributor to my understanding and experience of the miracle lifestyle. Before he came to Redding, we saw miracles weekly. After a few days with Randy, we saw the miracles multiply until they became daily happenings. John and Randy deserve much honour for lovingly sharing their lives with the rest of us’; Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.13 - ‘No one has had a greater influence on me as it pertains to the lifestyle of miracles, signs and wonders than Randy Clark. I have ministered with him all over the world and have been greatly impacted. His lifestyle and message have shaped my thinking and behaviour. I have heard some of his messages more times than I can count, yet they never get old. In fact, I am challenged every single time he speaks. The standard he holds for his personal life, the way he honors people, and most of all, his commitment to honor and follow the Holy Spirit have inspired me beyond words’.; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.20 ‘though he is an Assembly of God pastor and not a Vineyard pastor, he carries the DNA of John Wimber more than anyone else I know, especially when it comes to his passion for healing and the activity of the Holy Spirit’.

⁴⁵¹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.193.

A doctor is looking for the right diagnosis. In prayer for healing we are looking for the right discernment – which is the same thing as right diagnosis in the realm of prayer. We are really listening to two things:

- 1) To the person who asks for healing and tells us what seems to be wrong;
- 2) To God, who from time to time shares with us (through the gift of knowledge) the true diagnosis whenever the person isn't sure what is wrong.⁴⁵²

While there would be areas of conflict between Johnson and MacNutt, namely over whether or not to pray – Johnson would always pray, whereas MacNutt would discern whether or not to pray, the practice of waiting to receive spiritual insight into the root of the problem is common to both approaches. For both paradigms there is the common principle that ‘even when the person has a physical ailment, we should be alert to the possibility that some deeper healing may be needed’.⁴⁵³

As has previously been discussed, Bill Johnson has drawn on the teaching and practices of both John Wimber and Randy Clark. Both of these individuals also influenced one another prior to Johnson's involvement.⁴⁵⁴ As a result it is inevitable that Johnson's, and therefore Bethel Church healing practices carry the DNA of both Clark and Wimber. In *Power Healing*, Wimber outlines a Five Step Prayer Model that has since been modified by Clark.

Wimber's model is outlined below:

- Step one: interview
- Step two: the diagnostic decision
- Step three: the prayer selection
- Step four: the prayer engagement

⁴⁵² MacNutt, F., *Healing* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974) p.195.

⁴⁵³ MacNutt, *Healing*, p. 199.

⁴⁵⁴ Clark & Wimber, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.25 – ‘First I [Clark] went to Dallas and heard John Wimber in January 1984. For the first time in my life, I saw firsthand the power of God affecting people physically and causing them to tremble and/or fall. I was so excited. All I had seen prior to this was God's power touching someone emotionally. I had seen people cry under conviction for their sins or cry when touched by God's love after conversion. And as a child, I had once seen people laughing for joy in the Baptist church I grew up in. This was different. During the meeting in Dallas, I had the opportunity to have John Wimber pray for me. I was afraid he might tell me everything wrong in my life through the gift of prophecy, but instead, he told me many highly encouraging things. What I remember most was when he said, ‘God says you are a Prince in the Kingdom of God’. Sometime later, John's vice president of Vineyard Ministries International told me that the first two times John and I had met, John had heard God tell him audibly that I would one day go around the world laying hands on pastors and leaders to impart and stir up spiritual gifts in them. John did not tell me this himself until shortly before he died. A few days after the outpouring began in Toronto, though, John did tell me that I was now starting on what God had shown him about me ten years earlier’.

Step five: post prayer directions

The interview process involves asking ‘what is the problem?’, and ‘what do you want prayer for?’ The hearing and seeing practices are actioned at this point, as Wimber explains the importance of listening both in the natural and the supernatural. The diagnostic decision overlaps with the first step, as it involves identifying the root of the problem which in turn determines the type of prayer required.⁴⁵⁵ The third step involves deciding what God wants to do with the particular person at that particular time. It should be noted that Wimber would assert that God wants to heal, but would not assume that God wants to heal in that exact moment.⁴⁵⁶ Wimber distinguishes the two types of prayer that may be employed: ‘petition directed towards God and words that we receive from God and speak to a condition...’⁴⁵⁷ The fourth step is identified as prayer engagement which ‘consists of prayer, laying on of hands, and when needed, further interviewing’.⁴⁵⁸ The final step involves post prayer directions which may involve encouragement to those not healed, or direction towards further pastoral care.⁴⁵⁹ What is significant to Wimber’s approach is his value for the individual:

Keeping in mind that we pray for persons and not simply conditions ensures the protection of people's dignity. When I pray for a person's healing my goal is to leave him or her feeling more loved by God than before we prayed. One of the ways I express God's love is by showing interest in every aspect of a person's life. Often this means that praying for the sick takes a great deal of time, both in initial and follow-up sessions.⁴⁶⁰

Like Wimber, Randy Clark maintains that the Five Step model is not a formula; ‘it is a natural process of dialogue both with the person you are praying for and with God. It is a relational process, not a mechanical formula’.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁵ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.209-10.

⁴⁵⁶ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.214.

⁴⁵⁷ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.216.

⁴⁵⁸ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.221.

⁴⁵⁹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.244.

⁴⁶⁰ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.185.

⁴⁶¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.217.

It is repeatedly stated that the model is not the only way to pray for the sick. Clark upholds that healing should be modelled on Jesus.

This basic principle of discipleship is modelled after Jesus' relationship with the Father. Jesus perceived what the Father was doing. He heard or saw it and then obeyed it.⁴⁶²

Clark's Five Step model is outline below:

1. Interview
2. Diagnosis and prayer selection
3. Prayer ministry: praying for effect
4. Stop and re-interview
5. Post-prayer suggestion

According to Clark, the purpose of the interview is to determine the root cause of the problem in order to make a diagnosis and thereby select the most appropriate form of prayer.⁴⁶³ Clark distinguishes between command prayers and petitionary prayers; he maintains that Jesus did not say to pray for the sick, but to heal the sick and for that reason praying should on the most part involve commanding prayers directed towards the condition – 'Commanding prayers are directed towards the problem, not toward God. They indicate our understanding of our God-given authority for healing and our understanding of what He wants to do...'⁴⁶⁴ It could be argued that commanding prayers are not prayers at all. Clark's repeated emphasis is on praying for effect, rather than praying to comfort the individual.⁴⁶⁵ Clark directs that the prayer stop praying and re-interview; if the healing is partial, praying should then continue, but it is important to Clark that if healing has happened that it is acknowledged. Clark is keen to acquire quantifiable details of healing experiences. Finally, follow-up instructions may include encouraging the individual to have more faith, and to thank God for whatever measure of healing they have received.

⁴⁶² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.218.

⁴⁶³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.221.

⁴⁶⁴ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.224.

⁴⁶⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.228-9.

While Wimber places a greater emphasis on the importance of the person being prayed for, Clark is more interested in the healing miracle itself. It seems that both of these models have influenced Johnson's approach to the practice of healing, both in Healing Rooms and in other pastoral contexts as there is significance ascribed to both the person being prayed for and the miracle itself. The importance of interviewing and gauging the most appropriate and effective type of prayer is a common theme amongst the healing models. Johnson would differ from Wimber in that he would maintain that God always wants to heal in every moment.

Nevertheless, Johnson and the practice at Bethel Church would arguably be more closely aligned with the Wimber model because of the emphasis on the healing of the whole person. Interestingly, even when healing takes place in a large auditorium, Johnson would encourage a similar model to be practiced by the members of the congregation praying, unlike Clark who would lead a large service by bringing the words of knowledge, and command prayers himself. This will be discussed further in the next section.

5.3 Congregational ministry

The second healing practice that I identified through my field work was the prolific use of words of knowledge during services at Bethel Church. Most of those who were speaking from the front during any one of the services would use some of their time allocated to speak to deliver words of knowledge and pray for those who responded. After worship was drawn to a close, one of the leaders would lead the transition to the preached message, which involved financial giving, watching the 'video notices' and introducing the speaker for that service. Once the speaker had then greeted the congregation, it was common practice that they would ask for those who were suffering from one or more sicknesses or conditions to stand.

During my time spent in the field, conditions that were called out included: drug addiction, alcohol addiction, paranoia, schizophrenia, bipolar, Alzheimer's, memory loss, STDs, damage from abortion, liver damage, cancer, as well as every organ and body part that could be malfunctioning or damaged. There was a recurrent emphasis given to sustained head injuries and brain damage; it seemed as though this was a particular area of healing that was being actively pursued in order to see an increase in successful healing experiences. It is apparent that words of knowledge address both physical ailments as well as mental and emotional concerns.

As aforementioned, it was common practice to have those who identified with any of the sicknesses, diseases, ailments or medical issues to stand. While speaking, Seth Dahl (Children's Pastor) explained that this is because 'shame has no power over the person who refuses to hide'.⁴⁶⁶ It seems that there is significance placed on publicly identifying with the word of knowledge. The speaker then asked members of the congregation who were seated close to those standing to gather around them and pray. While the speaker would give some guidance as to what to pray for or how to pray, the emphasis was placed on the congregation praying for one another rather than the speaker. At every service it was far more important that healing was happening and that God was given the glory for every testimony rather than that healing being attributed to a specific speaker or minister. It was also common practice that anyone healed through this experience share their testimony from the front as a means of building faith and thanking God.

This model very obviously employs the whole congregation in the practice of healing.

Poloma distinguishes between healing evangelists and body ministry:

⁴⁶⁶ Comment from Friday service, College View Campus, 7pm, 24.01.2014.

Although most would acknowledge the efficacy of ministries of healing evangelists like Benny Hinn and Oral Roberts, there is an increased interest in the approach of the late John Wimber in ‘equipping of all believers’ to exercise divine powers.⁴⁶⁷

Healing practices that take place during the course of the service tend to subscribe to one or other of these models. Wimber was a forerunner in endorsing the notion and practice that ‘everyone gets to play’.⁴⁶⁸

Wimber provided a voice for others in the larger Pentecostal/ Charismatic movement who sought to downplay the role of healing evangelists and healing crusades that were characteristic of the 1950s healing movement, emphasising instead that the power to heal was available to all Christians. There was an attempt to democratize healing, taking it out of the hands of a few and putting it in the hands of the masses.⁴⁶⁹

As a result of Wimber’s congregational ministry approach to healing, the Toronto Blessing was a ‘nameless and faceless movement’— there was not one healing evangelist who pioneered and sustained the blessing, nor was ministry limited to any one person, or persons deemed qualified. It should be noted that Wimber identifies that the only qualifications required for praying for healing are faith, however great or little, and receptivity, openness to God’s healing power.⁴⁷⁰ It is apparent that this approach to healing has impacted Bill Johnson. Not only does Bethel Church practice congregational ministry in the Healing Room forum, where large numbers are required to meet the demand of those wanting prayer, but even during the service where it may be easier and safer to have healing prayer practiced by the one individual leading. On every occasion where a word of knowledge was called out from the speaker at the front, healing prayer was practised by members of the congregation. This visual image of members of the congregation gathering around those standing for prayer can be identified as another symbol that express the significance of healing being outworked within the community and by the community.

⁴⁶⁷ Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, p.87.

⁴⁶⁸ Wimber & Wimber, *Everyone Gets to Play* (Ampelon Publishing, 2009).

⁴⁶⁹ Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, p.102.

⁴⁷⁰ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.199.

Once again, Johnson's approach to healing practice sits more comfortably within the Wimber paradigm than the Randy Clark paradigm. While Clark would embrace body ministry in a pastoral setting, he equally functions as a healing evangelist during his own crusades or large services. Indeed during the Randy Clark School of Healing that I attended while in Redding, Clark practiced healing ministry using the typical approach of a healing evangelist who calls out words of knowledge and proceeds to pray for those who respond himself. Although Johnson was allied in the organising and running of this event, he himself did not engage in this model of healing ministry.

An interesting element of the specific model of body ministry that is outworked in Bethel Church is the reliance on words of knowledge. Here there is far more convergence between Bill Johnson's and Randy Clark's approach to healing. Cartledge suggests that this emphasis on words of knowledge in healing ministry is a result of Wimber's influence.⁴⁷¹ Indeed it is significant that despite differences in their approach to healing, Clark and Johnson regularly work together in holding healing conferences, and have written books together on the subject of healing. Given Clark's impact on Bill Johnson's theology and practice of healing ministry, it is important to acknowledge where they agree. Clark explains that 'though words of knowledge are not just for healing, they play a major role in healing'.⁴⁷² Clark suggests that the power of the word of knowledge lies in the expectation or faith it creates in the person who receives it:

People are certain they would be healed if Jesus told them He wanted to heal them. That is exactly what He does in a word of knowledge. When people truly understand the purpose of such words and are the benefactors of one (meaning they are the one about whom the word is given), it creates an excitement and a confidence that they will indeed be healed – because Jesus said so through the word of knowledge.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Cartledge, M.J., 'Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description', *JPT* 5 (1994) 79-120, p.94.

⁴⁷² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.203.

⁴⁷³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.204.

For Clark and Johnson, the word of knowledge is an insight from God that identifies either the condition that needs healing or the person who needs healing. It is suggested that a word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation of fact or insight which could not have been known through natural effort.⁴⁷⁴ Cartledge discusses words of knowledge under the broader typology of Charismatic prophecy,

It can be said that the word of knowledge is, in the main, understood to refer to knowledge revealed by the Holy Spirit through a revelatory impulse; and which the person then speaks out. It may be used within a general teaching ministry, and is usually understood to be a specific message, both in content and application'.⁴⁷⁵

For Clark and Johnson, the words not only create faith, but they possess the transformational power to heal.⁴⁷⁶ Likewise, standing in response to a word of knowledge is believed to be important in not only increasing faith but stimulating the potential of healing. The action of faith can be a catalyst for receiving healing.⁴⁷⁷ This belief is rooted in the biblical distinction in relation to prophecy between foretelling or prediction and forthtelling otherwise understood as proclamation. Cartledge suggests that forthtelling or proclamatory prophecy is increasingly popular in the Charismatic church.⁴⁷⁸ For Johnson and Clark it is the proclamation that has the power to stimulate the healing experience.

In *Healing Unplugged*, Clark and Johnson jointly discuss the way in which they individually receive these insights or words of knowledge from God. While Johnson identifies that he receives insight through inspired thought, Clark often feels a pain or condition in his own body and is able to identify that as a word of knowledge that God wants to heal someone experiencing such pain.⁴⁷⁹ Clark identifies that he sometimes feels a fire in his left hand

⁴⁷⁴ Cartledge, 'Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description', p.93.

⁴⁷⁵ Cartledge, 'Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description', p.94.

⁴⁷⁶ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.205.

⁴⁷⁷ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.39.

⁴⁷⁸ Cartledge, 'Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description', p.89.

⁴⁷⁹ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.38.

which is an indicator to him that there is anointing present for healing.⁴⁸⁰ Cartledge discusses the means by which prophecy, or supernatural revelation is received. He suggests that some experience ‘words coming to mind’, while others experience a sensing of a message, and others experience dreams, visions, pictures and images.⁴⁸¹ Another distinct Charismatic revelatory experience involves physical sensations and impressions – ‘someone may receive a pain or ache come to believe that God is telling them that someone else has that particular pain’.⁴⁸² It seems that Johnson and Clark experience supernatural revelation according to the typology articulated by Cartledge.

It is also common practice for both Clark and Johnson to not rely on words of knowledge, but instead invoke the principles of testimony breakthrough, whereby they pray for healing for conditions that they have seen God already heal frequently.⁴⁸³

When I don’t know what to do in a meeting, I can start with what I know God has done in the past... Using our momentum in God – what we have going in God – we can make a declaration or call out a condition.⁴⁸⁴

The significance of testimony was discussed in the previous chapter, and this statement adds substance to the sub-narrative of breakthrough that permeates Johnson’s approach to healing. As discussed in the chapter addressing the beliefs or theology of healing, there is a belief that by praying for a certain condition repeatedly, there is a spiritual leverage gained that means eventually the condition becomes easily healed – this would be identified as breakthrough in the area of this condition. The concept of breakthrough underpins the theology of healing, and in turn influences the practical outworking of healing.

⁴⁸⁰ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.43.

⁴⁸¹ Cartledge, ‘Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description’, p.83-5.

⁴⁸² Cartledge, ‘Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description’, p.86.

⁴⁸³ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.49.

⁴⁸⁴ Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.81.

A final point of interest is the choice to engage in healing prayer part way through the service, and indeed during the time allocated for the preached message. Daniel E Albrecht discusses the rites and rituals identified within Pentecostal services. He acknowledges that James White is correct in asserting that ‘the Pentecostal tradition is strangely free from the compulsion to get from A to Z in any service and may meander from Z to F and then on to O and T’.⁴⁸⁵ However Albrecht contends that there are patterns within the structure of Pentecostal and Charismatic church services: ‘the foundational/processual pattern consists of three primary rites: the rite of worship and praise, the rite of the pastoral message and the rite of altar/response’.⁴⁸⁶ Albrecht goes on to suggest that each of these three primary rites consist of a cluster of ‘microrites’, practices, behaviours and gestures’. In addition, the primary rites are connected by transitional rites. Albrecht identifies healing prayer as a microrite and places it within the third primary rite:

Rites of ministry and healing comprise the third category of extended altar/response. These too may take a variety of forms (e.g. various healing rites and ways of praying for needs), but the rites of ministry explicitly aim at ministering to and praying for felt needs (e.g. physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, even financial) that congregants and visitors present.⁴⁸⁷

Here Albrecht suggests that healing prayer fits within the response or altar call paradigm, during which there is space to respond to the preached message with prayer, or space to request prayer for a specific need. It is apparent that the services at Bethel Church do fit with the paradigm of rites described by Albrecht in that they do engage in post service prayer which includes prayer for healing. Albrecht also suggests that healing as a microrite may also take place during the first rite of praise and worship; while there is rarely opportunity made at Bethel Church for healing prayer to happen during the worship, there is always an expectation that God can heal during worship, through the medium of His increased presence, mediated through music, dance and visual art. What Albrecht does not account for is the

⁴⁸⁵ Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, p.152.

⁴⁸⁶ Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, p.152.

⁴⁸⁷ Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, p.168.

possibility of the microrite of healing featuring during the second primary rite of the pastoral message. This would in fact be the most obvious opportunity to receive healing prayer as the entire congregations' attention is held by the speaker issuing words of knowledge.⁴⁸⁸ In addition, at Bethel Church, healing prayer would also feature in the transitional rites as those performing the transitions felt led by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, healing prayer in its variety of forms may permeate all of the primary rites and transitional rites. It is apparent that healing forms one of the central narratives of Bethel Church.

5.4 Post service prayer

This third practice functions as a catch all, should a specific condition have not been called out as a word of knowledge. After every service there are large teams available to pray with anyone who wants to be prayed with or for. These teams wait at the front of the Sanctuary under banners that say the word 'Freedom'. While prayer is available for any need, it is verbally endorsed as the service is closed that anyone who is suffering from sickness or any condition should go forward to receive prayer for healing. During this time, anyone who goes to be prayed for will receive one on one prayer from a trained member of the team. This prayer will most commonly involve laying on of hands on the affected area. The same principles from Healing Rooms apply here, and it is likely that the ministry team will wait for spiritual insight into the root of the physical or emotional condition and pray about that rather than just for the physical condition.

It is also a common practice for services to end with a 'fire tunnel'. This practice involves trained team members forming two lines with the people facing one another. As members of the congregation walk through they are touched by those making up the tunnel and prayed

⁴⁸⁸ On the contrary, post service prayer would require those who wanted prayer to choose go to the front and request such prayer; this requires a higher degree of engagement with this opportunity for healing prayer.

for. 'Fire tunnels' are commonly used for the purposes of impartation by the laying on of hands but if the ministry team are engaged in the fire tunnel, those suffering from sickness will be encouraged to go through the tunnel in order to receive prayer for healing.⁴⁸⁹

McGuire's study identifies some of the features of prayer ministry teams. The fundamental aspects of this description applies to the prayer ministry teams at Bethel Church, particularly that the context for this healing practice means that usually more time is available for each prayer request:

This small group met with persons requesting prayer, usually before or after the larger prayer meeting. In this context, they often explored the person's needs more deeply than possible in the anonymous prayer chain. Several prayer ministries used this time to interpret requesters' illnesses to them, and to give advice, counselling, suggestions for reading, and practical suggestions, in addition to the actual prayers for healing. Typically, they laid hands on the person as they prayed.⁴⁹⁰

While laying on of hands is a significant feature in all of the healing practices discussed, I have chosen to address it as part of the exploration of post service prayer as it forms the central focus of this practice. The significance of laying on of hands in the practice of healing prayer can be traced back to traditional Pentecostal origins:

The Assemblies of God stood in agreement with other Pentecostals in their practices of praying for the sick. James 5 and Mark 16 were seen to provide the basic instruction. Anointing with oil, praying the prayer of faith and laying hands on the sick were the most often used methods.⁴⁹¹

It is apparent that Johnson's practice of healing in terms of laying on of hands stands in the tradition of the AG and Pentecostal tradition.⁴⁹² It should be noted however that he is not standing alone in this tradition. Wimber emphasises the importance of laying on of hands in Jesus' healing ministry; he recognises that when praying the sick Jesus often both touched the

⁴⁸⁹ See below for discussion of laying on of hands.

⁴⁹⁰ McGuire, M.B., *Ritual Healing in Suburban American* ((New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988) p.59.

⁴⁹¹ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.173.

⁴⁹² It should be noted however that while the Pentecostal tradition of laying on of hands is used by Johnson, the tradition of laying on of hands being done by the leader or pastor only has been abandoned.

person and spoke to the condition.⁴⁹³ Furthermore, Randy Clark employs the practice of laying on of hands on the premise of the principle of impartation, that being the notion that healing or a gift of the Spirit can be transferred through touch,

As clearly as teaching, modelling and imitation play roles in how Global Awakening transmits healing practices, Clark's central theological contribution is the concept of impartation. Pointing to biblical precedents such as the apostle Paul's encouragement to his disciple Timothy that he not forget the gift given to him through the laying on of hands and prayer, Clark envisions healing as more contagious than disease, and the anointing, or oil-like spread, of the Holy Spirit as a tangible, transferable power, or love energy, that is caught rather than taught and imparted to others through human touch.⁴⁹⁴

Not only does Johnson stand in the Pentecostal tradition of laying on of hands, but his praxis is also aligned with Clark with regards to impartation through the laying on of hands.

According to Clark, healing is received through this impartation. Although MacNutt may not have identified laying on of hands as impartation as such, he nevertheless identifies that

'there does seem to be a current of healing power that often seems to flow from the minister of healing to the sick person... like a transfer of life-giving power'.⁴⁹⁵ McGuire's studies endorse the laying on of hands as 'the use of touch to channel God's healing power'.⁴⁹⁶

Brown coined the term 'proximal intercessory prayer', referring to 'in-person, direct-contact prayer, frequently involving touch, by one or more persons on behalf of another'.⁴⁹⁷ Brown

uses this category in her study of the efficacy of healing prayer, and suggests that proximal intercessory prayer is believed to have greater effect than distant prayer.⁴⁹⁸ During my time

spent in the field of study, I observed that the type of touch used in the laying on of hands varied. If the afflicted body part was appropriate to be touched, for example a knee or back, then those praying would ask to lay hands on that area. If prayer was for a more conceptual

⁴⁹³ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.196.

⁴⁹⁴ Brown, 'Global Awakenings: Divine Healing Networks and Global Community in North America, Brazil and Mozambique, and beyond', p.361.

⁴⁹⁵ MacNutt, *Healing*, p.200.

⁴⁹⁶ McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, p.63.

⁴⁹⁷ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.89.

⁴⁹⁸ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.89.

healing request, hands may be placed on the shoulders, hands, head, forehead, or even over the eyes or ears to signify an opening of spiritual eyes or ears. Regardless of the specifics of laying on of hands, it is nevertheless a fundamental practice at Bethel Church and can be identified as another symbol expressing the spirituality of this community.

It is also important to acknowledge that laying on of hands further endorses the practice of congregational ministry. Warrington states that although laying on of hands was traditionally practiced by ministers, ‘it has now been recognised as the privilege of others also in the congregation’.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed ‘the emphasis on impartation encourages the democratization of healing practices – since anyone can become anointed by receiving impartation’.⁵⁰⁰ This democratization of healing practices is a central tenet of Bethel Church and Bill Johnson’s influence therein. The goal of Bill Johnson is to equip as many people as possible to pray for the sick. It is interesting to note a difference here between Johnson and Clark: while Clark identifies that impartation makes healing possible for all believers, impartation equally reinforces his own significance as the one imparting the healing anointing. Johnson on the other hand defers to the impartation of Clark’s healing anointing rather than encouraging others to receive his own healing anointing through impartation. While the difference may be subtle, it is significant. Johnson seems to be more interested in practically outworking the democratization of healing without creating an expectation that he could be the source of the healing anointing or impartation.

The discussion on congregational ministry highlighted the significance at Bethel Church of all members of the church participating in healing practices. It is interesting to acknowledge

⁴⁹⁹ Warrington, K., ‘Healing and Exorcism: The Path to Wholeness’, in Warrington, K., ed., *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998) p.161.

⁵⁰⁰ Brown, ‘Global Awakenings: Divine Healing Networks and Global Community in North America, Brazil and Mozambique, and beyond’, p.161.

that in order to participate in Healing Rooms and as part of a post service prayer team, formal training is required. ‘These prayer ministry teams were usually specialized and believed to possess special Gifts of the Spirit that enabled them to be more effective in their prayer than ordinary members’.⁵⁰¹ McGuire identifies a stratification that places those trained as members of the prayer ministry team higher than those who are not. In relation to healing practice, perhaps the Clark model would place him at the top, followed by those trained by him, followed by those who are believers but who have not received training. The Johnson stratification would most likely consist of him being on a par with those who were trained in any capacity to pray for the sick, and those untrained below.⁵⁰² However, for Johnson the gap between those trained and those untrained is minimal, and easily bridged by the Holy Spirit regardless of formal training. For Johnson, the practice of praying for healing is about partnership with God. In *The Essential Guide to Healing*, Johnson refers to a time when he was praying for healing for someone but did not use words, or laying on of hands:

In that moment I realised what God was doing. I was a play-by-play announcer, like at a sporting event. It was my privilege to describe what God was doing in her as He showed me on my own body. He wanted to heal her without it flowing through me either thorough prayer, decree, or laying on of hands. It is important for us to understand that it is always God who heals. Sometimes we get to deliver the package (gift). Sometimes we watch Him deliver the package himself.⁵⁰³

Johnson’s emphasis is on the healing occurring, through whatever means God intends to use in that specific circumstance. The notion of ‘co-labouring’ with God is one that features heavily in Johnson’s rhetoric. For Johnson, the practice of praying for healing can be summed as any individual whether trained or untrained, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in doing what they see the Father doing.

⁵⁰¹ McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, p.59.

⁵⁰² Johnson’s explicit goal is to empower all believers – Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.33 – ‘We, as sons and daughters of God, are destined to reveal our Father to the world by bearing His likeness. We do this as Christ did, by communing with the Father, walking in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth through demonstrations of power and authority, all in the context of showing the love of God’.; Johnson is regarded as an apostle by those in Global Legacy network & Revival Alliance, the office and title of ‘apostle’ has a particular meaning in the first order discourse, see appendix 2.

⁵⁰³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.131.

5.5 Inner healing and deliverance ministry

In chapter 4, the sub-narrative of wholeness was discussed. The notion of wholeness is implicitly embedded in the practice of praying for physical healing however it is more explicitly practised in the Sozo ministry.

Bethel Sozo ministry is a home grown inner healing and deliverance ministry which has been exported out of the local church and is practiced by trained individuals across the world. Sozo is a Greek word interpreted as ‘saved, healed, delivered’.

Sozo ministry is a unique inner healing and deliverance ministry aimed to get to the root of things hindering your personal connection with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With a healed connection, you can walk in the destiny to which you have been called.

A Sozo session is a time for the Sozo team to sit down with you and with the help of the Holy Spirit walk you through the process of freedom and wholeness. Sozo is not a counseling session but a time of interacting with Father, Son and Holy Spirit for wholeness and pursuing of your destiny.⁵⁰⁴

This statement from the Bethel Sozo website articulates some of the foundational features of this ministry. The purpose of this ministry is to explore any beliefs or experiences that can stand in the way of relationship with God. The goal is that the unseen wounds and hurts of life can be healed so that an individual can experience increased personal wholeness and freedom and an increased connection with God can be achieved. One of the key beliefs underpinning this ministry is that there can be root causes for physical and emotional suffering. On the surface there may be a physical or emotional issue that has been caused by a past experience, wound, or lie that has taken root in the heart of a person. Bethel Sozo ministry aims to identify and deal with the roots through facilitating a conversation between the person receiving ministry and God.

⁵⁰⁴ <http://bethelsozo.com/> [accessed 02.05.2015].

There are two tiers to this inner healing and deliverance ministry. Bethel Sozo ministry is the starting point for anyone seeking inner healing or deliverance; for those who are struggling to experience greater freedom or wholeness through this ministry or for those who have experienced an extreme degree of pain or abuse there is Shabar ministry. Shabar is a Hebrew word meaning ‘brokenhearted’ or ‘shattered’.⁵⁰⁵

This notion of root issues causing surface manifestations including, in some cases physical illness or suffering, shapes the healing theology of Johnson and Bethel Church as a whole. Although Healing Rooms focuses specifically on praying for physical healing, other forums of healing prayer may be affected by this belief.

In narrowing the remit of this thesis it is not possible to explore in depth the inner healing or deliverance ministries of Bethel Church. It is however important to recognise that the sub-narrative of wholeness and the belief in root causes for sickness permeates the overarching narrative of healing.

5.6 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, there are a few points that require acknowledgement. Firstly, having discussed all these practices, it could be assumed that assessing and quantifying healing experiences would be important. On the contrary, while Johnson is unequivocally interested in recognising the miracle and celebrating the testimony, he is less so when it comes to scientifically ascertaining or measuring physical healing experiences. ‘The distinctive epistemology shared by participants in Global Awakening events is that feeling

⁵⁰⁵<http://bethelsozo.com/about/1> [accessed 02.05.2015] referenced Isaiah 61:1 – ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the ‘brokenhearted’, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound’.

even more than seeing is believing'.⁵⁰⁶ Here Candy Gunther Brown is referring directly to Randy Clark's sphere of influence, however it has already been acknowledged that there has been and continues to be a significant degree of interaction between Clark's sphere and Johnson's sphere. This statement indicates a belief in feeling or sensing an improvement in health is as important as having scientific evidence for an improvement in health. It could even be argued that this epistemology runs more strongly in the veins of Johnson, as Clark does endorse medical confirmation of healing experiences. Johnson on the other hand seeks to protect those who have experienced healing miracles from the scientific and medical assessment that may throw into question the reality of the miracle. Johnson's practice of healing evidently encourages an emphasis on feeling and experience that is typical of Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity.

A second and final point to conclude this chapter is that Johnson's healing practices draw on and reflect two different paradigms of healing as identified by Pavel Hejzlar:

The current scene features both elements reminiscent of the theologies of healing of late nineteenth century, with their emphasis on the all-sufficiency of the atonement and faith as the avenue to healing, represented by our inquiry by Bosworth and Hagin; and trends introducing new concepts like 'inner healing' and soaking prayer' in conscious opposition to the perceived simplification of the former approach to the ministry of healing. Sanford and MacNutt are representative of these innovations. They show a tendency to dissociate themselves from certain beliefs and practices of early Pentecostalism and the post-WWII healing evangelism. The difference between the two models is visible in the setting chosen for the ministry of healing. Unlike their counterparts who fill huge arenas, Sanford and MacNutt opt for prayer in the much more intimate setting of small seminars.⁵⁰⁷

The current scene of this case study does contain features of both of these healing models.

While Johnson evidently carries the DNA of traditional Pentecostalism, the Healing Room context and democratization of healing practices demonstrate a shift towards a more pastoral healing paradigm.

⁵⁰⁶ Brown, 'Global Awakenings: Divine Healing Networks and Global Community in North America, Brazil and Mozambique, and beyond', p.363.

⁵⁰⁷ Hejzlar, *Two Paradigms for Divine Healing*, p.7.

6. Social Science Analysis: Engaging with Interaction Ritual Chain theory

6.1 Introduction

The pastoral model determines that at this stage the research findings are analysed in relation to social scientific perspectives. Having considered in chapter 2 the history and narrative of Bill Johnson within the context of Bethel Church, and having used chapters 3 and 4 to explore the espoused and practised healing theology, this chapter progresses the study by drawing a variety of social scientific voices into the conversation.

Typically, the pastoral model facilitates engagement with the social sciences through an interdisciplinary approach. Francis and Kay suggest that this approach is understood as the ‘reassessing of the content of one discipline in light of another’.⁵⁰⁸ Cartledge explains that ‘if the multi-disciplinary model is viewed sequentially as a series of monologues, then an interdisciplinary model is seen as a number of cooperate parallel dialogues’.⁵⁰⁹ The benefit of interdisciplinary engagement is the increased capacity for both disciplines to be applied fully and the potential for a more meaningful discussion between the two voices in the conversation.⁵¹⁰ As such this chapter will engage with the discipline of the sociology and in doing so will draw a sociological theory into the established theological dialogue.

Randall Collins’ ‘interaction ritual chains’ theory will be the central sociological voice in this conversation. This microsociological theory draws on Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman and is built on the notion of interpersonal, situational interaction. Developing the theories of

⁵⁰⁸ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.13 referencing Kay & Francis, ‘The Seamless Robe: Interdisciplinary Enquiry in Religious Education’, p.64-7; Francis & Kay, *Drift from the Churches: Attitude Toward Christianity during Childhood and Adolescence*.

⁵⁰⁹ Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.15.

⁵¹⁰ Dingemans, ‘Practical Theology in the Academy: A Contemporary Overview’, p.91, Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, p.14 referencing Kay & Francis, ‘The Seamless Robe: Interdisciplinary Enquiry in Religious Education’, p.66.

Durkheim and Goffman, Collins outlines the four main ingredients of interaction rituals [hereafter, IR]: bodily presence, boundaries to outsiders, mutual awareness of focus, and a shared emotional experience. Collins emphasises the significance of emotional energy as an outcome of IR; other outcomes include group solidarity, symbols, and a feeling of morality.⁵¹¹ It is the emotional energy, or feelings of confidence, elation, enthusiasm, strength and initiative combined with the other outcomes that result in the desire to repeat the ritual experience thus creating the chain of interaction rituals.⁵¹² This theory has been chosen as it provides a lens through which to view and thereby understand what is going on in relation to healing theology and practices in the context of Bethel Church as a result of the influence of Bill Johnson. This theory adds purchase to the analysis as it illuminates with clarity what is being experienced.

This chapter will be structured in accordance with the significance of this theory to the analysis. The first section of this chapter will give a thorough introduction and description of Randall Collins' IR theory. Following this, a brief section will identify where this theory has been used and applied in the context of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Subsequently, four cases where this theory has been applied will be chosen for both the clarity they bring to the theory, their theoretical proximity to the case study and subject of this thesis and their development of IR theory. Joel Robbins concept of 'portable practices' will be discussed in relation to IR chains. Robbins argues that IR chains are the foundation of Pentecostal community life and the reason why practices can be easily transported.⁵¹³ Robbins' usage of IR theory elucidates it through application and development. This theory has been chosen because of the significance of healing practices in Bethel Church and the subsequent portability of these practices. A second application of IR theory is by those working with the

⁵¹¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.48-49.

⁵¹² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.49, 118-9.

⁵¹³ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism'.

‘Godly Love’ concept. Here, Poloma et al have applied IR theory to illuminate the dynamic interaction with God’s love that enlivens benevolence. As participants receive love from God, they are enthused to share this love with others; as this cycle continues a chain develops which can be understood through the lens of IR theory. Candy Gunther Brown utilises the ‘Godly Love’ model, and its development of IR theory to discuss healing experiences. Brown’s use of IR theory is distinct from Robbins (and Wilkinson – discussed below) because she uses IR theory as it has been applied by those working with the ‘Godly Love’ concept, and therefore her contribution is discussed as a part of the ‘Godly Love’ section. The fourth contributing voice to this discussion is Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, specifically their text on Charismatic renewal and soaking prayer.⁵¹⁴ Their application of IR theory to the ritual practice of soaking prayer provides a model that assists with the application of IR theory to healing practices. Participation in soaking prayer is different but nevertheless comparable to participation in healing prayer. Although Robbins, Poloma, Wilkinson and Althouse are significant voices in this conversation by virtue of their development of IR theory, it should be noted that the primary dialogue partner in this analysis is Randall Collins with his original formulation of IR theory. Robbins, Poloma, and Wilkinson and Althouse are of secondary importance. Having considered Collins in his own right as well as how his IR theory has been applied by Robbins, Poloma, Brown and Wilkinson, this chapter will conclude with a section that applies IR theory to Bethel healing practices as influenced by the theology and practices of Bill Johnson.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*.

⁵¹⁵ Chapter 7 will continue the heuristic cycle with a critical evaluation of IR theory in light of the healing praxis of Johnson.

6.1.1 IR theory and religious studies.

Before discussing IR theory in greater detail, it is important to acknowledge where else this theory has been applied in religious studies. Joseph O Baker employs IR theory in his article ‘Social Sources of the Spirit’ in order to discuss the connection between this theory and rational choice approaches.⁵¹⁶ He proposes a synthesis between the collective ‘social’ goods in religious groups and interaction rituals. J Wollschleger’s congregational study considers IR theory in the context of religious participation, arguing that a congregational worship service should be considered an interaction ritual.⁵¹⁷ David Smilde considers how ritual is utilized by evangelical organisations in Venezuela.⁵¹⁸ Rafael Walthert uses IR theory to answer the question of why a strict evangelical community is successful in a secularized environment.⁵¹⁹ Katie E Corcoran uses IR theory to study the correlation between emotional energy experienced in a religious service and the desire to contribute financially as part of the service. She argues that those who experience high levels of emotional energy are more likely to give a high proportion of their income.⁵²⁰ Roberta Bivar C Campos discusses the emergence of charismatic leaders in Brazilian Pentecostalism and utilises IR theory in relation to the energy that is passed between leaders and believers.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁶ Baker, J.O., ‘Social Sources of the Spirit: Connecting Rational Choice and Interactive Ritual Theories in the Study of Religion’, *Sociology of Religion* 0:0 (2010) 1-25.

⁵¹⁷ Wollschleger, J., ‘Interaction Ritual Chains and Religious Participation’, *Sociological Forum*, 27:4 (2012) 896-912.

⁵¹⁸ Smilde, D., ‘Public Rituals and Public Positioning, Venezuelan Evangelicals and Chavez Government’, in Lindhardt, M., *Practicing the Faith* (New York, US: Berghahn Books, 2011).

⁵¹⁹ Walthert, R., Emotion, ‘Ritual and the Individual: The Production of Community in Evangelicalis’, *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 6:1 (2013) 90-119.

⁵²⁰ Corcoran, K.E. ‘Thinkers and Feelers: Emotions and Giving’, *Social Science Research* (2014).

⁵²¹ Campos, R.B.C., ‘Sharing charisma as a mode of Pentecostal expansion’, *Social Compass*, 61 (2014) 277-289.

6.2 Interaction Ritual Chains theory

In order to test this theory, it is necessary to first understand the theory by building up the component parts in layers. It is important to start with the contributory voices and concepts to this theory.

6.2.1 IR theory introduction

It should be noted that in order to develop IR theory, Collins starts with ritual theory.

According to Collins rituals permeate society, and can be identified everywhere; rather than this resulting in IR theory applying to everything and therefore nothing in particular, Collins suggests that instead the theory is significant in being generally applicable in a wide range of situations.⁵²² In addition, IR theory is the key to microsociology. Microsociology focuses on the study of small scale, face to face interactions and uses the specific situation and actors therein to understand the large scale or macro level. While acknowledgement of the risk of generalising is important, Collins upholds that a sufficiently strong theory at micro level can be used to illuminate the large scale.⁵²³

6.2.2 Key contributors to IR theory

Ervine Goffman is one of the key thinkers that contributed to the development of IR theory. Deriving his thinking from functionalist ritualism, Goffman understood IR theory as the abiding by rules of conduct that affirm the moral order of society.⁵²⁴ Goffman suggested five elements that uphold IR theory: situational co-presence, focused encounter, pressure to maintain social solidarity, honouring of that which is socially valued, and moral uneasiness

⁵²² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.9, 15.

⁵²³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.3.

⁵²⁴ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (New York, Doubleday, 1967) p.90.

when ritual is broken.⁵²⁵ Emile Durkheim, another one of the most important contributors to IR theory lays the groundwork for the ingredients that are required for rituals to happen, and the outcomes of said rituals.⁵²⁶ Durkheim emphasises the importance of the physical assembly of the group, whereby human bodies are together in the same place.⁵²⁷ Once together, there is an intensification of shared experience which Durkheim terms ‘collective effervescence’.⁵²⁸ In this stage a collective consciousness is formed, which is identified by Collins as a ‘condition of heightened intersubjectivity’.⁵²⁹ Durkheim identifies two connected and mutually reinforcing mechanisms – shared action and awareness, and shared emotion.⁵³⁰ These elements are created when movements that are carried out together focus attention, and participants become aware that they are doing and thinking the same – ‘collective movements are signals by which intersubjectivity is created’.⁵³¹ In turn, ‘collective attention enhances the expression of shared emotion; and in turn the shared emotion acts further to justify collective movements and the sense of intersubjectivity’.⁵³² In terms of the outcomes of ritual, collective effervescence is a short term effect, however prolonged effects include group solidarity, symbols and individual emotional energy.⁵³³ Durkheim suggests that one of the most important outcomes of rituals is to ascribe significance to symbolic objects, along with the individual receiving their own individual ‘reservoir of charge’.⁵³⁴ Durkheim likens this

⁵²⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.23-25 - Collins summarised Goffman’s contributions outlined in Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*; Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Goffman, *Encounters* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961); Goffman, *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes of the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Goffman, *Strategic Interaction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969) ; Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Basic, 1971) ; Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

⁵²⁶ Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ((New York: Free Press, 1912/1965).

⁵²⁷ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.245-7.

⁵²⁸ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.241-2.

⁵²⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.35.

⁵³⁰ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.262-3, 247.

⁵³¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.35 – summarising Durkheim’s contribution; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.262-3, 247.

⁵³² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.35 – summarising Durkheim’s contribution; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.262-3, 247.

⁵³³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.36 - Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.250-252.

⁵³⁴ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.38 -Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.265.

effect to ‘electricity’ which in a heightened state of excitement is stored in the ‘batteries’ which are comprised of the symbol, and the individual. ‘Participation in a ritual gives the individual a special kind of energy, which I will call emotional energy’. This emotional energy [EE] ‘is a feeling of confidence, courage to take action, boldness in taking initiative. It is a morally suffused energy; it makes the individual feel not only good, but exalted, with the sense of doing what is most important and most valuable’.⁵³⁵

Collins summarises the contributions of Durkheim and Goffman as follows:

Durkheim provided sociologists with a mechanism for situational interaction that is still the most useful we have. He set this model up in the case of religious ritual in a way that enables us to see what social ingredients come together in a situation and make a ritual succeed or fail.

Goffman broadened the application of ritual by showing how it is found in one degree or another throughout everyday life; in the secular realm as in the sacred and official worlds, ritual plays a key role in shaping both individual character and stratified group boundaries.⁵³⁶

Of significance for the case study that is the subject of this thesis, Durkheim applied IR theory to religion ritual. He identified religious ritual ‘as a revelation of the divine, a doorway into the transcendental’.⁵³⁷ According to Durkheim, religious ritual is a convergence of the transcendent in an imminent ritual. IR theory analysis is a secular framework that identifies a set of processes that produce a belief; Durkheim upholds that this framework can be used to provide a secular interpretation for religious ritual, while taking seriously the religious experience.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.39 – summarising Durkheim’s contribution; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.241.

⁵³⁶ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.8.

⁵³⁷ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.33 summarising Durkheim’s contribution; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

⁵³⁸ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.33 summarising Durkheim’s contribution; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

6.2.3 Randall Collins' IR theory

6.2.3.1 Ingredients and outcomes

Having considered the contributions of Durkheim and Goffman, Collins offers his formulation for what constitutes IR theory. There is much overlap between what his predecessors laid out, and what Collins maintains as important. Collins identifies four *ingredients, or initiating conditions* that are required for an IR to occur:

1. Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not.
2. There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded.
3. People focus their attention upon a common object of activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention.
4. They share a common mood or emotional experience.⁵³⁹

The *outcomes* of IR that Collins identifies are subject to the ingredients above being both present and combined; sufficiently high levels of mutually focused and emotionally shared attention are required.

1. Group solidarity, a feeling of membership;
2. Emotional energy [EE] in the individual: a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action;
3. Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves collectively;
4. Feelings of morality: the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group's solidarity and its symbolic representations.⁵⁴⁰

Each of these ingredients and outcomes will now be considered in further detail.

⁵³⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.48.

⁵⁴⁰ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.49.

6.2.3.2 Bodily presence

One of the significant elements of this theory is the necessity of bodily presence. Collins maintains that in its essence, ritual is a bodily process. Nevertheless, he considers in great detail the possibility of rituals being performed without bodily presence. Can mutual focus and emotional entrainment be generated through various forms of media communication? Responding to this question requires a comparison of the degree of shared attention and emotion that is generated, as well as solidarity, respect for symbolism and individual EE. Collins dismisses telephone communication as insufficient for the generation of shared attention and emotion, but gives further discussion to whether the visual media is better. He suggests that the benefit of this form of media communication is the possibility of camera close-ups of the faces of participants which in turn facilitates bodily feedback. Emotion can be read through the face and those engaging with media communication can experience shared attention and emotion through the screen. Collins however also distinguishes between the sound and visual elements of visual media. Both of these components contribute and in isolation generate differing levels of shared attention and emotion. Collins argues that when there is the visual element without the sound, visual media is limited in its ability to generate shared attention and emotion, whereas, sound without the visual element can still generate shared attention and emotion due to the effect of being able to hear crowd engagement and participation.⁵⁴¹

In the context of whether bodily presence is required, Collins hones in on the prolific use of visual media in religious contexts and recognises the significance of ‘media evangelists’. He argues that broadcast religious services reinforce and enhance personal attendance rather than displacing it. Such broadcasts include not only the preaching, but also the worship service

⁵⁴¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.53-55.

during which cameras are used to portray the congregation in a way that allows the distance viewer to project themselves into the experience. It is important that audience participation is conveyed in the broadcast. According to Collins, religious leaders who use broadcasting become media stars, and can be identified as symbols or sacred objects that draw audiences to them. The desire to be close to such symbols, especially when services are being broadcast, results in a desire to be in attendance in person and thereby be in what feels like the 'centre of religious action'. Collins suggests that distance media can stimulate some sense of shared emotion giving rise to feelings of membership, however the strongest effect is felt in full bodily assembly. Although there is discrepancy in the level of shared attention and emotion that can be generated via media communication when compared with bodily presence, Collins argues that large scale, formal rituals generate a higher level than do small scale, natural rituals. This he justifies with reference to large scale rituals engaging with symbols previously established through a successful IR chain. Such large scale rituals are successful in generating higher levels of shared attention and emotion because they facilitate membership that extends beyond those who are bodily present; only part of the group is ever present in one place. This is possible due to intermittent personal contact between members who all worship the same symbol.⁵⁴²

6.2.3.3 Symbols

Shared symbols are one of the causes of ritual success as they are the key to group solidarity.⁵⁴³ Collective effervescence in the words of Durkheim, or high levels of emotional entrainment in the words of Collins is the short term product of an IR. However this short term emotion has to be transformed into a long term emotion in order for the IR chain to be

⁵⁴² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.60-62.

⁵⁴³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.74.

stimulated in continuity. Such transformation occurs when EE is stored in symbols; symbols in turn invoke group solidarity.⁵⁴⁴

For anonymous crowds, symbols are presented to them from outside and passively received, therefore these symbols are only recharged when there next occurs another performance of the ritual. By contrast, situations with specific group membership involve personal ties that are generated and enacted through IRs; this results in a level of intersubjectivity that triggers a desire to repeat the ritual. A person can become a symbol through direct observation, where they are the focus of a collective ritual, or by indirect observation where they have stories and qualities attached to them.⁵⁴⁵

In sum, there are several distinctive ways in which symbols circulate and prolong group membership beyond ephemeral situations of emotional intensity. One is as objects that are in the focus of attention of emotionally entrained but otherwise anonymous crowds. The second is as symbols built up out of personal identities and narratives, in conversational rituals marking the tie between the conversationalists and the symbolic objects they are talking about. These symbols generally operate in two quite different circuits of social relationships; typically, the symbols of audiences, fans, partisans, and followers circulate from one mass gathering to another, and tend to fade in the interim; the symbols of personal identities and reputations are the small change of social relationships (and of business relationships), generally of lesser momentary intensity than audience symbols but used so frequently and in self-reinforcing networks so as to permeate their participants' sense of reality.⁵⁴⁶

The two types of symbols can be distinguished as generalized symbols of mass audiences and particularized symbols of personal networks. Both types invoke the emotion required for IR chains. Generalized mass audience symbols require the reassembly of the big group, individuals have little control over when and how this is orchestrated; the sporadic nature of the gathering results in volatility. In contrast, particularized symbols of individual identities and networks derived from personal relationship possess greater stability; such symbols are

⁵⁴⁴ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.81.

⁵⁴⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.83-85.

⁵⁴⁶ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.87.

capable of change by virtue of change to the individual or network but overall are more constant.⁵⁴⁷

Assessing whether something functions as a symbol in this context requires answering four questions:

1. Is it treated with respect, as a sacred object, as a realm apart from ordinary life?
2. Is there identifiable IRs that surround the emblem?
3. How are these symbols treated in secondary circulation?
4. Is there a third order in which the symbols circulate?⁵⁴⁸

These questions can be applied to a person or object to ascertain whether they are treated as a symbol that can be charged with emotional energy in the course of an interaction ritual and thereby perpetuate the chain. Symbols are therefore identifiable by virtue of the respect ascribed to them. Respect or significance is determined by considering whether it is highly valued or afforded high levels of care, or whether qualification is required in order to engage with it, or further whether it would be strongly defended. Symbols are also identified by the presence of IRs that function to ascribe significance to the symbol. It is important to consider who gathered, how many gathered, how frequently they gathered and what kind of activity generated collective effervescence. In considering the IRs that generate a symbol it is important to ascertain the degree to which individuals were charged with emotional energy and how this affected motivation. Subsequently it is important to trace the secondary circulation of symbols by asking who uses these symbols in IRs outside of the gathered group of participants, and how far beyond the gathered group is the symbol used in other situations. Finally, the third order of circulation considers how the symbols are used by individuals when they are alone. While physical objects may be carried around, Collins suggests that the most intimate level of circulation is when the symbol exists in the mind of an individual.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.87.

⁵⁴⁸ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.97-99.

⁵⁴⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.97-99.

Symbols are important to the extent to which they are charged with emotional energy, and it is to this element of IR theory that this analysis shall now turn.

6.2.3.4 Emotional energy

Emotions form the basis of IR theory as they are transformed through the process. Rituals start with emotional ingredients, intensify in collective effervescence or emotional entrainment, and create by way of outcome, other emotions. Happiness and sadness, identified as basic emotions, can be expressed in a number of different terms. For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge these emotions as either high or low emotional energy. High or low emotional energy comes from the entrainment or alignment of communicative gestures and emotional rhythms.⁵⁵⁰

Emotional entrainment stimulates energy for not only the initial emotional expression but also for initiating social interaction and setting the level of emotional entrainment. In addition, a long-term result of IR is group solidarity, which translates into an emotional framework of long term attachment to the group, or the feeling of status group membership.⁵⁵¹

Another element of IR theory is the stratification of interactions based on power; some have the power to control others through rituals or are the centre of attention, while others are passive or marginalized. Collins identifies those who have power in an IR as those who give order or dominate the interaction.⁵⁵² IRs and individuals therein can be classified according to power and membership status. IR theory involves participants gaining or losing emotional

⁵⁵⁰ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.105-107.

⁵⁵¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.107-108.

⁵⁵² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.112.

energy; such gain or loss correlates with status and power. While those with power or order gives gain EE, those without power, or the order takers lose it. Likewise having attention and gaining status group membership increases EE, whereas experiencing marginality decreases it.⁵⁵³

Experiencing the acquisition or loss of EE is important to whether or not there is a desire to repeat the IR experience.

Between interactions, EE is carried in the individual's stock of symbols, in the cognitive part of the brain; it is an emotional mapping of the various kinds of interactions that those symbols can be used in, or that can be thought about through symbols.⁵⁵⁴

Such emotional energy is situation specific to the extent that it drives an individual's behaviour in particular social relationships or with particular people. An individual will experience a chain of encounters through their daily lives with EE oscillating throughout. Whether EE gained is high or low will determine whether they are attracted to the situation. Where high EE is achieved there is a motivation to repeat the encounter; where low EE is achieved there is motivation to avoid repetition.⁵⁵⁵ As such IR chains are formed through the recreation of IRs that result in high EE. Interestingly, those who dominate in IRs gain EE, and can thereby dominate future IRs, and the same applies to those who are the centre of attention. 'Powerful persons thereby recreate their power from situation to situation, while those whom they dominate recreate the low energy level that makes them followers and subordinates'.⁵⁵⁶ On reflection, Collins identifies that there is a stratification of society based on an unequal distribution of emotional energy.

⁵⁵³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.115-118.

⁵⁵⁴ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.118.

⁵⁵⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.118-9.

⁵⁵⁶ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.131.

6.2.3.5 The market for emotional energy

‘The market for interaction rituals provides a way of conceptualizing the connection between micro and macro’.⁵⁵⁷ Collins employs rational choice theory, and considers the rational actor perspective as a means of building on these microsociological findings – ‘all social action is explainable in terms of individuals attempting to optimize their expected benefits relative to the costs of their actions’.⁵⁵⁸ Collins explains that individuals who partake in successful IRs are motivated to repeat the IR in order to experience the same solidarity; emotional energy creates symbols that represent group membership.⁵⁵⁹ EE varies according to the intensity of the IRs – ‘it is highest at the peak of an interaction ritual itself, and leaves an energetic afterglow that gradually decreases over time’.⁵⁶⁰ In order for EE levels to remain high the IR needs to be repeated. Each person can be understood to possess a ‘fund of EE’ that determines their ability to stimulate further IRs.

Individuals who have stored up a high level of EE can create a focus of attention around themselves, and stir up common emotions among others. Such high EE persons are sociometric stars; at the extreme they are charismatic leaders. Lacking such unusually high levels of EE, the emotional energy generated in prior IRs facilitates subsequent IRs of moderate intensity. At the other extreme, individuals whose prior experience in IRs has given them little emotional energy, lack one of the key resources to become initiators of subsequent high intensity interactions. Their depressed mood can even depress others, so that they are avoided in the market for interactional partners.⁵⁶¹

In the IR market, EE is a key resource. Some will have more than others, and therefore some can invest more than others. Likewise, some can and will be able to demand more in return.

There will also be a variety in the range of opportunities available for investment between individuals.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.141.

⁵⁵⁸ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.143.

⁵⁵⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.149-50.

⁵⁶⁰ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.150.

⁵⁶¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.150.

⁵⁶² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.150.

Collins discusses the significance of IRs in the context of the material market. ‘Social capital’ or shared trust is built in the arena of network ties. Network ties are developed through repeated interactions that are deemed significant to the participants:

Network ties are a particular kind of IR chain, those in which similar symbols and emotions are recycled and sometimes augmented – and to a higher degree than other interactions those persons have with other people.⁵⁶³

‘Social capital’ can be understood as both an individual resource, as well as a collective resource. There can exist high intensity pockets of social trust, as opposed to low intensity, or even social distrust. Social capital is equivalent to the Durkheimian concept of social membership.

6.2.3.6 Altruism

A final word should be given to the significance of altruism within IR theory. If altruism is where an individual gives something that is of value to them away to someone else for their benefit, then Collins suggests that altruism is not irrational but predictable.⁵⁶⁴ While there may be a lack of material benefit in altruistic behaviour, the goal is not material but EE.

The market for IRs makes it rational for some individuals to act altruistically or to seek power, to be a lover or be the party clown. Emotional and nonmaterial-seeking behaviour is rational behaviour, once we take EE as the central payoff that persons are seeking. There is an advantage here from the sociological side in seeing such behaviour as rational: it gives us an apparatus for predicting, in the contours of the market for IRs, which individuals under what circumstances will pursue these various social goals.⁵⁶⁵

6.2.3.7 Summary

Having surveyed the developments that Collins makes to IR theory, it is helpful to provide a summary for the key elements of this theory. IR theory is a theory of situations, identifying

⁵⁶³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.165-166.

⁵⁶⁴ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.168-9: Term irrational in context of rational choice theory, thereby indicating that altruism is in alignment with rational choice and not in opposition.

⁵⁶⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p 172.

the unique structures and dynamics of these situations, and emphasising the significance of situations as processes of sharing emotions. In addition, IR theory identifies the importance of cultural symbols in perpetuating ritual, giving consideration to how and when symbols are charged with significance and why they sometimes lose significance.⁵⁶⁶

6.3 IR Theory applied by Joel Robbins: Portable Practices

In 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism' Robbins identifies three aspects of Pentecostalism that he builds his argument around.⁵⁶⁷ The first is the global aspect of Pentecostalism that is manifest in its inherent ability to spread quickly across cultural and linguistic boundaries. The second aspect is its ability to build institutions in social environments where other institutions fail to neither thrive nor survive. The third is the high degree of ritual activity that determines its social life. Robbins argues that not only are these three aspects related, but that the third is the explanation for the first two.⁵⁶⁸

Robbins begins by asking the question of how Pentecostal churches succeed as institutions in conditions that are often bereft of sufficient resources. He measures success by the 'ability to engage people's time in the construction and maintenance of congregations that regularly come together to worship and whose members work to evangelize those who do not belong'.⁵⁶⁹ Such success is ascribed by Robbins, to the centrality of ritual to social interaction.

⁵⁶⁶ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.32.

⁵⁶⁷ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism: Ritual and Pentecostal Globalization'; Robbins, J., 'Pentecostal Networks and the Spirit of Globalization: On the Social Productivity of Ritual Forms', *Social Analysis*, 53:1 (2009) 55-66.

⁵⁶⁸ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.49-50.

⁵⁶⁹ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.53-55.

Robbins argues that Pentecostals relate to one another through participating in the performance of rituals.

These rituals can be praying together as almost a form of greeting, or as a way to define the kind of interaction about to transpire. They can be rites of ministration, where one prays for the needs or health of others. They can be celebratory rites of praise in word or song. And of course they can be the major Sunday service rites that constitute the sacred high point of the week in most churches. These rites can also involve a wide range of personnel. They can be carried out by two people, or in small groups (a fast-diffusing social form in many of these churches), or by whole congregations with some people acting as ritual specialists.⁵⁷⁰

Despite Pentecostal believers maintaining their rejection of rituals, preferring to be spontaneously led by the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal theology upholds the significance of ritual interaction. Their belief that God cares and intervenes, and bridges the sacred/ secular divide is pivotal to the performance of rituals. However of greater importance is the doctrinal principle that all church members are qualified to initiate and perform rituals. In addition, Pentecostal rituals are easily identifiable and contextualised.⁵⁷¹

Robbins argues for a connection between the importance of ritual in Pentecostal practice and its social productivity. Robbins identifies two components of Collins' IR theory – 'mutual focus of attention' and 'a high degree of emotional entrainment'.⁵⁷² He then identifies these two features in Pentecostal practices including prayer, praise, worship and healing. Robbins suggests that 'these frames are open enough to allow all kinds of content to arise within them, but their purpose and basic organization are fixed enough that as soon as the frame is in place, people possess an immediate mutual awareness of their shared purpose and interactional focus'.⁵⁷³ Emotional entrainment by virtue of bodily synchronization is possible due to the bodily practices that are recognised within the Pentecostal context such as lifted arms in worship, laying on of hands in healing, speaking in tongues, and singing. Ultimately,

⁵⁷⁰ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.55-6.

⁵⁷¹ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.56.

⁵⁷² Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.57.

⁵⁷³ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.58.

Robbins argues that living in a Pentecostal community necessitates participating in ritual; states of mutual attention and bodily synchronization are common in Pentecostal life, and therefore occasions that give rise to interaction rituals are rife. Robbins argues Collins' theory that the high frequency of successful IRs, which produces high EE is the reason why Pentecostal institutions survive and thrive even in the absence of material resources. Sustained high levels of emotional energy is the key to sustained involvement in Pentecostal church life.⁵⁷⁴

Furthermore, the globalization of Pentecostalism is enabled by ritual as these can be conveyed without the requirement of common language. New participants quickly adopt the bodily frames, and potentially experience the emotional energy produced by the ritual before understanding the doctrine underpinning it. Nevertheless, Pentecostal practice includes training participants from the beginning of their engagement with the religion. Such training enhances IRs in the dissemination of Pentecostalism; easily learned and therefore familiar ritual frames mean that travelling pastors and preachers have great success.⁵⁷⁵

Pentecostal techniques of revival have made this dynamic an almost explicit folk model of the way to spread the religion beyond local boundaries. From Azusa Street forward, Pentecostal revivals have ritually generated energy that has propelled evangelists out around the world. And each place these evangelists land becomes itself a center from which the ritual life of Pentecostalism can be propagated further afield. Pentecostalism has in essence moved around the world by leaping from one ritual hotspot to another along a path blazed by the emotional energy its ritual life generates.⁵⁷⁶

IR chains therefore facilitate and perpetuate the spread of global Pentecostalism.

Robbins also draws on the thinking of Rappaport who suggests that performing rituals together creates bonds of trust.⁵⁷⁷ Robbins applies this theory to Pentecostalism, and argues

⁵⁷⁴ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.59.

⁵⁷⁵ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.60.

⁵⁷⁶ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.61.

⁵⁷⁷ Rappaport, R.A., *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

that its global spread is due to rituals forming bonds of trust across cultural, linguistic and denominational lines, which in turn lead to coordinated actions and institution building. The frequency of Pentecostal ritual experiences enhances this trust building mechanism. Robbins cites the Toronto Blessing as an example that reinforces his thesis. He suggests that ritual was more significant than doctrine during the Blessing, and it was these ritual frames that made it possible for people of all Pentecostal-Charismatic backgrounds to engage. It was the ritual activity that gathered more visitors, and in turn larger numbers resulted in high levels of emotional energy. This emotional energy was sustained in TACF but also transported to the homes of the pilgrims. Robbins understands 'revivals as generators of cascades of enchainment interaction rituals that carry new forms of the faith quickly around the globe'.⁵⁷⁸ Finally, Robbins argues that despite the Blessing gathering strangers together in one location, participation in familiar rituals such as worship and prayer cultivated trust. Robbins concludes by suggesting that ritual participation is the most important social scientific feature of Pentecostalism.

For ritual, I have tried to demonstrate, is not only one of Pentecostalism's three obvious features – it is in social scientific terms the most important one. Pentecostalism's global spread and institution-building capacities depend on its elaboration of a ritualized approach to social life. Without the ritual, the other obvious aspects of Pentecostalism would not exist.⁵⁷⁹

Robbins develops Collins' IR theory by applying it to Pentecostal/Charismatic studies. IR theory is the building block on which Robbins builds his theory of portable practices. As has been argued, Pentecostal practices are made portable by virtue of the dynamic of IRs and portable practices, according to Robbins are a significant contributor to the globalisation of Pentecostalism.

⁵⁷⁸ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.62-63.

⁵⁷⁹ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.65.

6.4 IR Theory applied by Poloma et al: ‘Godly Love’.

Another application of IR theory is evident in the development of ‘Godly Love’ theory. The ‘Godly Love’ concept emerged as a result of the ‘Flame of Love’ Project led by Margaret Poloma, Stephen Post and Matthew T. Lee. This study intended to consider the following question – ‘To what extent can emotionally powerful experiences of a ‘divine flame of love’ move us beyond our ordinary self-interests and help us express unconditional, unlimited love for all others, especially when our human capacities seem to reach their limits?’⁵⁸⁰ Wilkinson and Althouse identify that ‘the idea of Godly Love is one result of Poloma’s research on the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement that highlights a great range of interactional relationships for the experience, production, and expression of love’.⁵⁸¹ As a result of this study, there have been four key books written by various collaborators from within the project.

Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church (2008), by Margaret Poloma and Ralph W. Hood Jr is a case study designed to investigate the role of love and its social implications in a Pentecostal church in Atlanta, Georgia.⁵⁸² The purpose of this study was to both quantify and qualify the benevolent outcomes of ‘Godly love’, specifically how an individual’s experience of ‘Godly love’ resulted in social action. This study used sociological frameworks established by Sorokin and Randall Collins. The authors promote the significance of Charismatic worship for social engagement and transformation.

⁵⁸⁰ Lee, M., & Poloma, M., *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009) p.7.

⁵⁸¹ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.59.

⁵⁸² Poloma, M.M., & Hood Jr., R.W., *Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism (2009) by Matthew T. Lee and Margaret Poloma developed the conversation in this area.⁵⁸³ This study refined the sociology of love by arguing that ‘Godly Love’ is a concept distinct from experiencing God’s love. ‘Godly Love’ encompasses all vertical interaction between the individual and God, as well as horizontal interaction between individuals and other people, organisations and communities through the means of benevolent service.⁵⁸⁴

The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and Revitalization of American Pentecostalism (2010) by Poloma and John C. Green explored the possibility of love being an agent of revitalization within a denomination.⁵⁸⁵ In specifically identifying the AG, Poloma and Green suggest that where institutionalization has caused detrimental effects, high levels of experiential love and benevolence were catalysts for renewal. Institutionalization thereby does not have to result in the death of a religious organisation, but could instead be the first stage of significant transformation for that organisation. It should be noted, that this phenomenon is a dynamic that has played out in the history of Bethel Church. Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed their transition out of the AG.

In 2013, Matthew T Lee, Margaret Poloma and Stephen Post published *The Heart of Religion* (2013).⁵⁸⁶ This work was founded on a national study that discovered that eight out of ten Americans report that they have felt God’s love increasing their compassion for others. They identify the interaction between the reception of love and the empowerment to love others. Using the data as a springboard, the authors then create a typology of prayer that includes

⁵⁸³ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*.

⁵⁸⁴ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.60.

⁵⁸⁵ Poloma & Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*.

⁵⁸⁶ Lee, Poloma & Post, *The Heart of Religion*.

‘Devotional Activity’, ‘Prophetic Conversation’, and ‘Mystical Communication’ and benevolence that include ‘Servers’, ‘Renewers’ and ‘Changers’.⁵⁸⁷

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to further establish what is meant by the term ‘Godly Love’. In the foreword to *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, Stephen G. Post identifies that ‘Godly Love’ refers to the interaction between divine love and human love. Having experienced the loving God, and being loved by God, individuals are motivated to engage in selfless service.⁵⁸⁸

This sociotheology of ‘Godly Love’ is built upon Pitirim Sorokin’s concept of ‘love energy’ which he saw as derived from a supraconscious source, and as the most powerful source of energy in the universe.⁵⁸⁹ He suggests that through social science ‘the channeling, transmission, and distribution of this [non-physical] energy’ can be studied.⁵⁹⁰ Wilkinson summarises Sorokin’s position as such

Sorokin observed that an outflow of love depended upon an inflow of love, and he included the value of experiences with a divine source of love in his understanding. Love is a kind of energy that infuses people, motivating and leading them to meaningful acts. On the social level Sorokin defined love as ‘a meaningful interaction – or relationship – between two or more persons where the aspirations and aims of one person are shared and helped in their realization by other persons.’⁵⁹¹

This sociological model is employed in conjunction with Randall Collins IR theory.⁵⁹²

Interaction rituals are identifiable in the passing on of divine love from person to person, subject to one or both of those individuals having received such love from the divine source. ‘Godly Love’ can be equated to EE, and perhaps is the Charismatic theological term for EE.

⁵⁸⁷ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.61.

⁵⁸⁸ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, Foreword i.

⁵⁸⁹ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.13 – a definition of sociotheology; Sorokin, P., *The Ways and Power of Love* ((Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Pr , 2002); Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.4.

⁵⁹⁰ Sorokin, *The Ways and Power of Love*, p.36.

⁵⁹¹ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.56.

⁵⁹² Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

The emphasis in this study however is less to do with the components or immediate outcomes of interaction rituals – it is clear that ‘Godly Love’/ high EE is a common outcome of IR thus motivating individuals to repeat the ritual and form a chain - but more to do with the significance of altruism, as evident in the benevolent action element of this IR. In addition, the ‘Godly Love’ model emphasises the importance of social capital.

Wilkinson explains that ‘the Godly Love model is a tool that offers an optic for observing a range of interactions while studying religious altruism... These interactions include four components: exemplars, collaborators, beneficiaries, and claims of experiencing the divine’.⁵⁹³ Exemplars are those in high positions of leadership who have the capacity to influence; collaborators are those who associate themselves with leadership and themselves spurn this influence; beneficiaries are those who are impacted by benevolent actions.

Poloma and Lee identify that for many involved in their study, loving God, receiving his love, and expressing that love towards others often began with an ‘epiphanal, spiritual encounter’.⁵⁹⁴ It is noted that while existentially all have a choice in response to this spiritual encounter, experientially those interviewed perceived their encounter as giving them no choice; many documented that their encounters left them with a sense of having received a specific call from God such that costs and benefits became redefined accordingly’.⁵⁹⁵ Often the narrative of receiving such a ‘calling’ came with suffering which was willingly embraced.⁵⁹⁶ ‘This notion of irresistible force comes close to capturing how some of our Pentecostal exemplars of ‘Godly Love’ experienced their call’.⁵⁹⁷ In *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, Poloma and Lee conclude that ‘Godly Love’ is a journey rather than a destination, taken by ordinary people who often take on extraordinary

⁵⁹³ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.14.

⁵⁹⁴ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.86.

⁵⁹⁵ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.89.

⁵⁹⁶ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.90.

⁵⁹⁷ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.93.

roles and tasks due to feeling empowered by God. 'Godly Love' is not a quality of personality, or type of person, it is a process through which divine interaction with humans results in benevolent action.⁵⁹⁸ 'Metaphorically speaking, Godly Love is a river of interactions that moves us toward some destinations and away from others. Along the way, we are transformed'.⁵⁹⁹

What is of significance about these sociological concepts is the emphasis on transfer of what is identified as social capital. Social capital can be understood as

...a source of emotional and economic support, educational and employment opportunities and information about the world at large... Social capital engenders feelings of trust, belonging and mutual cooperation that contribute to both individual and community well-being.⁶⁰⁰

Furthermore, the social network is important in providing a means by which interactions can occur. A social network exists as a structure of relationships or social ties. IR theory posits that a network perspective values relationship over attributes of individuals. Such relationships within a network are bidirectional and thus each relational connection can impact another. Ultimately, relational connections facilitate the flow of social capital through a network.⁶⁰¹

It is interesting to note the convergence between the flow of social capital between one individual and another in one interactive exchange, and the network of interactions between many individuals as one exchanges impacts another and the dynamic multiplies. This study argues that the multiplication dynamic and network perspective outweighs the individual interaction in terms of importance.

⁵⁹⁸ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.139.

⁵⁹⁹ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.140.

⁶⁰⁰ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.44.

⁶⁰¹ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.43.

It is by these mechanisms that we can conceive of Godly Love diffusing throughout a greater web of relationships. Empowered by the experience of loving and being loved by God, a person begins to speak in the language of social capital. In this way, an individual can become a hub for the flow of Godly Love by translating it into a resource that is to be shared and spread among others. Such ‘exemplars’ of Godly Love not only act as a conduit of their relationship with the Holy Spirit and an expression of Godly Love to specific others, but they may act as ‘brokers’ of social capital and bridge networks that are not otherwise directly linked. In turn, the beneficiaries and collaborators who interact with the exemplar are likely to continue passing on Godly Love in their interactions with others. In this sense, just as a flame can light many torches, exemplars spread the experience of Godly Love through their selfless service toward others.⁶⁰²

Poloma and Lee identify that the transfer of ‘Godly Love’ can escalate to create a complex model that involves brokers of social capital and those that ‘bridge networks’. The simple interaction chains that occur each time ‘Godly Love’ is received and passed on form the basic frames that sustains this system. However it is important to acknowledge those that rise in significance within this system, by virtue of their role as ‘brokers’ who act as key players. Candy Gunther Brown further explores this as she explores the significance of healing within the ‘Godly Love’ model.

At this point it is important to qualify the place of the ‘Godly Love’ model in the wider discussion. Poloma’s development of IR theory in relation to the concept of ‘Godly Love’ not only demonstrates how IR theory can be applied to Pentecostal/ Charismatic studies but also enhances the substance of IR theory itself. Engaging with the concept of ‘Godly Love’ in dialogue with IR theory and identifying the significance of ‘Godly Love’ as a stimulant for IR chains is important.

6.4.1 ‘Godly Love’ model applied by Candy Gunther Brown: Healing

In her 2012 work *Testing Prayer*, Candy Gunther Brown utilises the academic perspective of religious studies to approach theology; in her own words, ‘I do not assume the existence or

⁶⁰² Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.44.

nonexistence of a deity or other suprahuman forces. What I argue is that people's religious beliefs often have real-world effects that can be studied empirically'.⁶⁰³ Brown holds to the premise that empirical research is important for the avoidance of erroneous conclusions; she argues that medical assessment is required in order to verify that health is the result of healing prayer.⁶⁰⁴

Brown's intention in this study is to empirically ascertain the validity of healing testimonies. This makes for an interesting consideration in relation to the case study in question, particularly because Bill Johnson, and Bethel Church at large are unwilling to subject testimonies nor those who claim to have been healed to such testing. However the purpose of engaging with Brown in this context is due to the secondary findings derived from her study. Her research suggests that often individuals perceive themselves as healed having received prayer from members of their social networks; where healing experiences are attributed to divine love, they are subsequently motivated by their love for God and others to pray for healing for others.⁶⁰⁵

Brown identifies the connection between healing experiences and social exchanges of love. She acknowledges the significance of the 'Godly Love' model as discussed above and builds on Sorokin's notion of energy exchange. It should be noted that although she refers to Randall Collins' IR theory in the introductory chapter, she does little more than summarise the theory. Brown references chains of social interactions that create emotional energy, which in turn creates motivation to repeat the interaction. Citing Durkheim, she states that

⁶⁰³ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.7.

⁶⁰⁴ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.12.

⁶⁰⁵ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.14.

participating in religious rituals produces energy that motivates and sustains religious behaviour, and can lead to altruistic behaviour.⁶⁰⁶

It seems that Brown utilises IR theory in its form as adapted and developed by the ‘Godly Love’ theorists rather than its original form. This research suggests that interaction healing rituals cause effervescence or EE, which is understood by the participant as an experience of divine love. This EE or divine love motivates them to repeat the ritual and share this divine love with others. Having identified that those who experience healing credit that healing to divine love, she goes on to discuss the dissemination of this energy as one person experiences healing and is driven by love to pass on that energy through praying for the healing of others. She describes this dissemination as a ‘snowball effect’ whereby the IRs create chains and in turn networks. She argues that even one dramatic healing experience can position someone as a leader who models healing practices within a Pentecostal network. Brown describes how such leaders function as brokers of social capital, disseminating healing testimonies globally and across networks. As such leaders pray for healing for others, they both give away and gain EE which further increases the net volume of energy available. Furthermore, given that Pentecostals perceive that the supply of EE begins with divine love, and this resource is perceived to be unlimited, there is a constant inflow of energy to sustain the flow of interaction chains and thereby social capital.⁶⁰⁷

Brown uses Sorokin’s five measures for qualitatively measuring this love energy. These five measures are intensity, extensity, duration, purity and adequacy.⁶⁰⁸ Sorokin distinguishes between low intensity love, and high intensity love, such that at high intensity that which is of value to the individual is freely given. Sorokin identifies degrees of extensity, starting with

⁶⁰⁶ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.16.

⁶⁰⁷ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.286.

⁶⁰⁸ Sorokin, *The Ways and Power of Love*; Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.287.

love for oneself and extending that out as far as the capacity to love will allow.⁶⁰⁹ Brown suggests that those participating in healing practices notice changes in their behaviour that can be interpreted as exhibiting increases in both intensity and extensity of their expressions of love. Furthermore, in relation to duration, Brown identifies that for some a single healing experience will result in continual exertion of love energy. However, those who respond to healing experiences by going on international ministry trips may experience love energy in a shorter duration than those who engage with long term service. In addition, those who are healed of long term, severe conditions and those who have received prayer for a longer period of time may express higher degrees of love energy compared with those who experience minor healing.⁶¹⁰

Brown considers the effect of impure motives where healing claims have been falsified or those praying have dehumanized the recipient; she identifies that love energy exchange is incompatible with impurity in motive. Interestingly Brown suggests that whether there is immaterial self interest at play within the love energy interactions to the degree that it undermines the required altruism is irrelevant due to the overall net increase in love energy. Although leaders and partners in the love energy dynamic could be perceived as having impure motives due to the hierarchy and power afforded to those in high position, the result of increased love energy that filters through interactions overrides the perceived threat to altruism. Finally, Brown acknowledges that the measure of adequacy is hard to apply in this context as it would require the prayer for healing to result in healing. However she considers that love may be felt even where healing is not experienced at all or fully, due to the support gained through the social network.⁶¹¹ These measures applied by Brown to qualitatively

⁶⁰⁹ Sorokin, *The Ways and Power of Love*, p.15-16.

⁶¹⁰ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.287-288.

⁶¹¹ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.289-290.

ascertain the effects of healing/ love energy exchanges are helpful in identifying some of the key features of this phenomenon.

For the purposes of this study, what is of interest is Brown's emphasis on the global dissemination of the energy exchange. This lens can be used in conjunction with her findings in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*. In the final chapter she examines the portable healing practices of Global Awakening, and notes that an emphasis on the capacity of 'ordinary' Christians to pray for healing has democratized healing practices.

Brown identifies that the reason people travel with Global Awakening [GA] is the opportunity it gives for them to share their own experience of God's love in the form of healing with others. As referred to in previous discussion, Brown identifies that many including leaders such as Randy Clark and Heidi Baker, 'point back to at least one time in their lives when they experienced God's love for them in a particularly intense way through healing, which whetted their appetites to experience more of the love of God and to express greater love for God and for other people, including those from other cultures'.⁶¹² GA demonstrates an example of the 'Godly Love' model whereby Clark received healing and was energized by divine love to pass that onto others who could in turn continue the cycle.

Although Brown does not explicitly engage with IR theory, in her development of the 'Godly Love' model she is doing so by proxy. Brown's development of the 'Godly Love' model is important in relation to the study of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church because she considers the dynamic of 'Godly Love' in relation to healing.

⁶¹² Brown, 'Global Awakenings: Divine Healing Networks and Global Community in North America, Brazil and Mozambique, and beyond', p.352-355.

6.5 IR Theory applied by Wilkinson & Althouse: Soaking Prayer

Wilkinson and Althouse employ IR theory to explain the process and effects of participating in soaking prayer. Soaking prayer is a Charismatic practice that facilitates the receiving of divine love in order to pass it onto others through forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion and benevolence.⁶¹³ The term ‘soaking’ carries significance in a Charismatic context and has been associated with other practices such as resting in the Spirit. Wilkinson and Althouse’s research included attending conferences and church meetings to observe how and why soaking is practiced. Soaking has reportedly crossed denominational lines, and while it continues to carry significance in Toronto where it first emerged from, other churches including Bethel Church have developed the practice.⁶¹⁴

In practice, soaking prayer is nonverbal, meditative prayer where participants focus on being still and quiet in order to listen and receive. Wilkinson and Althouse report that the term soaking is used alongside illustrations of a sponge soaking water, or soaking in the sun. The term ‘soaking prayer’ is used in the conceptual context of playfulness where participants are encouraged to approach God as a child, or in the conceptual context of love, which encompasses a wide range of types of love including the love of a child towards a parent, the love of a parent towards the child, or ‘the giddy love of a young couple just learning who the other person is’.⁶¹⁵ Wilkinson and Althouse suggest that Carol Arnott’s image is ‘communal and relational’ whereas John’s is ‘spatial and individualist’.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.4; also discussed in Wilkinson, M., ‘The Institutionalization of Religion’, in Lee, M.T., & Yong, A. *Godly Love: Impediments and Possibilities* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012) 153-170.

⁶¹⁴ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.4-5.

⁶¹⁵ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.5-6.

⁶¹⁶ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.9.

Wilkinson & Althouse outline their own themes that explain soaking prayer using the language of rest, receive and release. Rest is important in settling the mind and body so that God's love can be received. Receiving God's love leads to increased intimacy with God, and energizes the participant to share this love with others. Release is the 'outward impartation of God's love' which can refer to release from bondage, or inner, emotional pain or baptism in the Spirit.⁶¹⁷

This research is shaped by the 'Godly Love' project, as discussed above. According to Wilkinson and Althouse, 'the 'Godly Love' model is a tool that offers an optic for observing a range of interactions while studying religious altruism... These interactions include four components: exemplars, collaborators, beneficiaries, and claims of experiencing the divine'.⁶¹⁸ In this study, exemplars would be Charismatic leaders such as John and Carol Arnott who model and influence in the practice of soaking prayer; collaborators could be identified as soaking prayer leaders, church leaders and others who associate with Arnotts; beneficiaries include spouses, families, and congregations who are loved by those who practise soaking prayer.⁶¹⁹

Soaking prayer has already been categorised as a type of meditative prayer, however it also fits the receptive type of prayer in Lee and Poloma's typology due to the prophetic and mystical characteristics. Soaking prayer also fits with Ladd and Spilka's notion of the inward, upward and outward directionality of prayer. Francis MacNutt also defines soaking prayer as a type of petitionary or intercessory prayer because it is a form of healing prayer.

Building on the 'Godly Love' model, Wilkinson and Althouse draw on Sorokin's thinking in relation to altruism and altruistic transformation. Those who engage in soaking prayer

⁶¹⁷ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.9-11.

⁶¹⁸ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.14.

⁶¹⁹ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.14.

demonstrate altruistic behaviour through acts of love to others. Sorokin's five dimensions of love, previously discussed are central to this research. According to Sorokin an outflow of love depends on an inflow of love, and love can be understood as energy that motivates acts.⁶²⁰

In addition to Sorokin, and in continuity with the 'Godly Love' model, Wilkinson and Althouse consider the application of IR theory to soaking prayer. Wilkinson & Althouse outline the outcomes of IR – group solidarity, emotional energy, symbols, and feelings of morality. Emotional energy is acknowledged as an important outcome, not only because it accounts for the emotions experienced during the ritual but also because it continues after the ritual ends and motivates the individual to seek to repeat the ritual.⁶²¹ IR theory provides a framework for understanding social interaction and how high levels of EE can result in long term effects. Wilkinson and Althouse's study outworks the connection between secular IR theory, and Charismatic perspective of what is happening in the practice of soaking prayer. 'Charismatics specifically, offer a theological framework for interpreting the experience of EE through soaking prayer'.⁶²² The theological language that Charismatic Christianity employs includes renewal, transformation and engagement; those who engage with the love of God through soaking are transformed by the experience and carry it with them so they pass it on.⁶²³ Furthermore, research suggests that the emotional energy gained through soaking prayer increases compassion, forgiveness and has motivated many to participate in social action.⁶²⁴

⁶²⁰ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.56.

⁶²¹ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.72-73.

⁶²² Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.74.

⁶²³ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.92.

⁶²⁴ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.152.

In summary, IR theory is applied by Wilkinson and Althouse to understand how soaking prayer is practiced and how it results in benevolence. They propose that Charismatic Christianity has shaped patterns of interactive behaviour, in this case soaking prayer. Those that participate in this interaction believe that they are experiencing God's love. The emotional energy gained through participating becomes a motivating factor to repeat the interaction of engaging in soaking prayer and also to extend God's love to others.⁶²⁵

Like with Robbins and Poloma, Wilkinson and Althouse's application of IR theory is not only important in providing an example of how IR theory can be applied to Pentecostal/Charismatic studies, but also in developing the theory itself. In this application, IR theory is developed by focusing on a particular interaction ritual, and the concept of 'Godly Love' is further explored as a concrete example of how divine love can be received.

6.6 IR theory applied to Bethel Church: Healing

Having given attention to interaction ritual chain theory as formulated by Randall Collins, as well as how this theory has been applied by the likes of Robbins, Poloma, and Wilkinson, it is now possible to consider how this theory can be applied to the case study that is the subject of this thesis. This analysis will discuss how IR theory sheds light on what is going on within the context of Bethel Church in terms of healing practices, as influenced by the senior leadership of Bill Johnson. It should be noted that while this chapter will consider how IR theory explains the case in question, the subsequent question of how the case modifies the theory will be considered in the next chapter.

⁶²⁵ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.162.

6.6.1 Randall Collins' IR theory

Collins' IR theory will be applied to the healing practices of Bethel Church, considering Healing Rooms, congregational and post service prayer in turn.

6.6.1.1 Ingredients and outcomes

The key ingredients that are necessary for an interaction ritual to take place are: that there are two or more people physically assembled in order that consciously or unconsciously they are affected by one another's bodily presence; there are boundaries to outsiders so it is clear who is taking part; there is common focus, and mutual awareness of the focus; and there is a common mood or emotional experience.⁶²⁶

In the context of Healing Rooms, there are always more than two people physically assembled, including both members of the ministry team and recipients of prayer. The Healing Rooms experience means that the physical assembly of bodies changes, from a large crowd of anonymous individuals to a small group of two to three individuals who engage with a specific prayer need. There is a boundary that can be drawn around the large gathering of individuals that exists throughout the course of the gathering indicative of those participating in the ritual. In addition, smaller boundaries may be drawn around the small groups that gather to engage over the specific prayer needs. Given that Healing Rooms function with the purpose of practising healing prayer there is evidently a common focus, and a mutual awareness of this focus. This is heightened when each small pocket of individuals gathers and their mutual focus on healing is narrowed to a specific prayer need. Amongst the wider gathering of individuals, and the smaller group that gathers there is a common

⁶²⁶ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.48.

emotional experience. This is intensified in the smaller group as the individuals interact over the specific prayer need.

In the context of congregational prayer, it is a given that there are two or more people physically assembled. Services at Bethel Church gather between one hundred to one thousand participants.⁶²⁷ It is possible to create a boundary around those who can be considered part of the congregation gathering for a given service based on their presence in the main auditorium. It should be noted that within a service there will be a range of IRs occurring that focus on different means of engagement including worship and soaking prayer. The common focus of healing is initiated by a member of the leadership team who uses words of knowledge to channel this focus. As members of the congregation respond to the words of knowledge, and other members of the congregation engage in healing prayer there is a common emotional experience. Practising healing in a congregational setting, much like in the Healing Rooms environment, involves engaging both with the corporate congregation as a whole as well as the person to person interaction.

In the context of post service prayer, there are always two or more people physically assembled; as a minimum there is one person present to pray for healing, and one person to receive healing prayer. Although the congregation may be present in the room, the closing of the service means the boundary around the congregation is weaker. Therefore the boundary is more clearly acknowledged around the small gathering of two or three individuals who are engaging over a specific prayer need. The common focus and mutual awareness of this focus is acute when the recipient presents their prayer need and the common emotional experience is triggered when those praying engage to meet that need. It should be acknowledged that in

⁶²⁷ Across both campuses – College View and Twin View.

each of these healing practices, whether the wider congregation is of greater or lesser significance, IRs are present by virtue of the interaction that takes place between a few individuals.

The outcomes of IRs are: group solidarity, or a feeling of membership; emotional energy; symbols that represent the group which include visual icons, words or gestures; feelings of morality.⁶²⁸ It could be argued that each of the healing practices above enhances a feeling of membership not only to the local community or church, in this case Bethel Church, but also to the wider community of Pentecostal and Charismatic believers who practice healing. The significance placed on healing testimonies as well as the enthusiasm and excitement that is caused by successful IRs (whether healing is believed to be experienced or not) is indicative of the emotional energy that is produced by the IR. In addition, it could be suggested that gestures including laying on of hands as well as words or commands used in healing prayer have the potential of becoming symbols that represent the group. Feelings of morality are evidently based on the benevolence inherent in praying for healing. In addition participants in Bethel Church, specifically and Pentecostal/Charismatic congregations generally are likely to feel a sense of morality for fulfilling what they believe to be the purpose for the existence of the church, namely to heal the sick.⁶²⁹

6.6.1.2 Bodily presence

Bethel Church utilises media communication to a high standard. Not only do they release weekly podcasts for free, but they also allow anyone to sign up and pay online to access different packages of media communication.⁶³⁰ The most expensive and thorough package

⁶²⁸ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.49.

⁶²⁹ Matthew 10:8 (NKJV) - Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

⁶³⁰ There are also other media resources that are selectively made freely available.

allows an individual to live stream and watch after the event, most worship sessions and preached messages on Friday evening, Sunday morning and Sunday evening. In addition, the large and most popular conferences are also made available for live streaming and subsequent viewing, as well as selected sessions from Bethel School of Supernatural Ministries. Often previews to new worship albums, or special extra interviews with key leaders will also be made accessible.

Collins suggests that sophisticated media communication may well reduce the necessity of bodily presence if sufficient mutual focus and emotional entrainment is possible via this medium. He argues that if the media communication includes visuals of the audience engaging in the ritual then this may well be possible. He justifies this on the basis that emotion through face to face engagement, and thus emotional entrainment, is possible through seeing the emotional experience an audience participant is having.

iBethel.tv regularly prioritises footage of audience participation in both worship services, and during preaching. This increases the possibility of IRs occurring via media communication. Collins also suggests that large scale rituals that have been repeated many times prior have a better capacity for creating emotional entrainment through media communication. The large numbers that gather at Bethel Church for each service on a regular basis, combined with the frequency and regularity of the broadcasting of services means that if any religious service had the capacity of facilitating IRs through media communication it would be this one. Although bodily presence would be preferable, the prolificacy and professionalism that are evident in Bethel Church's broadcasting mean that IRs are not necessarily hindered by a lack of bodily presence.

Healing Rooms uses the media forum of Skype to enable recipients to contact ministry team members on site at Bethel Church to receive healing prayer. In this situation one recipient video calls a member of the team, shares their prayer need and receives healing prayer. Although the visual element makes this form of communication superior to a telephone call, there is an obvious lack of an audience for the recipient to engage with. Collins highlights the importance of the inclusion of the audience in visual communication; he requires that there is more than just the leader shown on the screen. In a Skype call, the leader would be the ministry team member and there are no other individuals visually available for the recipient to interact with. As such it could be argued that Skype facilitated healing prayer is insufficient to create emotional entrainment according to Collins' requirement. Nevertheless the healing interaction rituals occur over Skype just as it would if the various participants were in close physical proximity.

Although Collins has theoretical space for the possibility of emotional entrainment without bodily presence, it seems that emotional entrainment may not require bodily presence to the degree that Collins suggests it does. Collins argues that bodily presence is preferable in the creation of emotional entrainment, and that a lack of bodily presence may produce some level of emotional entrainment but the experience is always inferior to when bodily presence occurs. It is possible that in relation to this aspect of IR theory, this case study that places a spotlight on healing interaction rituals within the context of Bethel Church modifies IR theory. It seems that IRs occur successfully through media communication as emotional entrainment is successfully created in the absence of bodily presence. This case study broadens the possibility of strangers interacting in IRs which will be discussed further in the context of soaking prayer.

6.6.1.3 Symbols

Collins suggests that symbols are important as a long term outcome of IRs because they store EE and become representative of the group, thus endorsing group solidarity and motivating repetition of the IR. It is necessary to distinguish whether the healing practices in question take place within an anonymous crowd or whether they are as a result of specific group membership with personal ties. Accordingly, there are either generalized symbols of a mass audience, which require the assembly of the big group or particularized symbols of personal networks that are more stable and outworked within personal relationships. The environment of Bethel Church is a difficult one to categorise as the congregation is comprised of both personal relationships and anonymous interaction. The church does not fit comfortably into the anonymous crowd category, like, perhaps, a crowd at a concert. In such large churches it cannot be presumed that everyone has a personal tie with one another, and so a healing interaction ritual may involve two people interacting who are essentially strangers to one another. Nevertheless, it could be suggested that on the whole large churches are made up of network ties or relational connections. Thus it could be argued that Bethel Church fits more comfortably with the second category, and therefore the symbols are particularized in the context of personal networks.

It is possible to identify two types of symbols within the Bethel Church context. Collins outlines that symbols can be public figures as well as objects, gestures etc. Indeed he argues that religious leaders who regularly use media communication to extend their influence can readily be perceived as symbols. It is therefore easy to identify Bill Johnson as a symbol. A symbol must be treated with respect as a sacred object; and it is observable that Johnson is recognised as a significant leader and treated accordingly by those who acknowledge this. He is given both a physical and conceptual platform in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.

Healing is one of the most significant IRs that surrounds Johnson, as a symbol. Johnson regularly instigates healing IRs when he is leading a service or preaching and he ascribes significance to healing testimonies. The purpose of symbols is to store EE, represent the group and thereby stimulate group solidarity. Bill Johnson, as a public figure, is an individual who gathers people to him by virtue of his charismatic leadership and teaching. He has become a symbol within the Pentecostal and Charismatic environment and could arguably be perceived or construed as a celebrity within Pentecostal/ Charismatic culture. It is important to consider the way in which Johnson as a symbol is treated in secondary and third order circulation. By virtue of his profile and status within the Pentecostal/ Charismatic scene, Johnson is identified as a symbol beyond the local church in Redding. Churches from across the world choosing to associate themselves with Johnson through affiliation with Global Legacy are likely to identify Johnson as a symbol. In addition, it is possible that as a result of the use of mass media and publication of books, Johnson functions as a symbol in third order of circulation. If the third order circulation exists in the inner dialogue of a person, Johnson may well feature in this dialogue as a result of the status afforded to his written and oral teaching. It is therefore clear that Johnson exists as a symbol within the local church of Bethel, and on the Pentecostal/ Charismatic scene through the global platform that he has obtained.

Although Pentecostals tend not to use objects in their rituals, they are renowned for their bodily engagement in rituals. In the context of Bethel Church specifically, as well as Pentecostal and Charismatic circles in general, laying on of hands, the use of smearing oil, speaking in tongues, and verbal prayers could all be identified as symbols. There is variation in the words used in healing prayer, but commonly the pray-er will 'speak to the condition' rather than petitioning God and often they will utilise 'words of knowledge'. Of all of these

possible symbols, the most frequently used is the laying on of hands. In Bethel Church, hands are laid on the afflicted area if appropriate, or on the shoulder, head or hands. This practice is not unique to this church, and is one of the portable practices that enables group membership and solidarity to extend beyond those gathered in a particular place at a particular time.

6.6.1.4 Emotional energy

Emotional entrainment or collective effervescence is the immediate short term outcome of IRs. Emotional energy is derived from emotional entrainment, and whether the emotional energy experienced is high or low determines whether there is sufficient motivation to repeat the IR.

Healing interaction rituals inevitably invoke an emotional experience for both the recipient of prayer as well as the person praying for healing. It could be argued that the act of praying is the means of emotional entrainment as the emotions of the two parties are synchronized. An important question to consider is what determines the success of a healing IR. Is a healing interaction ritual only deemed successful when the recipient experiences healing? There is obvious emotional energy, evidenced by the immediate elation and excitement when someone testifies to being healed as a result of healing prayer, and it seems to be irrelevant that this is often based on perception and feeling rather than scientific evidence. Nevertheless, it can be argued that EE is still present and has the potential to be high after a healing interaction ritual regardless of whether healing is experienced. This will be discussed further when the contributions of Poloma and Brown are considered; it will be suggested that even if physical healing is not received immediately, participants will have nevertheless experienced God in some way, enough to result in high EE levels.

Another important consideration in the discussion of emotional energy is the stratification of power. It was outlined above that individuals have the ability to dominate in an interaction, and the loss or gain of EE can be synonymous with the loss or gain of power. Although IR theory concerns human interaction, it is important when engaging with Pentecostal/Charismatic experience to consider the divine-human interaction. It is understood that healing is a result of God's interaction with humanity, and as such healing is possible because of God's power. However, the interaction ritual that occurs in the context of healing prayer is demonstrative of conflation between divine and human power. This is exacerbated given the notion of stratification of power whereby those engaging in interaction rituals have the ability to dominate the interaction and gain EE, and thereby gain power.

6.6.1.5 The market for emotional energy

'Social capital' is important in the context of network ties. This shared trust is the means by which IRs can exponentially multiply and thus create a 'snowball effect'. The market for emotional energy is competitive and is the means by which some emerge as leaders. Within the Bethel Church context, although effort is made to ascribe the same significance to all members of the congregation when healing prayer is practised, there is nevertheless a market for accessing those who are better trained or have a more successful history of praying for healing experiences. There is a ministry team trained for purpose that prays for recipients in both Healing Rooms and in post-service prayer. In addition, it is observed that many recipients wanting prayer will target the senior leaders of Bethel Church after the service. Despite an attempt to democratize healing practices, there remains a market of social capital and emotional energy. This will be further discussed in relation to the contribution of Brown.

6.6.1.6 Altruism

Altruism is often presented as juxtaposed with the rational choice approach. Collins, however, argues that IRs function in such a way that altruistic behaviour results in an increase of EE in the individual performing the altruistic act therefore these two concepts are not actually at odds with one another. Pentecostals and Charismatics, Bethel Church members included, would attribute their desire to participate in healing prayer to their mandate articulated by Bill Johnson as follows – to heal the sick, cast out demons; bring the kingdom of heaven to earth etc.⁶³¹ This motivation could be construed as altruistic not only because EE will always be gained regardless of the success of healing prayer (as long as the IR is successful) but also because there is morality in living in accordance with divine commandment. This will be further discussed in relation to Poloma's 'Godly Love' and benevolent action theory.

6.6.2 Joel Robbins: Portable Practices

Robbins' argues, using IR theory, that rituals including healing rituals are the reason why people engage and continue, due to EE, to engage in Pentecostal church life. He also suggests that healing IRs are the facilitators of 'portable practices'. Healing interaction rituals allow for an experience of a practice that can be repeated and adapted to different environments. By virtue of EE motivating repetition of the ritual, not only can the IR be repeated, it can be easily repeated and quickly passed on to others. Robbins also adds that performing IRs together fosters trust amongst participants which further enhances the success potential of the IR chain. Robbins ultimately suggests that IR chains facilitate revival as they spread practices such as healing across the globe. Robbins thereby begins to consider the significance of

⁶³¹ Matthew 10:8 (NKJV) - Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.; Matthew 6 :10 - Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

dissemination through the means of interaction ritual chains. This concept is further developed in the 'Godly Love' model and Brown's research.

It is necessary to acknowledge that healing interaction rituals within the context of Bethel Church are indeed facilitators of portable practices. The symbols ascribed significance in the interaction rituals carry significance through the chain. The Bethel healing practices can be replicated both in terms of the large scale Healing Rooms model, and the small scale approach to engaging in healing prayer. IR chains spread these portable practices across the globe. In the case of Bethel Church practices, both the large scale models and small scale approaches have influenced across the globe. While some of this influence has come from media communication and publications, the significance of network ties and personal relationships in the context of IR chains have enhanced this influence.

In addition, Robbins' development of IR theory enhances the discussion concerning strangers and emotional entrainment. Robbins, in his exposé of the Toronto Blessing, references the significance of ritual in overcoming stranger relationships. According to Robbins, familiarity with Pentecostal rituals makes participation possible regardless of whether relationship exists otherwise. This is apparent in the context of Bethel Church as those gathering in a weekly service are unlikely to have relationship with everyone present, and may not even know anyone amongst whom they are physically present. The healing practices evident in Healing Rooms, congregational prayer and post service prayer do not require that there is a relationship between participants. It is therefore apparent that interaction rituals are not dependent on pre-existent interpersonal relationships. It is possible that this case study modifies IR theory as it offers the possibility that strangers can participate in interaction rituals, and perhaps that interpersonal relationships can be born out of participating in

interaction rituals. This is an important development of both Collins' IR theory and Robbins' theory of portable practices.

6.6.3 Margaret Poloma et al.: 'Godly Love'

Drawing on Sorokin's love energy, and Collins' IR theory, Poloma along with others working with the 'Godly Love' concept suggest that there is a receiving and giving dynamic fuelling network ties and relationships. 'Godly Love' refers to loving God, being loved by God and loving others through benevolent social action. IR theory explains the ritual of receiving divine love, and being motivated to share it with others; IR chains are formed when this divine love is regularly received and passed on, motivating others to pass it on. Using Sorokin, Poloma assimilates Collins' notion of emotional energy with love energy.

Altruism features heavily in this research model as many participants make decisions that seem contrary to what would be most cost effective for them personally as a result of a divine encounter that marks them with a calling, often one that directs them towards benevolent social action. These benevolence acts form part of the IR chain as another benefits from such action and is motivated to behave altruistically towards someone else.

Poloma et al. also hone in on the significance of social capital within the network. Social capital strengthens the networks through which IRs occur; social capital therefore fuels and enhances the IR chains within a network. Strong networks that facilitate IR chains have the capacity to grow and extend their membership and influence. Exemplars, such as Bill Johnson, become brokers of social capital and bridge networks thus further extending the network and IR chains across the globe.

It is apparent that this model offers some explanation for what is being experienced in Bethel Church, Redding, however the ‘Godly Love’ concept is not the most prevalent motivating factor for healing IRs. While ‘Godly Love’ in this context fuels benevolent action, and healing could be considered as such, Brown’s application of the ‘Godly Love’ model to healing suggests that it is a person’s healing experience that motivates them to pray for the healing of others. This is a closer fit and therefore provides a better analysis for the Bethel Church model.

6.6.3.1 Candy Gunther Brown: Healing

Brown applies the ‘Godly Love’ model to healing practices and in doing so indirectly applies Collins’ IR theory. Brown suggests that those who experience healing prayer are motivated by love to pray for others to experience healing. Thus she combines Sorokin’s notion of love energy with the healing experience. It seems she is suggesting that even though the interaction ritual is focused healing prayer, and potentially regardless of whether this healing experience is successful, the recipient receives divine love in the process of the interaction.⁶³² As one experiences healing prayer, and is motivated by love to pray for another, these IRs result in IR chains that result in networks due to the ‘snowball effect’.

Brown suggests that one dramatic healing experience can position the recipient as a leader within a network. Bill Johnson’s narrative identifies him as such a leader who like Randy Clark and Heidi Baker had a healing experience that resulted in a desire to engage in the love energy exchange. Johnson’s story fits the framework whereby a significant leader experiences a dramatic healing, albeit emotional healing from burnout, and progresses to establishing a healing model. Many of the leaders at Bethel Church could identify with this

⁶³² Brown, *Testing Prayer* - Brown argues that healing could only be deemed successful through medical verification and without such verification, healing is only perceived as successful.

experience and continue to do so. The cycle of receiving love from a divine source and passing it on through praying for healing for others is a prevalent dynamic. Although espoused reasoning may not identify love as a significant driving force behind healing prayer, it is nevertheless the rhetoric used in personal testimonies. What is important however is that the snowball effect plays out in the context of the healing practices. There is an evident desire within the community to pass on the healing experience to others – those who have received love in this form want to share this love with others. Healing practices such as congregational prayer during services, and through Healing Rooms are indicative of the involvement of a significant number of people. Such large scale interaction with healing practices is sustained through the continual reception of divine love and the subsequent transmission to others through praying for healing. Furthermore, the dissemination of healing love energy goes beyond the local church, through the mission work that Bethel Church engages with as well as the conferences and material that is published and released from within the community.

6.6.4 Michael Wilkinson et al.: Soaking Prayer

Wilkinson and Althouse's analysis of soaking prayer provides another example of how IR theory can be applied, and in this case to a different type of prayer. Although soaking prayer is a private, personal, meditative engagement between the divine and humans, it nevertheless adds another dimension to the developing understanding of what is being experienced at Bethel Church and how IR theory can further enlighten this understanding. The rest, receive and release motif is a lens onto which IR theory can be placed. The soaking prayer model fills some of the gaps that have become apparent in the discussion of healing, prayer and 'Godly Love'. Wilkinson and Althouse suggest that soaking prayer is the means by which such divine love is received. It is an active positioning of the participant in order to receive 'Godly Love' which is both transformative for the individual and motivational for the transferral of

divine love to others. Soaking prayer could be the source of both altruistic behaviour in the form of social action or healing prayer. Thus this research offers an explanation for how divine love is received and how it might be imparted to others through interaction ritual chains.

The lens provided by Wilkinson and Althouse is a broader one than that of Poloma or Brown in that it references IR theory and the 'Godly Love' model and applies it to soaking prayer. Applying these theories to soaking prayer, Wilkinson and Althouse have considered how divine love and emotional energy interact as well as how the long term outcomes interact. Wilkinson and Althouse acknowledge that soaking prayer is practiced within Bethel Church and therefore is an important contributor to the reception of divine love. Although 'Godly Love' might not be the primary discourse in the Bethel Church context, it nevertheless plays a part in fuelling IR chains in general, and healing IR chains in particular.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter started with a discussion of interaction ritual theory as expounded by Randall Collins. IR theory was chosen as the primary dialogue partner for this analysis as it provides a strong sociological explanation for what is being experienced at Bethel Church. The chapter then considered three major cases in which this theory has been directly applied and one case where it was indirectly applied. These cases provide secondary dialogue partners as they are exemplars of how IR theory is applied in Pentecostal/ Charismatic studies and also develop IR theory. As such these cases provide different lenses to view and thereby further understand what is going on at Bethel Church. Having examined the theory in its original form, and in its applied form, IR theory was then applied to the case study of this thesis – this involved first engaging with the primary dialogue partner, and subsequently the secondary

dialogue partners. It is apparent that Collins' IR theory provides theoretical, secular clarity on the healing experiences in and related to Bethel Church, and the cases where IR theory has been developed in relation to Pentecostal/Charismatic studies offer perspectives that are sympathetic with religious experience. The next chapter will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this theory and consider how the Bethel case study projects onto and modifies IR theory.

7. Theological reflection/ construction

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual chain theory was discussed in dialogue with the data obtained through this research project. This theory was discussed in both its original form as set out by Randall Collins, and in its applied form in the 'Godly Love' model by Poloma et al, in the context of portable practices outlined by Joel Robbins and in the context of soaking prayer as outlined by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse.

At this stage in the pastoral cycle it is important to engage in an exercise of reflection and construction. This chapter will consider the strengths and weaknesses of interaction ritual chain theory as formulated by Randall Collins, and as applied by the various other sociological theorists. It will be argued that the primary strength of this theory is its general applicability and the possibility of it being developed in relationship and dialogue with the data to create new theories. Counterbalanced by this strength, the major weakness of this theory however is the fact that it can only be directly applied to the practices as opposed to the theology underpinning these practices. It will be important to reconsider the praxis orientated approach to this research in order to assess the significance of this theory for the case study.

7.2 Interaction Ritual Chain Theory

Collins' theory was outlined in detail, emphasising the various component parts.⁶³³ This theory was important for the purpose of establishing what comprises an interaction ritual; as such Collins' theory was used to identify the ingredients and outcomes of interaction rituals.

⁶³³ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

In addition, Collins' theory highlights some of the key issues related to these ingredients and outcomes, including the necessity of bodily presence, the significance of symbols, and the centrality of emotional energy as a stimulus for the development of an interaction ritual chain. Robbins' application of Collins' IR theory was discussed, not merely because Robbins makes effective use of this theory, but primarily because Robbins' proposes that the globalisation of Pentecostalism is made possible by virtue of Pentecostal rituals.⁶³⁴ His thesis as such suggests that Pentecostal rituals are portable practices that accompany globalisation. As such Robbins' application of Collins' IR theory is of interest in relation to Bethel Church given the global impact and relational network that is developing from the movement born out of the local church. Poloma, and those contributing to the 'Godly Love' research project have also applied Collins' IR theory and in doing so have developed a means of understanding altruistic behaviour that is triggered by engaging with 'Godly Love'.⁶³⁵ While Collins' theory itself can be applied to illuminate the phenomenon occurring within the Bethel church context, the 'Godly Love' model and its utilisation of IR theory provides an enhanced lens. IR theory is used to explain the interactions that occur through which 'Godly Love' is received and transmitted, and thus the 'Godly Love' model is an exemplar of applied IR theory. Furthermore, the 'Godly Love' concept is significant within the Bethel Church practice. The importance of receiving and transmitting 'Godly Love' is a resonant narrative amongst the Bethel community. Brown's development of the 'Godly Love' model to include consideration of the impact of global healing networks, as formed through IR chains is also resonant with narratives emerging from within Bethel Church.⁶³⁶ The notion that a single healing experience can position a person at the centre of a global healing network by virtue of social capital is demonstrated in Bill Johnson's own story. This story pertains to his own healing that took place during a visit to TACF during the Toronto Blessing. Having been

⁶³⁴ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism'.

⁶³⁵ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*.

⁶³⁶ Brown, *Testing Prayer*.

‘burnt out’ Johnson claims to have had a healing experience that resulted in a transformational personal encounter with God. The narrative of this transformational encounter fits with the experiences recorded and argued to be the stimuli for altruistic action within the ‘Godly Love’ research project. Such encounters can be understood within the framework and practice of soaking, thus qualifying the significance of Wilkinson and Althouse’s theory.⁶³⁷ Once again, although their work acts as an exemplar of applied IR theory, their contribution is significant in itself for the light it sheds on the narrative of encounter and personal transformation. Soaking is often practised as the means by which ‘Godly Love’ is received and altruistic actions are charged. Given the importance of Johnson’s personal encounter with God, it is important to consider soaking as an example of how ‘Godly Love’ is received.

7.3 Strengths of IR theory

Having considered IR theory in its original and applied form, and having considered the unique lenses that each form and application of IR theory has to offer this dialogue, it is important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of these theories. The strengths of Collins’ IR theory will be considered first, and then the strengths of each theory that has utilised Collins’ IR theory will be discussed in turn. The weaknesses of each theory will be discussed likewise.

Fundamentally, Collins’ asserts the strength of IR theory in the early stages of his own work:

In my own use of ritual theory, I am one of the worst sinners, proposing to see rituals almost everywhere. But this does not reduce everything to one bland level, explaining nothing of interest. On the contrary, it provides us with a very generally applicable theory by which to show how much solidarity, how much commitment to shared symbolism and to other features of human action, will occur in a wide variety of situations. If it is any help in mitigating the prejudice against ritual theory, the theory

⁶³⁷ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*.

can just as well be couched in terms of the causes and consequences of variations in mutual focus and emotional entrainment. I will claim that this theory can be universally applied; but that no more makes it vacuous than, for instance, Boyle's law relating volume, temperature, and pressure, which usefully applies to a wide range of circumstances.⁶³⁸

Collins suggests that although identifying rituals everywhere could be indicative of a weakness of the theory, it is in fact indicative of the strength of the theory. The broad applicability of the theory does not diminish its significance or undermine the illumination it can bring to a range of interactions. IR theory is not made less important by virtue of its ability to explain many different scenarios. On the contrary the general applicability of the theory is matched by its fluidity to be adapted and tailored to each scenario.

Furthermore, the broad nature of the theory facilitates the possibility and realisation of the theory being developed to account for specific types of situations. By virtue of its general applicability, IR theory lays a foundation on which other theorists can build. The theory lends itself to entering into to a wide range of dialogues pertaining to different interactions and emerging from these dialogues with a different development added and a different meaning ascribed to IR theory.

In this specific case, the general applicability of the theory means that it can easily and readily be applied to the interaction ritual of healing. This case study has identified the specific ritual of healing that has been developed and is experienced in the local church of Bethel, Redding. Collins' theory has offered an explanation for what occurs when someone receives healing prayer and/or someone imparts healing prayer. IR theory engages with the small scale, one on one interactions, in order to offer an explanation for the development of

⁶³⁸ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.15.

IR chains.⁶³⁹ This explanation hinges on the importance of emotional entrainment and energy. IR theory enables a close up examination of what occurs in a one on one healing prayer interaction, as well as how this interaction stimulates subsequent healing prayer interactions and causes a chain effect. Collins explains that developing ‘a sufficiently powerful theory on the micro-level... will unlock some secrets of large-scale macrosociological changes as well’.⁶⁴⁰ Collins’ IR theory offers a lens through which to view both the small scale and large scale aspects of healing interactions that take place in Bethel Church. This lens provides an explanation for why healing interactions have increased and continue to increase in number and facilitate church growth.

Collins’ IR theory lens is enhanced by the ‘Godly Love’ lens, which as a sociological study, examining experiential Christian narratives demonstrates the importance of engaging with first order discourse. The ‘Godly Love’ lens is also helpful in introducing a wider view of IR chains and giving a concrete example of a network facilitated by IR chains.⁶⁴¹ Brown, adopting the ‘Godly Love’ framework considers healing interactions and the significance of healing networks.⁶⁴² In doing so, the significance of theory gives way to the relevance of content. Brown bridges the gap between the ‘Godly Love’ model developed from the notion of receiving and transmitting of ‘Godly Love’ and healing interactions. Wilkinson and Althouse’s study on soaking prayer further develops the sociological findings in relation to interaction rituals and Pentecostal practices and experiences.⁶⁴³ In addition, Robbins’ theory of ‘portable practices’ emphasises the connection between the small scale interaction ritual

⁶³⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.118-9.

⁶⁴⁰ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.3.

⁶⁴¹ Lee & Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*, p.44.

⁶⁴² Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.286.

⁶⁴³ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.4; also discussed in Wilkinson ‘The Institutionalization of Religion’, p.153-170.

and the global impact.⁶⁴⁴ Robbins suggests that ‘portable practices’ enable IRs to occur between strangers particularly in relation to worship, and the development of this theory can be employed in the context of healing interaction rituals also. Building on Collins’ IR theories enables Poloma et al, Brown, Robbins and Wilkinson to consider not only the specifics of the individual interactions but also the large scale effects including globalisation. Utilising these theories in tandem thereby allows for this case study to consider not only the individual healing interactions but to also take a step back and consider the big picture. If Bethel Church, and the healing interactions that occur therein can be understood as the micro scale, by contrast the macro perspective considers Bethel Church as a site from which a healing network has emerged, and global impact has been felt. These theories are helpful in considering both the micro and macro elements of this case. In addition, these theories provide explanation for the connection between the micro and macro. It is the individual healing interactions that stimulate repeated interactions, thereby causing chains that evolve into networks that are facilitated by social capital. Emotional energy as the stimulant for the development of IR chains and the evolution of networks as a result of multiple IR chains explain the breadth of the impact of healing. Furthermore, the notion of a broker of social capital explains the significance of one individual who plays a pivotal role within the field of healing interactions and functions to increase the number of IRs and the creation of a network.⁶⁴⁵

It is clear that this case study has been enhanced by the application of IR theory and the lens it provides in understanding the healing praxis of Bethel Church is a valuable one. At this stage, attention will be given to the benefits gained through utilising IR theory in this specific case.

⁶⁴⁴ Robbins, ‘The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism’, p.65.

⁶⁴⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, p.118-9; 165.

7.3.1 Healing Prayer model

Applying the IR model to the healing prayer practices of Bethel Church enables each unique interaction to be perceived by its commonalities rather than differences. Although this study has sought to identify and distinguish between the three primary forms of healing prayer practised within the context of Bethel Church, the application and discussion of IR theory reduces these different practices to their common elements. Using this theory to interpret the healing practices of Bethel Church enables each occurrence of healing prayer to be understood as an interaction ritual. Regardless of the nuances of each forum, or whether healing prayer takes place in a large congregation with many participants or through one on one interaction, each of these healing prayer experiences can be identified as interaction rituals. Although this reduction to identifying and perceiving interaction rituals wherever healing prayer is taking place could arguably result in both IRs and healing prayer carrying little significance, it is important to recognise the unique nature of the healing prayer IR in the specific context of Bethel Church.

While every healing prayer exchange can be understood as an interaction ritual, this is not the only commonality in terms of the healing prayer model. There are further distinguishing features of the prayer model that is utilised within the Bethel Church context whether that be practised during a Sunday service or in Healing Rooms. The basic prayer model, as discussed in Chapter 5, is not formulaic as such but can be identified from the data. The common elements include laying on hands, receiving and sharing words of knowledge, speaking to conditions and sickness rather than petitioning for God to heal. In addition, one of the central tenets of this prayer model is that the only qualification required to participate in healing

prayer is that a person has relationship with God and baptised in the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴⁶ The general applicability of IR theory means that each interaction ritual, as outworked in its specific local context, can carry its own identity and character. What is significant is that the Bethel healing praxis is having impact outside the local context. Robbins' notion of portable practices sheds light on this. Healing practices carrying the generic Pentecostal DNA are portable by virtue of their being interaction rituals. Likewise healing practices carrying the specific Bethel DNA are also portable by virtue of their being interaction rituals. Robbins suggests that the portability of practices is determined by these practices being interaction rituals which are easily accessed, participated in and replicated.⁶⁴⁷ While Robbins applies this theory to Pentecostal rituals in general, it is only one step further to suggest that if a practice can be identified as a ritual with the aforementioned qualities then it carries the possibility of being portable. It is not the specific DNA, whether generically Pentecostal or related to a specific context such as Bethel Church that determines the portability of a practice but its nature as an interaction ritual. Nevertheless, even if a practice is portable by virtue of it being an interaction ritual, it still carries Pentecostal DNA within it. It is important to acknowledge that the interaction ritual element is not the only common feature of healing practices. There is a distinctive Bethel prayer model that shapes this interaction ritual. However by virtue of the healing practices being interaction rituals, the Bethel prayer model is a portable practice. This notion of portable practices interacts with the notion of IR chains and networks; IR chains facilitate the transmission of portable practices and result in networks that embody these portable practices.

⁶⁴⁶ This requirement is vague and difficult to qualify - *Wimber & Wimber, Everyone Gets to Play*; Johnson, *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.33 - 'We, as sons and daughters of God, are destined to reveal our Father to the world by bearing His likeness. We do this as Christ did, by communing with the Father, walking in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth through demonstrations of power and authority, all in the context of showing the love of God'.

⁶⁴⁷ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism', p.160.

7.3.2 The significance of Bill Johnson in the Bethel healing network

Before considering the dialectic between Bethel as a local church with healing practices outworked therein, and Bethel as a global movement, it is necessary to give attention to the significance of Bill Johnson as a broker of social capital within the emerging healing network.

Brown suggests that one dramatic healing experience has the potential to position an individual at the centre of a healing network.⁶⁴⁸ As has already been discussed Johnson had one such experience during a trip to TACF during the Toronto Blessing. Although Johnson's healing experience was not physical, but pertained to a spiritual revitalization following spiritual burn out – a common experience of senior pastors, it nevertheless has been primed with significance. Subsequent to this healing experience, Johnson had a spiritual experience that he terms an encounter with God and has recorded in many of his publications. This spiritual experience could be regarded as the second part of his healing experience as it became a propellant for Johnson to position himself and the church he was leading in Weaverville to prioritise healing prayer. Johnson narrates that it was after this spiritual experience that there was a marked increase in healing experiences which further stimulated the prioritising of healing prayer amongst the church community. Johnson assimilates the increase in healing experiences with revival – it seems for him they are one and the same. Due to his spearheading the revival of healing experiences in Weaverville, Johnson was asked to pastor Bethel Church in Redding. Since the early days of this revival, the fame of both Bill Johnson and Bethel Church have exponentially increased in measure within the Pentecostal/Charismatic sphere.

⁶⁴⁸ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.286.

Johnson clearly fits the typology that Brown identifies in that his own healing experience has positioned him at the centre of a healing network. Although there have inevitably been other contributing factors such as the vast number of published works, as well as the prolific and effective use of media such as iBethel.tv that have propelled Johnson and Bethel Church to a place of significance, it is apparent that his own narrative including a dramatic healing experience have given credibility to his position.⁶⁴⁹ Due to his significance Johnson can be identified as a broker of social capital within the Pentecostal/ Charismatic sphere. By virtue of his own healing experience, as well as healing being a strong narrative in his teaching and published material, and healing prayer featuring heavily in his leadership of services whether in the local context or global network Johnson has gained status in this area. Perhaps the cause of his status is twofold; he is perceived as a broker of social capital because he is the senior pastor of a local church which is having global impact as a result of their renowned success in claiming miracles happening as a result of healing prayer, and yet he is also championing the cause of anybody who is baptised in the Holy Spirit to pray for healing in the same way. In this respect his popularity stems not only from being the famous symbol for healing prayer but also because he is empowering the global church to pursue the same end.

Bethel Church is an interesting case study because healing prayer is not merely taught and practised by Bill Johnson, it is an embodied belief of the whole church community.⁶⁵⁰ The convergence between Johnson's experience of seeing an increase of healing miracles in his personal life, and the increase of miracles, signs and wonders within the Bethel Church community is indicative of the significance of Johnson within Bethel Church and the present revival. Nevertheless, Johnson places great importance on the local church, as well as the global church prioritising healing prayer as a means of bringing heaven to earth. While

⁶⁴⁹ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.9-12.

⁶⁵⁰ Healing practices demonstrate congregational involvement. See chapter 5.

Johnson may well be the broker of social capital, he nevertheless elevates the significance of the individual interaction rituals which create chains, and sustain the network.

7.3.3 Bethel Church as movement/ healing network

It is apparent that over the past twenty years Bethel Church has grown in significance and notoriety. Today there is an emerging distinction between the local church and the global movement.⁶⁵¹ IR theory is a powerful means of enabling a simultaneous view of both the micro and the macro scale. While IR theory explains the individual interactions that multiply to form chains, it also explains the formation of networks facilitated by multiple chains of interaction rituals.

Bethel Church functions on a global scale through the various ministries that travel around the world. Bill Johnson travels globally both on his own, as well as in conjunction with other ministries such as Randy Clark. As a member of the loosely affiliated network of church leaders called 'Revival Alliance', Johnson connects with the likes of Randy Clark, Heidi and Rolland Baker and John and Carol Arnott.⁶⁵² In this sense it can be seen that Bethel Church, through Bill Johnson, connects outside of itself. However Bethel Church is not merely a local church that has connections elsewhere; many Pentecostal/ Charismatic churches connect both formally and informally with other churches and leaders outside of their locality. Bethel Church functions dualistically as both a local church and the centre of a global movement. Bill Johnson has been released from leading the local church in order to be free to travel, and in doing so build the global movement. In this sense, Johnson has been the means through which Bethel Church functions globally and has developed into a global movement. This movement is hard to categorise and pin down because it is not an organisation defined by

⁶⁵¹ This reflected in their use of multimedia; the Bethel Redding website (local) is distinct from the iBethel website (global).

⁶⁵² <http://revivalalliance.com/> [accessed, 15.03.15].

membership. This movement can, however, be identified through the network that has been developed via interaction ritual chains.⁶⁵³ This network is fluid and evolves in relation to the connections between individuals that facilitate IR chains. It should be noted that while the IR chains multiply to create a network, likewise the network is sustained by virtue of the continuation of IR chains. This network is synonymous with the global movement because it not only expands outside of the locality of Redding, but because it exists outside of it also. Global Legacy is the means by which churches can affiliate loosely with Bethel Church and therefore exists outside of the Bethel Church context. The purpose of this network is to facilitate connection between affiliating churches and as such this network facilitates interaction rituals. Global Legacy as a network is sustained not by formal membership but through interaction rituals. As such it is clear that IR theory serves this case study well in illuminating both the small scale interactions as well as the large scale network which has expanded beyond and now exists outside of the locality of Bethel Church in Redding.

7.4 Weaknesses of IR theory

Having considered the strengths of IR theory in its original and applied forms, it is important to balance the strengths by acknowledging the weaknesses. This research has sought to consider the praxis of Bethel Church, and in doing so has considered both the espoused theology and the practised theology. While IR theory as outlined by Collins' and as applied by Poloma, Robbins and Wilkinson is useful in shedding light on the practices of healing, it does little to illuminate the theological underpinnings of these practices.⁶⁵⁴ Even where Poloma, Robbins and Wilkinson apply and develop this sociological theory in dialogue with Pentecostal/ Charismatic studies the theoretical conversations concerning Christology, soteriology and eschatology are not considered. As such it could be argued that IR theory

⁶⁵³ <http://globallegacy.com/> [accessed, 15.03.15].

⁶⁵⁴ Given that IR theory is a secular theory, this is to be expected.

only applies to the healing practice component of this case study. However, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental interplay between theology and practice. This case study has been intentional in studying the praxis of Bethel Church that is value-laden action.⁶⁵⁵ Although theology and practice have been teased apart in order to undertake a valid and comprehensive study, it is necessary to hold these two components as closely together as possible - they are two sides of the same coin. If praxis is understood as value-laden action, then it is possible to understand the theological considerations of Christology, soteriology and eschatology as the beliefs, and the healing practice as the action. What is important to acknowledge at this stage is the relationship between these two elements. Even where the espoused theology is implicit rather than explicit, they nevertheless shape the operant theology. Thus the beliefs or theology are embodied and outworked in the practices. The distinction between the two is artificial but required in order to fully understand what is driving the healing practices. It could be argued that the sociological theory chosen and applied does not need to directly relate to the healing theology on the premise that it relates to the healing practices. If the sociological theory illuminates the healing practices, it thereby illuminates the healing theology indirectly. While this may be true, given that the beliefs and action, or theology and practice were teased apart in order to answer the why and how as well as the what, it is important to evaluate the theological elements of Christology, eschatology and soteriology on their own terms.

7.4.1 Christology

One of the significant points of contention that arose in the course of discussing healing theology concerned the Christology that underpinned the healing theology of Bill Johnson.

⁶⁵⁵ Swinton & Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p.20.

The issue at stake concerns the absence of the hypostatic union in the teaching of Bill Johnson. The hypostatic union, the coexistence of and relationship between the humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus, is compromised by extreme kenotic Christology which argues that Christ emptied himself of divine power and glory in the incarnation. Although Johnson repeatedly acknowledges that Jesus was both fully God and fully man, there is no attention given to *how* these two natures coexist in the person of Christ. As has already been stated, Johnson's ontological Christology may indicate an awareness of the divinity of Jesus, but his functional Christology downplays it. Driven by the goal of empowering the present day church to live as Jesus did, performing healing miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, Johnson presents a Jesus who is emptied of His own divine power and therefore only capable of performing healing miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To this end Johnson engages with a kenotic Christology as well as a Spirit Christology. It is significant that there is a notable absence of Logos Christology, which emphasises the pre-existent Christ before the incarnation. Logos Christology is important as it makes room for the answer to the question – how does the divinity and humanity of Christ coexist? Ralph del Colle argues that one Christological lens should not displace another but instead be held together in tension.⁶⁵⁶

David Brown suggests that a moderate kenotic Christology may be possible if consideration is given to the hypostatic union. He suggests that all of the Gospels present a Jesus who has a limited divine consciousness and power, and cites Godet who argues that even John's higher Christology communicates a kenotic understanding.⁶⁵⁷ Brown considers the significance of Chalcedon against the contextual discussions that formulated it. He concludes that although

⁶⁵⁶ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.98.

⁶⁵⁷ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.4 referencing Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel*.

Chalcedon requires that the two natures of Christ coexist in the person of Christ, problems arise by holding to Chalcedon as much as they do by departing from it. Debates that took place after Chalcedon attempted to hold onto the Chalcedonian position and reached the conclusion that the human nature could not be a subject in itself or it would constitute two persons. As such, according to these debates, an-hypostasia was the only means of understanding the human nature, with humanity having no subject of its own. If this is the case, however, Christ cannot be said to be fully human. More recent attempts to reconcile Chalcedon with biblical texts have resulted in an en-hypostatic union which in giving the human nature its own personal identity pushes the boundaries of possibility in relation to the singleness of consciousness. Brown emphasises the problems with all Christological possibilities and suggests that although Chalcedon and kenotic Christology seem at odds, they are no more so than other ways of resolving the tension.⁶⁵⁸ Thereby the preclusion of kenosis as a valid means of understanding Christology is unnecessary. Such a kenotic Christology however should include consideration of the hypostatic union, that is the coexistence of and relationship between the humanity and divinity of Christ. Returning to Brown's thesis, he argues that previous forms of kenosis have fallen down due to the focus being on what was abandoned rather than what was assumed. Although that which was assumed is given consideration at some point it has previously not been the primary emphasis, with the result that the process becomes marked by the divine wrestling to absolve itself of its inherent identity.⁶⁵⁹

Barth outlines the an-enhypostasia distinction:

Anhypostasis asserts the negative. Since in virtue of the *egeneto*, i.e., in virtue of the *assumptio*, Christ's human nature has its existence – the ancients said, its subsistence – in the existence of God, meaning in the mode of being (*hypostasis*, 'person') of the

⁶⁵⁸ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.24.

⁶⁵⁹ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.250.

Word, it does not possess it in and for itself, *in abstracto*. Apart from the divine mode of being whose existence it acquires, it has none of its own; i.e., apart from its own concrete existence in God in the event of the *unio*, it has no existence of its own, it is *anhypostatos*. *Enhypostatos* asserts the positive. In virtue of the *egeneto*, i.e., in virtue of the *assumptio*, the human nature acquires existence (subsistence) in the existence of God, meaning in the mode of being (*hypostasis*, ‘person’) of the Word. This divine mode of being gives it existence in the event of the *unio*, and in this way it has a concrete existence of its own, it is *enhyposatos*.⁶⁶⁰

Oliver Crisp distinguishes between the abstract-nature view, which emphasises that Christ’s human nature was comprised of the nature universal to all of humanity, and the concrete-nature view which holds that Christ’s humanity was comprised of his uniquely particular human nature. Crisp proposes that a three-part Christology that holds to the concrete nature view is the best means of understanding the *an-enhypostasia* distinction. As such, human natures are understood as ‘concrete particulars that do not exist prior to, or independently of the person who possess them’.⁶⁶¹ In the incarnation then, the concrete particular that is the human nature of Christ is personalised in the hypostatic union with the Logos, thus preserving the enhypostatic element. In addition, if one simultaneously holds a realist position in relation to properties, it can be understood that Christ’s nature is anhypostatic by virtue of the fact that Christ has properties that are common and therefore universal to humanity. Ultimately however, according to this view, it is Christ’s concrete-nature, the particular nature that possesses the universal properties.⁶⁶² In resolving, the an-enhypostasia distinction using abstract-nature and concrete-nature categories, Crisp therefore endorses the enhypostatic aspect, that is, according to Barth, the positive assertion. In doing so, he, like Brown, focuses on what is assumed.

According to Kathryn Tanner, Brown’s construction of kenosis using an artistic analogy is one of the main strengths of his work,

⁶⁶⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol 4., p.163

⁶⁶¹ Crisp, O., *Divinity and Humanity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p.88

⁶⁶² Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.89

The incarnation is the culmination of the sort of creative love of an artistic kind that God demonstrates for the world generally. Like the respectful relationship of a painter, sculptor or author to his or her materials, God doesn't so much condescend from a height to what is deemed of lower value than itself as draw alongside what is merely different from itself in a relationship as close to equality as possible in the effort to elicit from those materials their own full potential.⁶⁶³

Tanner contextualises the analogy by discussing the way in which artists identify with their materials, seeking to allow the materials to speak for themselves. Brown forges an analogous connection with 'method acting' which allows for total identification with the human condition in order to resolve the tension of divinity and humanity in kenotic Christology.⁶⁶⁴

The premise of 'method acting' based on the theories of Russian theatre director Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) is that 'realistic portrayal was most likely to be achieved through total absorption in the character's identity: seeing the world through the particular character's eyes such that, while the film or drama is being produced, the actor lives the part both on and off stage'.⁶⁶⁵

In engaging with Stanislavsky's 'method acting' approach, Brown suggests that,

'Communion' is such that there is a real merging into a single consciousness even if its contents are, strictly speaking, derived from two quite different sources and so technically remain 'two'. The divine 'nature' becomes the subject of the specific humanity derived from Mary, which also sets it within a specific social and cultural context. Even so, it would be wrong to envisage the divine nature wholly in control, since the point of the identification is to allow every aspect of the human reality to affect its being. What occurs is thus significantly different from empathy. The latter is a matter of trying to enter into another's experience while fully aware that it is not one's own.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶³ Tanner, 'David Brown's *Divine Humanity*', p.108.

⁶⁶⁴ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.250; self-identification could be construed to imply that the human nature is merely a semblance rather than a reality, thus rendering Brown's constructed kenotic Christology as Docetism. However it is important to acknowledge that self-identification is purposed to embrace the fullness of humanity in the person of Christ.

⁶⁶⁵ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.251.

⁶⁶⁶ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.253.

This communion is understood as self-identification rather than self-abandonment.⁶⁶⁷ Such ‘communion’ allows for an understanding of the single consciousness of Christ comprised of the two discrete sources – his divinity and humanity. There is therefore the coexistence of the distinction of the two and the communion of the two. This means of conceiving kenosis is more than the divine activity merely shadowing the human, but instead the interpenetration of one into the other with everything of each being taken into the other.⁶⁶⁸ Drawing the divine into the human means that Jesus was not incarnated as raw deity, but in divine sonship.

God cannot live an identical godlike life in eternity, and in a human story. But the divine Son can make an identical response to his Father, whether in the love of the blessed Trinity or in the fulfilment of an earthly ministry... Above, the appropriate response is a cooperation in sovereignty and an interchange of eternal joys... Below, in the incarnate life, the appropriate response is an obedience in inspiration, a waiting for direction, an acceptance of suffering, a rectitude of choice, a resistance to temptation, a willingness to die.⁶⁶⁹

Farrer argues that divinity in eternity and divinity incarnated in humanity would inevitably result in different expression and experience. By contrast, the drawing in of the human into the divine is typified by new experiences of suffering, estrangement, doubt and uncertainty for the divine also. Brown acknowledges that the reality of humanity was experienced daily by the divine, and not just at the end of Christ’s life. The ‘method acting’ analogy enables the coexistence of Jesus as divine, and Jesus as divine incarnated in humanity, with the first identified the actor whose human existence is not limited to the role, and the latter identified as the actor immersed and experiencing life in that role.⁶⁷⁰

It is apparent that Brown’s contribution to kenotic Christology resonates with the theological notion of *perichoresis*. By the end of the fourth century, God’s *ousia* or substance was

⁶⁶⁷ Tanner, ‘David Brown’s *Divine Humanity*’, p.108.

⁶⁶⁸ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, p.255.

⁶⁶⁹ Farrer, Sermon on ‘Incarnation’ (1961), in Farrer, *The Brink of Mystery* (London: SPCK, 1976) p.20.

⁶⁷⁰ It should be noted that Brown’s argument may be considered flawed on the premise of its dependence on Christ’s single consciousness and the Docetic tendency within the ‘method acting’ analogy.

identified as the communion of persons.⁶⁷¹ Acknowledging the unity of the *ousia* in the persons, the verb *choreo* was used to indicate the interpenetration of persons. This concept became known as *perichoresis* which was translated from Greek into Latin in two ways - *circuminsessio*, a passive term, meaning that ‘one person is contained in the other – literally “seated” in another, filling the space of the other, present in the other’ and *circumincessio*, an active term, indicating ‘the interpenetrating of one person in another; it captures the sense of a moving in and through the other’.⁶⁷² *Perichoresis* as a concept was expressed metaphorically as a divine dance whereby ‘the partners not only encircle each other and weave in and out between each other ... in the divine dance, so intimate is the communion that they move in and through each other so that the pattern is all inclusive’.⁶⁷³ This dance according to Fiddes is less about the dancers and more about the patterns, an ‘interweaving of ecstatic movements’.⁶⁷⁴ Brown’s constructed kenotic Christology employs the notion of interpenetration between the divine and human natures of Christ and thereby resonates with this idea.

Interestingly, Oliver Crisp considers *perichoresis* in the context of the two natures of Christ. Crisp holds that the two natures of Christ subsist in a hypostatic union in the incarnation. There is a communication of attributes between the two natures, however there is not transference of properties.⁶⁷⁵ The communication of attributes involves the attribution of properties of both the divine and human natures of Christ to the theanthropic person of Christ, meaning that the person of Christ possesses both divine and human attributes. However, this

⁶⁷¹ Fiddes, P., *Participating in God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000) p.71.

⁶⁷² Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp.71-2.

⁶⁷³ Gregory of Nazianzen; Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p.72.

⁶⁷⁴ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p.72.

⁶⁷⁵ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.22

communication of attributes occurs without predicating attributes that properly belong to one with the other, without transference of properties and without confusing the natures.⁶⁷⁶

The interpenetration is understood by virtue of divine omnipresence:

Just as the divine nature might be said to interpenetrate the whole of creation, sustaining it and upholding it at each moment of its continued existence, so also the divine nature of Christ interpenetrates the human nature of Christ, upholding and sustaining it at each moment of its existence.⁶⁷⁷

Crisp argues that the difference between the interpenetration of creation and of Christ is a matter of degree. He understands ‘nature-perichoresis’ as an asymmetrical relation between the two natures of Christ, whereby the divine nature penetrates the human nature without confusion but the human nature does not penetrate the divine nature; this asymmetry is a result of the pre-existence of the divine nature prior to the incarnation.⁶⁷⁸ Therefore, in ‘nature-perichoresis’ the two natures remain intact and unconfused, there is no transference of properties from one nature to the other, but there is a sense in which there is a penetration of the human nature by the divine nature. Crisp then poses the question: ‘in what sense is the perichoresis of the human nature of Christ by the divine nature anything more than the penetration of my human nature by the divine nature of God at each moment of my continued existence?’⁶⁷⁹ He answers this question with reference to the distinction between penetration of creation and the penetration of Christ, that is by reference to degree. If it is a question of degree, then is it only Christ who can be penetrated in nature-perichoresis?

The answer to these questions is simply this: God could act upon other human beings in the way in which he acts upon Christ. All that distinguishes the perichoretic relation that Christ’s human nature experiences with his divine nature, and that my human nature experiences with God, is the degree to which the divine nature of Christ penetrates his human nature. But none of this means that there is not a difference

⁶⁷⁶ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.22; Crisp is employing a weak *communicatio idiomatum* – ‘The attribution of the properties of each of the natures of Christ to the *person* of Christ, such that the theanthropic person of Christ is treated as having divine and human attributes at one and the same time, yet without predicating attributes of one nature that properly belong to the other nature in the hypostatic union, without transference of properties between the natures and without confusing or commingling the two natures of Christ or the generation of a *tertium quid*’.

⁶⁷⁷ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.19.

⁶⁷⁸ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.19.

⁶⁷⁹ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.24.

between the way in which Christ's human nature is penetrated by the divine nature and the way in which I am penetrated by God.⁶⁸⁰

Crisp's thesis is a pertinent contribution in the context of Johnson's functional goal. Crisp offers a means of understanding Christ's divinity and humanity such that the human nature is not overwhelmed by the divine nature. Crisp's consideration of nature-perichoresis in relation to humanity is also important as it maintains the uniqueness of Christ whilst also allowing humanity to follow the model of Christ, at least to a degree.

Furthermore, Crisp, employing the *extra calvinisticum*, proposes a 'krypsis' Christology as a means of understanding the hypostatic union.⁶⁸¹ Crisp argues that the Word assumes human nature in the incarnation, and yet there is no relinquishing of divine properties. While the Word is incarnate, there is a restriction of the divine attributes of Christ through the limited human nature which is assumed. However there is no restriction of the divine attributes in abstraction from the Incarnation.

At every moment at which the Word is incarnate, he is also exercising his divine attributes to the full, as he was before the Incarnation. What changes at the Incarnation is the taking on of the human nature in addition to the divine nature of the Word.⁶⁸²

The image of the hypostatic union presented by Crisp is one in which the human nature is indwelt by the divine nature, but does not necessarily have access to all that the divine nature is. According to Crisp, this 'krypsis' view abides by Chalcedon in that the Word does not abdicate divine attributes in the Incarnation. In addition, this view makes sense of the notion of self-emptying as the human nature assumed by the divine is limited and does not have access to divine properties. However the 'krypsis' view is not kenotic – 'the Word does not relinquish or abdicate properties for the purpose of Incarnation nor does he withhold the

⁶⁸⁰ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.25-6.

⁶⁸¹ The term 'krypsis' is used to mean 'hidden' as per the Greek definition.

⁶⁸² Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.149.

exercise of the properties, except insofar as the human nature of Christ does not exercise these properties'.⁶⁸³

In Tanner's critique of Brown, she questions whether Brown's construction is kenotic on the premise that he displaces self-abandonment which is a fundamental aspect of kenosis. In her review, Tanner considers that if self-abandonment is not the hallmark of kenotic Christology, is this hallmark instead the inclusion of divine change or non-coercive divine power? She argues that the notion of kenosis is broadened to any theologian who recognises a single human consciousness in Jesus. According to Tanner, the common starting point for kenotic Christology is that Christ has a fully human consciousness, and divinity appears in keeping with a fully human existence in Jesus. She goes on to argue that to this end, classical Christology can explain what kenotic theologies try to explain. Although classical Christology is reluctant to discuss the changing of divine power, Tanner suggests this is not necessary in order to respect the full humanity of Jesus. She argues that where classical Christologies have allowed the divinity of Christ to displace his humanity, this is because of how divinity is attributed to Christ.⁶⁸⁴

On my understanding of those basic claims, Christ is divine because God has given rise to a fully human life which remains God's own. God is the one living this human life for that reason – because this strictly human life remains God's own in unity with it, because this is God's own life in virtue of God's being one with the humanity of Christ in assuming it to itself – and not because Jesus has a divine subjectivity or centre of consciousness and agency something like a human one, just better, to replace or supplement his human one. What makes Christ divine is that activity of God by which God remains united with what God is not, lying behind and giving shape to the whole human existence of Christ; Christ is not divine because one can isolate within his life certain divine powers or capacities comparable to human ones

⁶⁸³ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p.151; Loke, Andrew TE, *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014) - Andrew Loke presents the Divine Preconscious Model that fits with the Partial Functionalist Kenoticism on the premise that the DPM denies that there was transference of Christ's divine properties to the human nature, affirms that the Logos restricted the use of his omniscience, and that the Logos continued to exercise his omnipotence in certain activities such as holding the universe together. For this reason, DPM can also be considered a 'krypsis' account – activities exercising his omnipotence would have been concealed from others. Loke therefore presents an alternative 'krypsis' account to Crisp.

⁶⁸⁴ Tanner, 'David Brown's *Divine Humanity*', p.109-111.

and existing alongside his human ones – although often classical christologies suggest something like that. Instead, what reveals the divinity of Jesus' human life is the way the whole of that life is being made over according to a divine pattern, rather than any discrete divine aspects one can pick out within it. Divinity is apparent in Jesus' life not from any particular superhuman characteristics or activities which might well suggest that in those respects Jesus is no longer human; divine power appears, instead, in and through every human act and power of Christ insofar as they have saving effects.⁶⁸⁵

Tanner identifies that Christ's divine nature should not be understood as comparative to his human nature. By understanding the divine nature on a continuum with the human nature, the natures are set up in competition to be more or less present or dominant. Tanner argues that classical Christology gives rise to an understanding of Jesus as both fully God and fully human when the divine and human natures are understood correctly. According to this argument, Christ is divine by virtue of God becoming incarnate in human form. The divine nature is evident in the fact that Jesus' human life is dependent on God's choosing to become human. Christ is not divine because of divine power, but because of the divine purpose and pattern in God becoming human. Tanner therefore proposes a classical Christology in which Jesus has full human consciousness and his divinity does not compromise his humanity. Brown has constructed a kenotic Christology that gives attention to the hypostatic union, the coexistence and interrelationship between the divinity and humanity in Christ.

Returning to Johnson's goal of empowering humanity to perform miracles, signs and wonders, this thesis proposes that Johnson's functional goal can be achieved by modifying Brown's contribution through engagement with Tanner and Crisp, and by reintroducing Ralph del Colle's Spirit Christology back into the conversation.⁶⁸⁶ As such this thesis constructs a modified Christological position that can be used to shape Johnson's argument. Building on Brown, this modified position adopts the emphasis on what can be assumed

⁶⁸⁵ Tanner, 'David Brown's *Divine Humanity*', p.112.

⁶⁸⁶ Modifying Brown's position is desirable on the premise that he relies on Christ's single consciousness and the 'method acting' analogy leaves the argument susceptible to being conflated with Docetism.

rather than what is abandoned, and in doing so asserts that the hypostatic union can be understood as total identification of the divine nature with the human nature. Crisp's notion of asymmetrical penetration further elucidates Brown's concept of total identification such that the divine nature penetrates the human nature, but the human nature does not likewise penetrate the divine nature. Crisp also asserts that asymmetrical penetration does not include transference of properties. In addition, Tanner's contribution regarding the way in which divinity is attributed to Christ further enhances Brown's position by asserting that Christ is divine by virtue of the divine pattern lying behind his existence rather than by virtue of possessing divine power.

At this stage, it is important to reintroduce Spirit Christology to the conversation. Ralph del Colle argues that Pentecostal and Charismatic experience presents a Jesus who is both truly human and truly divine by presenting 'a Spirit-anointed and transfigured human being that is God's communicative and salvific relation to humanity'.⁶⁸⁷ According to Del Colle, Spirit Christology 'attributes a constitutive role to the Holy Spirit in the theological and soteriological reality that we identify as the person and work of Jesus Christ'.⁶⁸⁸ The central question concerns the convergence and distinction between the Son and the Spirit in the person of Christ. Rather than a separation of *Christus praesens* and *Spiritus praesens*, there is a perichoretic coinherence.⁶⁸⁹ Building on this premise, Ralph del Colle draws on Tom Smail who asserts that,

Jesus' humanity has its origin in his conception by the Holy Spirit; it has its effectiveness from its anointing by the Holy Spirit. This new man, Jesus Christ, is the work of the Son of God operating in his own human nature in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.94.

⁶⁸⁸ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.95.

⁶⁸⁹ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.103-4.

⁶⁹⁰ Smail, *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians*, p.64.

Del Colle therefore argues that Christ's humanity is not only conceived by the Holy Spirit, but also given effectiveness through anointing by the Holy Spirit. As such he presents a Spirit Christology whereby Jesus is both divine and human, but operates in his human nature empowered by the Holy Spirit. Given that Ralph del Colle identifies that engaging with Christological perspectives is not an exercise of displacement but complementarity, it is possible to draw Spirit Christology into the dialogue with Brown, Tanner and Crisp, and indeed to draw his position into the modified construction.⁶⁹¹

In summary, modifying Brown's position through engagement with Tanner and Crisp yields a new Christological position that focuses on what was assumed rather than what was abandoned and therefore understands the hypostatic union on the basis of total identification. This total identification is asymmetrical with the divine nature penetrating the human nature without the reverse occurring. This total identification occurs without transference of properties and divinity is attributed to Christ by virtue of the divine pattern that gives rise to his existence rather than his possession of divine properties. Furthermore, Ralph del Colle's Spirit Christology enhances this position by presenting a Christ whose humanity is given effectiveness by the Holy Spirit and who operates in his human nature, empowered and energised by the Holy Spirit.

This modified Brown position in conjunction with Ralph del Colle's Spirit Christology can be used to modify Johnson's own Christological position without negating Johnson's functional goal of empowering humanity to engage in performing miracles, signs and wonders. The next chapter will outline how this modified Christology can be used to revise Johnson's Christological position.

⁶⁹¹ Del Colle, 'Spirit Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality', p.98.

7.4.2 Soteriology

The soteriological theology of Bill Johnson is fundamental to the healing theology that has emerged through his teaching and published works. There are two points of discussion in relation to Johnson's soteriological position. The first concerns Johnson's treatment of the cross, and the second concerns the tension between crisis and process.

Driven by his desire to challenge norms across the global church, Johnson forms an understanding of salvation that emphasises the effects of the cross and what was made possible for humanity as a result rather than the significance of the cross itself.⁶⁹² Johnson's goal is to expand the understanding of salvation to include more than just gaining atonement for sin and access to heaven.⁶⁹³ It seems that in his thinking this is one of the major shortfalls of the Christian church at large. Johnson is again motivated by a functional goal of encouraging the universal church to recognise that their personal and collective salvation has a purpose that is greater than personal redemption. Johnson's goal is to mobilise the church to engage in the commission of 'seeing heaven come to earth'. In doing this, Johnson compares the 'gospel of salvation' and the 'gospel of the Kingdom'. He argues that the gospel of salvation limits the commission of the church to seeing people 'saved' and gain access to heaven. By contrast, Johnson suggests that being saved carries with it a responsibility of far greater significance – to see the transformation of lives, cities and nations. The gospel of the Kingdom is thereby providing a more holistic lens through which to understand the purpose of salvation. This holistic lens is a valid one given the Pentecostal and Charismatic framework that shapes Johnson's theology and practice.

⁶⁹² Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.46.

⁶⁹³ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.259.

The distinction between attributing significance to the cross and placing emphasis on what the cross made available is a subtle one, but one that needs to be maintained. There is no question over the importance of a holistic approach to soteriology. What needs to be made explicit is the significance of the cross in relation to what it made available. Both aspects need to be emphasised together and with equal attention; indeed, there is nothing available if it were not by means of the cross of Christ. It is clear that Johnson's goal in emphasising what the cross made available is to redress a perceived imbalance; it is important that he acknowledges the significance of the cross proportionately to the significance of what was made available through the cross. There is no possibility of an individual being filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit to engage in the activities such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons which are demonstrative of heaven being established on earth, without the cross.. A holistic soteriology is not only valid but desirable particularly when engaging with Pentecostal theology, however a holistic approach requires a balanced engagement with all elements of the salvation experience. Pinnock's endorsement of holistic soteriology gives purchase to endorse Johnson's argument that there is more to salvation than merely justification.⁶⁹⁴ Pinnock acknowledges the various dimensions of a salvation experience, and suggests that the climax of the salvation experience is union with God. According to Pinnock, this union is experienced in and through each dimension of the salvation experience and continues to be experienced through intimacy with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹⁵ As such Pinnock validates the significance of a holistic approach to soteriology. Johnson is in good company with Pinnock as they both identify that justification is a facet of salvation but by no means the only element. In essence, both Johnson and Pinnock are attempting to achieve the same end that is to broaden the understanding of salvation. Pinnock's strength lies in his acknowledgement of the significance of the cross in itself as

⁶⁹⁴ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p.150-1.

⁶⁹⁵ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p.155-6.

well as in relation to what was made available in terms of union. While it is evident that Johnson acknowledges the significance of the cross, the emphasis lies more on what was made available through the cross. There is no doubt that implicit in Johnson's theology there is a strong awareness of the importance of the cross, it could however be made more explicit. In essence, it would benefit Johnson to be more deliberate in his articulation of a narrative of salvation. Salvation is discussed in relation to the commission of humanity to bring heaven to earth and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, made possible because of Christ's work on the cross. It could be suggested that Johnson should redress the balance of emphasis in order to present a more nuanced holistic soteriology that considers the significance of all dimensions of the salvation experience in equal measure, and in doing so formulate a clarified narrative of salvation.

The second point of discussion in relation to Johnson's soteriology is the tension between crisis and process. The crisis/process tension is outworked in the context of salvation but also has implications for healing experiences, and informs healing theology and practice. Johnson understands 'process' as the means by which we appropriate into reality what was made available through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. According to Johnson, the 'process' requires active participation to appropriate what was made available on the cross, but is quite literally a process, and can take time.⁶⁹⁶ This understanding allows Johnson to hold onto both the Finished Work position typically favoured by Pentecostal thinking as well

⁶⁹⁶ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.138/9 – 'One of the areas we need to look at is gaining a healthy understanding of process. This can be theologically challenging for many reasons. The argument is that when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, there was a complete shift from an old covenant to a new covenant, so we no longer have to do anything to get what He has made available. With this reasoning, we have removed process from the equation. We then move from a place of responsibility to a place of entitlement. It is in this place that we see many people abusing or misusing their inheritance. This is a hurdle that the generations in the past and the generations to come will need to jump over. It's necessary for us to understand the difference between process and striving. A lot of the things that Jesus confronted were mindsets and issues of the heart. When this is done correctly, 139 we will see process at its best. If this is done incorrectly, we will see striving at its worst. Process helps prepare us and our hearts to recognise what we have and to use it in a way that honors the King'.

as a Wesleyan perfection approach. Wesleyan ‘perfection’, as discussed in Chapter 4 is understood as the process of sanctification being outworked in a person’s life. This process is understood as a gradual movement towards choosing not to sin, and is also marked by a crisis moment where sanctification or perfection is achieved.⁶⁹⁷ The process element of perfection or sanctification requires participation from the individual. The process was engaged with through persistent or prevailing prayer.⁶⁹⁸ As Pentecostal theology began to develop out of the Holiness movement the process/ crisis tension was resolved in favour of the crisis. Pentecostal theology emphasised the sufficiency of the cross and collapsed the process or outworking of salvation into a crisis moment. Invoked by a repentant decision, justification, reconciliation and sanctification are all understood to occur in that crisis moment.⁶⁹⁹ As such all that was made available through Christ’s death and resurrection is made immediately and readily accessible to the individual. The Finished Work position does not require appropriation of what the cross made available to an individual life, but holds that it is already present in that persons’ life. Johnson therefore sits somewhere between the two positions. It seems that he reconciles the Finished Work position with the Wesleyan perfection position by maintaining that these positions are not mutually exclusive. According to Johnson, the Finished Work position is correct in asserting that all that was made available through Christ’s work on the cross is readily accessible, however the Wesleyan perfection position is equally correct in asserting the importance of process. What was made available through the cross needs to be appropriated into the life of a believer and this appropriation is a process.

⁶⁹⁷ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p.47; Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth Century England*, p.62-3.

⁶⁹⁸ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.208.

⁶⁹⁹ Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.150-210.

Johnson's theological locus may well resolve the tension between crisis and process, however this resolution causes tension with his other theological conclusions. It is necessary to consider how Johnson's embracing of both process and crisis can be reconciled with the now and mystery paradigm that he has established in his eschatological position. As has already been discussed, Johnson's now and mystery adaptation of Wimber's now and not yet eschatology means that he emphasises what of the Kingdom of heaven is available to be established on earth now without giving too much attention to what is not yet experienced despite prayerful petition. When healing, or some other such expression of the establishing of heaven on earth is not experienced Johnson does not relegate this lack of experience to the 'not yet' but instead categorises it as a mystery. As such it seems that Johnson is buying more heavily into the crisis, or Finished Work position than the Wesleyan perfection approach. Wimber's now and not yet paradigm would fit well with the process/ crisis tension, as what is experienced in the immediate is understood as the crisis moment whereas what is not yet experienced can be understood as the process element. It is interesting that Johnson places significance on process when it is not easily reconciled with his now and mystery paradigm. It could however be argued that Johnson embraces process to the extent that it bridges the gap between what is experienced now and what will be experienced as a result of persistent prayer. By not relegating an experience of lack to the realm of not yet, Johnson 'contends for breakthrough' in the now. Perhaps his emphasis on process is evident in the persistent praying that takes place between what is not experienced in the now but what is believed to be possible in the now and what therefore will be contended for. In this respect process is understood as bridging the gap between what is experienced now and what should be experienced now because it is already available as a result of the cross. By not engaging with the not yet element, and by instead replacing it with mystery Johnson is emphasising the importance of continuing to pray what is available on earth into a reality on earth. Process

may not be at odds with mystery; mystery may actually be the stimulant for process. Where healing is not experienced in the crisis moment, Johnson would respond with ‘I don’t understand, but I will continue to contend in prayer for breakthrough’; in doing so he embraces the opportunity to actively engage in the process.

Ultimately, it is apparent that Johnson would benefit from clarifying his theological positions. Although some may argue his goal is not to formulate theology, it is important that he is mindful that that is exactly what he is doing when providing theological justifications for functional goals. There is evident convergence between his Christological, eschatological and soteriological positions. It is interesting to note the paradox that lies in his emphasis on process and yet his dismissal of the not yet of the Kingdom. As has been argued this paradox can be resolved when process is understood as the bridge between the now and the not yet, with Johnson’s mystery being the trigger to continue engaging in the process. It seems Johnson is reluctant to engage with the not yet in the event that it allows for individuals to stop engaging in the process of contending for breakthrough in healing or other such experiences of heaven coming to earth. It should also be noted that tensions are a commonality in Johnson’s theology. He openly does not seek to resolve everything in favour of one side or another. Nevertheless as his goal is often to redress a perceived imbalance, he does refer to extremes and overemphasise one side of the tension. Perhaps then the challenge is to redress the perceived imbalance while also maintain healthy emphasis on both sides of the tension.

7.4.3 Eschatology

Eschatology is pivotal to the theology of Bill Johnson. Matthew 6:10 is a foundational text that shapes the theological discourse – ‘on earth as it is in heaven’. Johnson’s wider theology

is determined by his interpretation of this text. This text is typical of the dualistic worldview which underpins Pentecostal theology in general, and Bill Johnson's theology specifically; in this context dualism is understood as a collision between two worlds – visible/ invisible, natural/ supernatural, heaven/ earth. The coming kingdom for Johnson is a matter of seeing what is in heaven released, experienced and established on earth. According to Bill Johnson, miracles, signs and wonders are one of and arguably the most important indicators of heaven on earth.⁷⁰⁰ The central question that arises from this position concerns how much of heaven is available on earth today, or rather how much can be expected on earth today?

John Wimber's 'now and not yet' argument is one that has shaped Johnson's theology.

Wimber argued that present day believers live between ages, the Kingdom has been inaugurated but is yet to be fully established at the Second Coming. As such miracles, signs and wonders are possible between these ages, but will be certain once the Kingdom has been fully established. Between the now and the not yet, Wimber understood that the church was to engage in battle for the continued increase of the Kingdom to be established.⁷⁰¹ Johnson would align himself with Wimber's position but only to the extent that the kingdom is focused on the promise of the now. Johnson maintains that the now and not yet mandate was always intended by Wimber to be a promise of what was possible rather than a reminder of what was not.

Although Johnson perceives himself to be tracking the same theological paths as Wimber, there is a distinction in their approach to eschatology. Johnson is arguably forging a new paradigm that relegates the 'not yet' to the realm of mystery. Faced with a lack of miracles, signs and wonders, or more broadly a circumstance in which it is apparent that the Kingdom has not yet come, Wimber would understand this through the lens of 'now and not yet'. If the

⁷⁰⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.63.

⁷⁰¹ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, p.86.

Kingdom was not being experienced in the now, Wimber could reconcile this with the not yet, knowing that at the eschaton the fullness of the Kingdom would be established and experienced. Bill Johnson, on the other hand, does not engage with the not yet in the same way. If the Kingdom is not experienced in the now, Johnson is not satisfied with suggesting that the Kingdom is not yet. Using the language of ‘contending for breakthrough’, Johnson will continue to pray for the Kingdom to be established in the now.⁷⁰² The possibility of heaven or the Kingdom being ‘not yet’ is not a valid explanation in Johnson’s thinking. In this respect, Johnson is tailoring the now and not yet paradigm to remove the possibility of using it as an excuse for powerlessness. In doing so, Johnson is creating a new paradigm of now and mystery. Johnson will continue to pray for heaven to be established on earth, and if miracles, signs and wonders do not happen he will assert that he will not create a theology for what God is not doing. Johnson is wary of relegating anything to the not yet, and as a result creates a new category of mystery, in which he would place any experience that is marked by a lack of miracles, signs or wonders. Johnson’s own narrative of the death of his father demonstrates his response to a lack of healing. Despite having prayed for healing, Johnson’s father died and his responses included: ‘I don’t understand’; ‘I won’t create a theology for what God has not done’; ‘I know God is good’ and ‘I will continue to contend for breakthrough in this particular area of healing’.⁷⁰³ Johnson’s narrative of this indicates that he believes that his persistent prayer for healing of cancer prior to the death of his father contributed to a breakthrough in seeing cancer healed after his death. Johnson likens this experience to pushing hard against a hypothetical rock (cancer); even though the rock did not move in that particular situation and his father died, in the process of praying, Johnson

⁷⁰² DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.447; Clark & Johnson, *Healing Unplugged*, p.64; Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.135; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.66.

⁷⁰³ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.125-7, Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.151-2;

perceives that he built up a hypothetical strength resulting in a breakthrough in the area of healing of cancer.⁷⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that in explicitly referencing what God has not done, albeit in an attempt to avoid discussion, Johnson is assuming that God has done nothing. It is possible that God has done something however that something just may not be what was desired. Furthermore, the assumption is at odds with the dualistic perspective that acknowledges the seen and unseen, the visible and invisible. On this premise, it is possible that God is at work but his work as yet remains unseen. Due to his desire not to create a theology based on what God has not done, Johnson is displacing the ‘not yet’ with ‘mystery’. For Johnson it seems that engaging with the ‘not yet’ is equivalent to making excuses for a lack of power to see heaven come to earth in that particular area. By relegating an experience in which heaven has not yet come to earth to the realm of mystery, Johnson shuts down the conversation on this topic. It seems that for Johnson entertaining the idea of not yet implies that an answer is required as to why heaven is not yet experienced. It is apparent that Johnson is wary of considering the not yet; this could be because such considerations risk questioning whether God wants to heal in this situation, or at this time, or indeed at all.⁷⁰⁵ It seems that for Johnson if the not yet is discussed there is a risk that these questions arise and have to be answered in the context of the unanswered prayer or not yet kingdom; as a result he steers away from the not yet discussion entirely. In doing so, however, it can be argued that the reality and significance of suffering and disappointment is also relegated to the realms of a

⁷⁰⁴ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.178-9.

⁷⁰⁵ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.177 - ‘Believers easily say, ‘Yes, God is good’. We have to; the Bible says so. But when tragedy strikes, many say, ‘I know He’s good, but His ways are mysterious’, thinking that God causes evil because He’ll work it out for good in the end. The implication is that God sometimes brings crises, disease, and torment to teach us to be better Christians. There is no question that God can work good out of evil. This is a testimony to His greatness, and His redemptive purpose in our lives. But to attribute evil to Him tragically undermines our purpose on the earth, as it cripples our ability to re-present Jesus as the manifestation of God’s goodwill toward all. Furthermore it compromises our ability to discern the difference between God’s discipline and actual demonic assault’.

dangerous discussion. Perhaps mystery is an insufficient substitute for ‘not yet’ for this reason. Even though ‘I don’t understand’ and ‘I don’t want to create a theology based on what God has not done’ may be legitimate responses, it is important to create space for a conversation when the Kingdom is not fully realised and heaven is not yet experienced on earth.

The now and not yet paradigm gives space to disappointment in the event that the Kingdom is not experienced in a particular circumstance. The now and mystery paradigm seems to treat disappointment as dangerous.⁷⁰⁶ Johnson regards disappointment as a trap that destroys courage, causes destruction and shifts focus off God.⁷⁰⁷ As discussed in chapter 4, Daniel Castelo’s challenge to Pentecostal eschatological expectation is relevant in this conversation. Castelo endorses the legitimacy of Pentecostal expectation of the immediacy of the coming Kingdom, however he acknowledges that the coming Kingdom is God’s initiative and can therefore challenge human thinking and logic. Castelo argues that the gap between the now and the not yet should be bridged with patient hope; such patience helps people reconcile what they believe with what they experience.⁷⁰⁸ He suggests that a lack of patience results in the displacement of divine sovereignty; when people believe that a miracle or healing can be obtained by meeting assumed requirements but when the miracle or healing is not experienced, the net result is disappointment. In such a situation, making God subject to human requirements, particularly in relation to ways of praying or ways of increasing the chances of experiencing miracles negates divine sovereignty. As such, Castelo poses a

⁷⁰⁶ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.156– ‘Any disappointment that does not get touched redemptively by God will foul and fester, bringing infection into our souls’; Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.157 – ‘Some people just need to weep before God in an honest baring of their souls. This kind of openness before the One who never rejects us is vital. Make sure to block out enough time for this process’. – Although reference is made to processing disappointment healthily, the attention given to this in the primary literature is minimal. This thesis argues for an increased profile for suffering and disappointment.

⁷⁰⁷ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.125.

⁷⁰⁸ Castelo, ‘Patience as a Theological Virtue’, p.235, 39.

challenge that can be directed at Bill Johnson. An increase in patient hope would shift the balance of Johnson's theology towards the not yet while holding to the belief that healing could still be experienced and should still be pursued through prayer. Patient hope is an important addition to Johnson's approach as it endorses the 'contending for breakthrough' motif whilst also acknowledging that even if the miracle is not experienced in the immediate there is hope that it can still happen. Patient hope, according to Castelo, involves participating in a conversation where disappointment is experienced. He suggests that transparency and vulnerability are central in this conversation; by choosing to be open about where healing is not experienced and vulnerable in sharing the pain this causes, it does not have to be that hopelessness is cultivated. Instead, Castelo argues that such transparency and vulnerability can encourage patient hope as well as strengthening community. It should be noted that while Castelo challenges Pentecostals to engage in open conversation over the disappointing not yet experiences, he also commends those who do this while also embracing mystery. In this respect, the strength of Johnson's adapting of the now and not yet theology should be recognised. Castelo acknowledges that much of God himself as well as his ways of interacting with humankind are mysterious and Pentecostals should embrace the patience by remaining silent where healing is not experienced and there is no explanation. Johnson can be commended for his desire not to qualify a lack of experience of the coming Kingdom. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the need to engage in conversation with regards to suffering and disappointment. Indeed, Castelo suggests that such experiences of lack should further encourage patience which in turn looks like waiting on the presence of God.⁷⁰⁹

Furthermore, it could be argued that Bill Johnson needs to consider his position on the continuum between God's responsibility to fulfil his promise to heal and his sovereignty to

⁷⁰⁹ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.243-245.

heal. Employing HH Knight's continuum, it has been argued that Johnson sits at the pole that holds that God is responsible to heal because he can be held ransom to his promise to fulfil what He has said.⁷¹⁰ At the far end of that scale is the Word of Faith movement, and although some have recognised the similarities between Bill Johnson and this movement, it should be acknowledged that he cannot be fully assimilated with that particular theological framework. It is however identifiable that Johnson sits closer to this extreme, rather than holding in healthy tension God's sovereignty to choose how and when, or indeed if to heal. It may be that Johnson should reconsider Wimber's position; Wimber, on this continuum, is placed in the middle ground as although he would hold that it was God's will to heal, his emphasis on the not yet means that he would not prescribe or expect how or when God would heal. Castelo's challenge to Johnson concerning the importance of engaging with patient hope in the process between the now and the not yet is one that requires a reengagement with divine sovereignty. Perhaps Johnson should consider his position in relation to divine sovereignty in relation to healing and in doing so increase the potential for his theology to include the necessary element of patient hope.

Developing this discussion, Stephen Torr employs Knight's continuum in his discussion of the problem of evil and suffering in Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Torr adapts this model by changing the poles at each end of the continuum to God's responsibility and human responsibility in relation to healing and suffering.⁷¹¹

By God's responsibility I mean an extreme view of determinism in which the presence and continuance of evil is controlled by God, as is its removal. This position understands God as the great puppet master, that we are at the mercy of, who pulls the desired strings to cause His grand plan to be worked out.

In opposition to this, at the other end of the spectrum, is the view that the presence and continuation of evil in the world is purely due to humans, and thus its removal is

⁷¹⁰ HH Knight, 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom: A Comparison of Contemporary Theologies of Healing'.

⁷¹¹ Torr, S.C., 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', *PhD Thesis*, University of Birmingham, 2012, footnote 200, p.88.

their responsibility. As will be seen, this sets God up as the distant watchmaker God of Deism, who has set the world going with certain laws and rules regarding how it works. Humans have a choice as to whether they adhere to those rules and use the resources they have correctly, or not, the consequences of the latter choice being the invasion and continuance of evil.⁷¹²

He places healing practitioners along the continuum according to their theologies concerning suffering. While Hagin and the Copelands are placed firmly in the human responsibility, Sanford also leans towards this position, along with Kelsey.⁷¹³ Torr places Kathryn Kuhlman and Charles Farah towards, although not firmly at, the other end of the spectrum, promoting God's responsibility.⁷¹⁴ Torr then considers Francis MacNutt, John Wimber and Ken Blue who he considers hold a middle ground between the two poles.⁷¹⁵ Of relevance to this study is Torr's analysis of Wimber:

Joint responsibility seems to exist regarding what can be done and who can do it. Humans have choices to make as to how they will act and whose side they will fight for and God has a responsibility to respond to the obedience of his children.⁷¹⁶

According to Torr, Wimber strikes a balance between God's responsibility and human responsibility. Torr's appropriation and adaption of Knight's continuum enhances the original contribution. According to Knight, Wimber holds a middle ground between God's faithfulness to fulfil His promises and God's sovereignty to heal. According to Torr, Wimber again strikes a balanced tension between God's responsibility in healing, and human responsibility in relation to healing. Johnson has already been placed towards the faithfulness pole of Knight's continuum. In relation to Torr's spectrum, Johnson would be placed toward the pole of human responsibility. Johnson recognises God's role in healing, yet to a greater

⁷¹² Torr, 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', p.89.

⁷¹³ Torr, 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', Hagin & Copelands p.98; Sanford p.103; Kelsey p.106.

⁷¹⁴ Torr, 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', Kathryn Kuhlman, p.115.

⁷¹⁵ Torr, 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', Francis MacNutt, p.130.

⁷¹⁶ Torr, 'A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament', p.136.

extent he emphasises the importance of human action.⁷¹⁷ The rhetoric of ‘co-labouring’ is important in communicating Johnson’s emphasis on human responsibility.⁷¹⁸ In addition, the prayer language of ‘speaking to a condition’ rather than asking God to heal is indicative of the propensity towards human responsibility.⁷¹⁹ In light of this, Johnson would do well to redress the balance and move towards a middle ground where he acknowledges both God’s and human responsibility in relation to healing. Striking this tension well is important because it serves to remind of the power of God as well as removing undue pressure from humanity.

Ultimately, Castelo both endorses and challenges Johnson’s eschatological position. Johnson’s displacement of the not yet with mystery is not necessarily a problem if there is a simultaneous embracing of patient hope and a conversation concerning suffering and disappointment. Such a conversation can be shaped in such a way that it gives rise to hope rather than fuelling pain, but there nevertheless needs to be space for people to be honest about their lack of experience of heaven on earth and a place for them to process their pain and be encouraged by community. Patient hope is an important addition to Johnson’s theology as it encourages such a conversation while also focusing on the possibilities of the coming Kingdom as opposed to the limitations.

⁷¹⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.43 – ‘I did not realise then that it was always God who lit the fire on the altar, but it was the priests who kept it burning – that all revivals start because of God, but end because of man. It never occurred to me that I had a role in maintaining and increasing a move of God. Somehow I thought things ended out of God’s sovereign choice. Since then, I have learned that the sovereignty of God gets blamed for the end of many great things’.

⁷¹⁸ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.34 – ‘Our minds become renewed through divine encounter, making it the perfect canvas for Him to paint on. We become co-laborers with Him in the master plan for planet earth. Our dreams are not independent from God, but instead exist because of God. He lays out the agenda – On earth as it is in Heaven – and then releases us to run with it and make it happen! As we grow in intimacy with Him, more of what happens in life is a result of our desires, not simply receiving and obeying specific commands from Heaven. God loves to build on our wishes and desires, as He embraced David’s desire for the temple’.

⁷¹⁹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, p.221.

7.5 How does this case study modify IR theory?

It has already been argued that IR theory sheds light on many different dimensions of this case study. It is clear that both the micro and macro elements of the healing praxis of Bethel Church are explained through this sociological lens. Where IR theory falls short of explicitly drawing on the conceptual theological discussion it is possible, by virtue of the praxis orientated approach, to perceive these theological concepts as implicitly present and engaged with through the discussion of practices. At this stage it is important to consider whether the case study in question modifies IR theory in any way.

One of the central tenets of IR theory is the importance of emotional energy experienced in a successful interaction ritual. High levels of emotional energy act as a stimulant for repetition of the ritual, and in conjunction with creating group solidarity is the cause for the development of repeat interaction rituals into a chain. As such Collins argues that a successful IR is one that produces high levels of emotional energy as opposed to an unsuccessful one that produces low levels of emotional energy. What constitutes a successful IR in the context of healing is an interesting point for consideration. If Collins' IR theory suggests that a high level of emotional energy is the outcome of a successful interaction ritual then is it required that healing is experienced in order to achieve this high level of emotional energy? In this specific case it could be argued that a successful interaction ritual requires a positive healing experience, a situation in which a person's health dramatically improves as a direct result of healing prayer. If this were the case, by applying the theory to this case would suggest that the development of a healing network is the result of IR chains that are deemed successful because the IR resulted in a positive healing experience. This would not be an unfair theory to develop. The fame of Bethel Church can be attributed, at least in part, to the

healing testimonies that regularly emerge from the community and mark the church as a place where a significant number of dramatic healing experiences are taking place.

It can be seen that healing interaction rituals continue, and indeed chains are formed even where healing is not experienced following healing prayer. In circumstances where there is no improvement in relation to health it seems emotional energy is triggered by engaging in the ritual itself. The healing prayer ritual stimulates emotional energy in itself; in the event of a negative healing experience, the participants may feel strong negative emotions such as disappointment or sadness, combined with feelings of compassion and the desire to see healing fully realised. Collins distinguishes between high and low levels of emotional energy, suggesting that high EE is embodied in positive emotions and low EE is embodied in negative emotions. In this case study however it would seem that high levels of emotional energy are not determined by whether these emotions are positive or negative but instead by their strength. High levels of emotional energy in the case of healing interaction rituals may be comprised of excitement when healing is received or disappointment when healing is not experienced. In either situation, it is the strength of the emotional energy that stimulates the perpetuation of the chain and sustains the network.

Collins does not go as far as to prescribe what constitutes a successful interaction ritual; he only requires that the outcome includes high levels of emotional energy. This study of Bethel Church adds to the understanding of what constitutes emotional energy, as it seems that both positive and negative healing experiences can give rise to high levels of emotional energy that in turn perpetuate the chain and sustain the network. Where healing is not experienced following healing prayer, perhaps the high levels of emotional energy are also enhanced by the even greater degree of group solidarity. The sense of belonging to a group and partnering

with one another to participate in healing prayer could be a strong contributor to the high levels of emotional energy regardless of whether the outcome of the healing prayer is full health or no improvement.

It is interesting to consider the relationship between the interaction ritual of healing and the interaction ritual of worship. In all three of the healing practices identified as primary means of outworking the espoused theology at Bethel Church, worship plays a significant part.⁷²⁰ If worship is understood as an interaction ritual, then emotional energy can be generated through participation in this ritual. It is therefore important to consider the interplay between emotional energy generated through worship and healing IRs. It could be argued that high levels of EE generated through participating in the interaction ritual of worship have an impact on the healing IRs. The ‘Godly Love’ study as well as Brown’s application of this study to healing, reinforces this argument on the premise that worship could be understood as the means of receiving God’s love, which in turn stimulates the desire to participate in healing interaction rituals. It seems therefore that participating in one type of IR, gaining high levels of EE through participation may lead to motivation to participate in a different type of IR. This case study has the potential to modify IR theory by suggesting that emotional energy can be transferred and expressed in different interaction rituals.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that interaction rituals in the context of Bethel Church frequently occur between strangers. It is apparent that IR chains are powerful to the degree that they can facilitate interaction between strangers. Robbins suggests that this is due to the familiarity of Pentecostal ritual meaning that participation is easily accessible. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the requirement of bodily presence in IR theory

⁷²⁰ See chapter 5: Healing Rooms includes opportunity to engage in worship; congregational prayer occurs during or after worship; post service prayer occurs after the service in which participants would have engaged in worship.

should be reconsidered in light of the successful IRs that take place in the absence of bodily presence in this case study. Through multimedia and Skype facilities at Healing Rooms it is apparent that healing IRs occur regularly and stimulate emotional energy that serves to motivate repetition of the IR. To this end, this case study modifies the requirement of bodily presence.

To this end this case study that has considered the healing praxis of Bill Johnson, as outworked in the context of Bethel Church, has been both informed by and informed the IR theory as developed by Randall Collins.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the utility and efficacy of the sociological theories as applied to the case study. It is apparent that Randall Collins' IR theory in its original form, and applied by various other sociological thinkers is helpful in illuminating the micro and macro elements of the healing praxis being experienced and outworked in the context of Bethel Church, under the influence of Bill Johnson. Although this theory has obvious limitations in its application to the conceptual theological elements of this study, it has been argued that through the praxis orientated approach the theory can be applied indirectly to the various theologies that inform the healing practices. Furthermore, it has been suggested that IR theory has not only informed, but can also be modified by the case study. The healing praxis of Bethel Church has provided scope to reconsider what constitutes emotional energy as a stimulant for the recurrence of interaction rituals, and the development of interaction ritual chains.

8. Return to praxis

8.1 Introduction

The pastoral cycle has thus far guided this research project through exploration, analysis and reflection. At this stage the cycle instigates a return to praxis; as such the praxis is reconsidered in light of the analytical and reflective exercises. The purpose of undertaking such an exercise is to inform praxis and propose change by way of recommendations for renewed praxis. This chapter will therefore consider how the analysis and reflection can advise such change. The conceptual construction will be translated into a concrete outworking.

It should be noted that praxis, in this context, is again interpreted as value-laden action. Therefore the concrete recommendations for renewed praxis will include considerations that address theory or theology, the practices and the convergence between the two.

8.2 Recommendation for renewed praxis: theological engagement

Throughout this case study it has transpired that the Christological, soteriological and eschatological elements of Bill Johnson's theology give rise to questions and debate. These questions and debates are valid and require consideration in relation to how and why they inform praxis. However, at this point, it should be acknowledged that these concerns stem from a lack of meaningful engagement with theology.

It is important to recognise that these elements are drawn out of literature or other such documents in which Johnson does not reference the theological framework explicitly. For example, Johnson will refer to Jesus being fully God and fully man without explicitly

acknowledging this as a Christological conversation.⁷²¹ As such, it could be argued that Johnson's popular writing is theologically underdeveloped and to critique his work against theological frameworks is unfair. Johnson is not intending to produce theological statements or documents. As a Pentecostal/ Charismatic practitioner who is engaging with the concept and practice of revival, and could therefore be reasonably identified as a revivalist, Johnson is more concerned with the goal of empowering the global church to live in the fullness of what Christ made available on the cross.⁷²² For him, the theory or theology is only important insofar as it gives explanation and justification for the practical. However it cannot be said that Johnson does not care for the belief side of the praxis coin. Johnson frequently identifies and builds on 'core values' which are both explicitly and implicitly referenced in literature as well as orally reinforced in teaching material.⁷²³ The term 'value' is used in a distinct way to refer to beliefs that are important to Johnson himself and the Bethel community at large.⁷²⁴ These 'core values' are essentially beliefs that carry the DNA of the community. They are not, however, intended as theological statements. Theology itself is a questionable term within the Bethel Church context; theology is often viewed with suspicion and associated with head knowledge rather than holistic personal transformation. There is an underlying concern that theological engagement can be counterproductive to the goal of an empowered church.⁷²⁵ In addition, there is a strong Pentecostal hermeneutic which compounds the

⁷²¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.29.

⁷²² Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.49 – 'True revival is an outpouring of the Spirit that brings the Kingdom until there is transformation unto reformation. The nature of the Kingdom is continual advancement'; 'That is the normal Christian life. Anything less is going backward. This spiritual shift is precisely what happens in true revival. In revival, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit brings an invasion of the presence of the King of Heaven, which displaces the prince of darkness. The result of this displacement is that people experience the life and power of Kingdom. Bodies are healed, souls are delivered and saved, believers grow in unity, and ultimately, society and the earth are transformed'; Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.164 - Multi-generational revival, along with societal transformation (the Kingdom coming 'on earth as it is in heaven') are at the top of God's agenda'.

⁷²³ <http://www.ibethel.org/articles/2006/02/01/the-power-of-a-vision>.

⁷²⁴ <http://www.ibethel.org/articles/2006/02/01/the-power-of-a-vision> - 'Therefore, the things we believe to be true determine the way in which we interpret life. These "things" are called "core values." Core values are the lens or eyes of our heart'.

⁷²⁵ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.115-6 - 'For me to consider the criticisms of this revival would be the same as giving audience to someone trying to prove I should have married another woman. First of all, I

suspicion of theological engagement.⁷²⁶ As such theology takes a back seat to the contemporary divine revelation or inspiration, which is received by an individual, shared with the community and often becomes the building blocks for praxis.⁷²⁷

Nevertheless, whether explicitly framed or not, Johnson is making statements that have theological implications. His published works and teaching are espoused theology. While there may exist a suspicion of formal theology, it should be acknowledged that Dann Farrelly as an Associate Pastor of Bethel Church and Head of Biblical Studies at Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry carries some level of responsibility towards the theological grounding of the school.⁷²⁸ It seems he may also act in an advisory capacity to those engaging in public speaking and publishing literature in relation to theology. It seems the understanding of theology held within the Bethel Church context is a narrow one, in part because engaging with theology seems to be a task assigned to an individual or two rather than a task for those in leadership who are actively teaching and publishing material. If Johnson's statements and published works are to be deemed espoused theology, which hinges on a broader understanding of theology, then it is important that Johnson becomes more theologically aware. It may be argued that Johnson is not intending to engage in theology, however, this would only be a plausible argument if a narrow understanding of theology was employed. It is possible to understand that whether intentionally engaged or not, theology underpins the praxis of Christianity. As such intention is somewhat irrelevant. Through his oral teaching

love my wife and have no interest in anyone else. Second, I refuse to entertain the thoughts of any person who desires to undermine my love for her. Only those who will add to my commitment to her are allowed such an audience with me. The critics of this revival are unknowingly attempting to separate me from my first love. I will not give them place. I have many friends who are able to read the books of the critics with no ill effect. I respect them for their ability to stick their hands in the mire without getting their hearts dirty. I don't care to do it. It's just not my gift. Learn how you function best, then function!

⁷²⁶ Archer, K., *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic* (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2009) p.125-6.

⁷²⁷ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, p.89 - 'When you put revelation into practice, what used to be impossible will begin to look logical. Your area of faith will expand. That revelation will bring you into an experience and empower you to do the works of the Kingdom'.

⁷²⁸ <http://www.ibethel.org/users/dannandchristiefarrelly>.

and written works Johnson is handling theology and this would be the case even if his influence stretched only as far as the local church. It has however been established that Johnson has a much farther reaching influence and thus by virtue of his status as a broker of social capital within a large and far reaching network, it is of greater importance that consideration is given to the theological implications of his work. Johnson has written or contributed to in excess of 20 published texts and his travelling schedule is taking him across the US, Europe, Asia and Australia.⁷²⁹ In 2014 the European Leaders Advance conference held in Harrogate, UK gathered 2000 participants from across Europe and from different denominations including Church of England, Vineyard and Baptist. Even if Johnson does not consider that he is engaging with theology, it is apparent that a broad understanding of theology indicates that he is, and the wide reach of his influence requires a higher degree of responsibility be taken in relation to the formation and development of theology.

This case study has highlighted a lack of meaningful theological engagement and has simultaneously identified the significance of the apostolic network of which Johnson is the pioneer and primary broker of social capital. One of the most important recommendations for renewed praxis is therefore the need for Johnson to increase his theological engagement. His end goal of empowering the global church to live in the fullness of what Christ made available by bringing heaven to earth does not need to be compromised in the pursuit of theological engagement.⁷³⁰ Indeed, as has been argued and will be further addressed in the following section, it is possible to engage with a kenotic Christology in a moderate form and

⁷²⁹ A number of these books have also been translated into Spanish.

⁷³⁰ This goal is articulated in the following statements: Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.39 - 'The Christian life has been harnessed to this goal, verbalised in the Lord's Model Prayer: 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. His dominion is realised when what happens here is as it is in heaven'; Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.33 - 'We, as sons and daughters of God, are destined to reveal our Father to the world by bearing His likeness. We do this as Christ did, by communing with the Father, walking in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth through demonstrations of power and authority, all in the context of showing the love of God'.

be able to reach similar conclusions, and more importantly the same functional end. It has been noted previously that Johnson has a tendency to overemphasise the neglected side of the dialectic. Johnson would identify ‘tensions in truth’, referring to the coexistence of two seemingly mutually exclusive biblical truths or perhaps ‘core values’.⁷³¹ Throughout his teaching and published material, Johnson has identified the underemphasised element of the tension and given it attention without necessarily acknowledging the balance.⁷³² As such when engaging with his popular theology it is possible to conclude that he often holds one sided positions. While there is merit in his desire to redress the balance by emphasising the neglected element of the tension or dialectic, it is nevertheless important that those learning from and incorporating his popular theology into their personal lives or corporate church communities have a grasp of the tension and not merely the overemphasised element. It is therefore important that Johnson presents both sides of the tension and dialectic. By all means he should continue to redress balances where he perceives the imbalance, but this should be done in the context of the tension in order that those engaging with his teaching can have a holistic understanding. Examples of such tensions are evident in the discussions concerning Christology, soteriology and eschatology. Formulating a high profile popular theology carries with it a responsibility for presenting a holistic perspective that communicates both sides to every tension.

It would serve Bill Johnson well to begin to consider the deeper theological implications of the statements that he makes and uses to build his functional, practical ‘theology’. Although this would require the embracing of theology as a whole, and the removal of suspicion

⁷³¹ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.48.

⁷³² Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.129 - ‘Not all truth is equal. Truth is multidimensional – some things are true, and some things are truer... The Holy Spirit has been given to lead us into all truth. But one of the things He is so clearly in charge of is taking us into the truths that the Father wants emphasized in a particular season... Present truth implies truth that is at the forefront of God’s thinking. It is a wise man who learns to recognise where the winds of Heaven are blowing. Life and ministry are so much easier when we involve ourselves in what God is already blessing’.

towards theological thinking, much of this suspicion is most likely a result of theology being an unknown entity as well as the traditional Pentecostal predisposition against academic theology.⁷³³ Choosing to engage more fully and meaningfully with academic theology as well as popular theology would allow for Johnson's teaching to be strengthened and shaped accordingly. Such a move would also arguably widen his influence as he would gain a greater respect from the academic community. A wider and deeper theological engagement would also facilitate the holding onto both elements of a tension in his pursuit of redressing the balance. Engaging with academic theology does not need to be considered a threat to the practical outworking of heaven on earth, and should perhaps be considered the responsibility of those who carry a far reaching influence in terms of popular theology.

8.3 Recommendation for renewed praxis: Adjustment in popular level discourse

Having argued that there is a need for Johnson to engage more meaningfully in a deeper and richer theological conversation, it is possible to identify why such an engagement is important based on the theological considerations of this thesis. Johnson's positions on Christology, soteriology and eschatology would certainly benefit from considering the theological implications of the statements that communicate these positions. Having unpacked these three theoretical elements of praxis at an earlier stage, it is now possible to identify how these discussions can and arguably should inform and shape praxis.

8.3.1 Christology

It has been argued that Johnson adopts a strong form of kenotic Christology. This is evidenced by the significance of the statements - 'the Son can do nothing' and 'he chose to live within the restrictions of a man who had no sin and was empowered by the Holy

⁷³³ Davies, A., 'What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 18 (2009) p.223.

Spirit'.⁷³⁴ Although Johnson refers to Jesus being both fully God and fully man, forming an ontological Christology that holds onto both Christ's humanity and divinity, Johnson builds a functional Christology that elevates Christ's humanity. As such, Johnson's goal in portraying Jesus as a man empowered by the Holy Spirit is to create a model for all of redeemed humanity to imitate.⁷³⁵ In pursuit of a functional Christology that endorses this goal, Johnson loses grasp of the ontological Christology aforementioned, and thereby loses a grasp on the hypostatic union. There is no consideration given to the coexistence of the humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus.

In Chapter 7, a dialogue was set up between David Brown, Kathryn Tanner, Oliver Crisp and Ralph del Colle. This dialogue gave rise to the formulation of a new Christological position - Brown's position was modified using Tanner and Crisp's contributions. This modified position was then enhanced by Del Colle's Spirit Christology. The proposed modified Christology can be stated as follows:

Focusing on what was assumed rather than what was abandoned, the hypostatic union can be understood on the basis of total identification. This total identification is asymmetrical with the divine nature penetrating the human nature without the reverse occurring. This total identification occurs without transference of properties and divinity is attributed to Christ by virtue of the divine pattern that gives rise to his existence rather than his possession of divine properties. Christ's humanity is given effectiveness by the Holy Spirit and Christ operates in his human nature, empowered and energised by the Holy Spirit.

⁷³⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.29; Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.125.

⁷³⁵ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.125.

This modified Christological position is important in order to strengthen Johnson's work as it is possible for Johnson to continue to champion the cause for all Christians to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. What is required, however, is a consideration of how the two natures of Christ coexist and interrelate in the person of Jesus. Given that Christology becomes the means by which Johnson can conclude that redeemed humanity can be likened to Jesus on the basis of him being a human empowered by the Spirit, it is important that Johnson engages more fully with Christology and the implications of his position.

In order to propose substantive changes it is important to consider again Johnson's position concerning Christology. Johnson's Christological position can be summarised as such:

Jesus was existentially both divine and human, but chose to set aside His divinity and live within the restrictions of humanity. Jesus is supernaturally powerful to perform miracles, signs and wonders by virtue of his dependence on the Holy Spirit. Johnson's functional goal is to present Jesus as a model for redeemed humanity; those who are dependent on the Holy Spirit in the same way as Jesus are able to perform the same miracles, signs and wonders.

This thesis suggests that Johnson's position should be revised in light of the modified Christological position proposed. Johnson's new position could be summarised as follows:

Jesus is both fully God and fully man. The hypostatic union of Christ's humanity and divinity is understood as total identification of the divine nature with the human nature. (However, the human nature does not identify fully with the divine nature.) The total identification of the divine nature with the human nature means that Jesus is divine by virtue of the divine pattern that gives purpose to his existence. The total identification of the divine nature with the human nature does not mean that Jesus is

divine because he possesses divine power. Jesus does not perform miracles/ signs/ wonders because he is divine/ possesses divine power. Jesus, being both fully God and fully man is anointed by the Holy Spirit. It is this anointing that enables him to perform miracles/ signs/ wonders as a human by the power/ energy of the Holy Spirit. The same anointing can be received by redeemed humanity in order that they too can perform miracles/ signs/ wonders by the power/ energy of the Holy Spirit.

It is important that Johnson's Christological position holds both the divinity and humanity in tension. That Jesus is both fully divine, and fully human are two dimensions of this tension, and as such it is important that this tension remains intact when implications are discussed. It is important that when Johnson seeks to empower redeemed humanity to become empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the same miracles, signs and wonders as Jesus, he maintains this tension. In addition, it seems that this Christological discussion serves to reinforce the importance of a deeper theological engagement; this would not only be of benefit to his personal theological understanding but also to those who critique his teaching. Johnson's Christology is arguably one of the most controversial elements of his popular theology and as such it would be beneficial for him to be seen to engage in a depth of conversation drawing on academic theology to aid his development of a popular theology.

8.3.2 Soteriology

In chapter 4, Johnson's soteriological position was discussed with particular reference to his holistic approach. In redressing the perceived imbalance that overemphasised salvation as only a means to gain access to heaven, Johnson pushed the pendulum to the other side by emphasising the full repercussions of Christ's work on the cross.⁷³⁶ In doing so, Johnson adopted a more holistic approach, emphasising the importance of Christians understanding

⁷³⁶ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.259.

the significance of their salvation experience in terms of their commission of bringing heaven to earth. Johnson attempts to widen the perceived understanding of salvation to include the transformation of people, cities and nations. He distinguishes between the gospel of salvation, pertaining to a narrow understanding and the gospel of the Kingdom which encompasses the fullness of what Christ made available on the cross.⁷³⁷ Although it is apparent that Johnson attributes significance to the cross it seems that he does so in relation to what it made available.⁷³⁸ There is merit in embracing a holistic approach to salvation, however this needs to be done in the context of acknowledging the importance of the cross in and of itself. Given Johnson's goal of empowering the church to live in the fullness of what was made available, it is fitting that Johnson emphasises the benefits of the cross, however it is important that in communicating his popular theology he presents a nuanced perspective that attributes significance to the cross and Christ's death and resurrection.

Johnson's theology concerning the significance is summarised in this statement:

The Christian life is not found on the Cross. It is found because of the Cross... WE HAVE NOTHING WITHOUT THE CROSS! Yet, the Cross is not the end- it is the beginning, the entrance to the Christian life.⁷³⁹

While on the surface this statement presents a nuanced perspective, it is important to recognise the underlying leaning towards what the cross made available. In his pursuit of developing a holistic soteriology it is important to both the significance of the cross itself as well as what it made possible. A reformed statement that embraces a holistic soteriology might state:

The cross of Christ is the turning point in human history. The cross is the beginning and foundation of Christian life. It is because of the cross that humanity can receive salvation. Salvation is both an invitation into a conversion experience- a personal

⁷³⁷ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.46

⁷³⁸ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.259.

⁷³⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.46.

relationship with God as well as an invitation to participate in the commission to preach the gospel, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and in doing so bring heaven to earth.

This soteriological discussion serves to reinforce the importance of communicating both points of a tension; even where the goal is to redress a balance there must be sufficient context for this emphasis to be nuanced.

8.3.3 Mystery

The notion of mystery has developed beyond existing as an element of soteriology and eschatology. It has of course developed out of discussions on both of these topics however it has grown in significance and therefore warrants attention on its own. Johnson's soteriology was significant in raising the tension between process and crisis.⁷⁴⁰ In relation to sanctification, the Wesleyan Pentecostal position embraced both process and crisis, with entire sanctification being outworked as a process and then finally achieved in a crisis moment.⁷⁴¹ On the other hand, the Finished Work Pentecostal position moved away from the tension between process and crisis and understood sanctification as a crisis moment that happened in the context of a salvation decision.⁷⁴² It has been argued that Johnson draws on both of these traditions in relation to salvation, and indeed healing. The salvation experience of an individual makes the Finished Work of the cross fully available, which includes forgiveness of sins as well as full physical healing, however what was made available through the cross has to be appropriated into the individual life.⁷⁴³ Herein lies the tension between process and crisis. If the crisis moment is assimilated with the salvation experience, then the process is understood as the appropriation of what was made available through

⁷⁴⁰ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.138/9.

⁷⁴¹ Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England*, p.62-3.

⁷⁴² Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, p.215.

⁷⁴³ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.138/9.

Christ's work on the cross. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this position, it is interesting how this relates to Johnson's eschatological position of 'now and mystery'.⁷⁴⁴

Johnson's position on mystery is articulated in the following statement:

There are two parts to mystery that are important for us. First, we need to have areas in our lives that we have no understanding of so we can learn to trust God. If I understand everything about my Christian life, I have an inferior Christian life. What I don't understand is often as important as what I do. That becomes the grounds for the relationship of trust. Christianity is called 'the Faith'. As such, it must contain mystery. Second, and this must be held in tension with the first, God has chosen to give us the realm of mystery as a gift. This basically means we have access to hidden things. Hunger and development of character are two essential elements to this process of searching our mysteries. Hunger is the driving force that enables us to take possession of what God has promised. And character provides the 'container' to place the blessing in. The bottom line is that mystery is completely managed by God. It is not ours to demand or control. Yet our influence in the matter through dependence and hunger is seen in His delight to give us more than we could ever ask for.⁷⁴⁵

Johnson evidently places significance on mystery in general, however in the context of healing experiences it seems that Johnson is driven more by the second part of mystery that he identifies, that is to gain 'access to the hidden things' through 'hunger'. For Johnson, mystery is not necessarily accepted as a satisfactory justification for when healing is not fully experienced in the now. It may well be an explanation for why healing is not fully experienced but it is not a satisfactory alternative to the now experience.⁷⁴⁶ It is apparent that even where something is not understood and placed into the mystery category, the case is not settled until it can be moved from mystery to a 'now' experience. As such it seems that the term process relates to the engagement in moving a case from mystery to the now, crisis

⁷⁴⁴ 'Now and not yet' - Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.152 - 'We simply live in a world of conflict and sin. Bad stuff happens. While I may not understand 'why', I do understand that neither God nor His covenant is deficient'; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.27 - 'The lack of miracles isn't because it is not in God's will for us. The problem exists between our ears. As a result, a transformation - a renewing of the mind - is needed, and it's only possible through a work of the Holy Spirit that typically comes upon desperate people'.

⁷⁴⁵ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.35; Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.59 - To embrace revelation with one hand, and embrace mystery with the other, forms a perfect cross. This is a cross that everyone who is hungry to do the works of Jesus will have to carry. God must violate our logic to invite us away from the deception of relying on our own reasoning.

⁷⁴⁶ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.27 - 'The lack of miracles isn't because it is not in God's will for us. The problem exists between our ears. As a result, a transformation - a renewing of the mind - is needed, and it's only possible through a work of the Holy Spirit that typically comes upon desperate people'.

experience. Mystery, as has been argued by Daniel Castelo is a significant part of Pentecostal experience and should perhaps be embraced not in the meantime but as an end in itself.⁷⁴⁷ For Johnson, in the context of healing, mystery is embraced in the absence of a ‘now’ experience and only until the ‘now’ experience is realised.⁷⁴⁸ In addition, mystery is understood by Johnson as a good thing on the basis that it prevents the exercise of holding God to ransom over what he has not done, for example in healing.⁷⁴⁹

An intellectual gospel is always in danger of creating a God that looks a lot like us; one that is our size. The quest for answers sometimes leads to a rejection of mystery. As a result mystery is often treated as something intolerable, instead of a real treasure. Living with mystery is the privilege of our walk with Christ.⁷⁵⁰

However this understanding of mystery is limited; it could be argued that embracing mystery is not merely about not questioning God with regards to what has not happened but about embracing the unknown in a broader sense. An increased emphasis on the unknown and mystery is important in preventing those who have not had a ‘now’ experience from holding God ransom to question but it is also important in preventing God being held to ransom over promises to fulfil expectations.⁷⁵¹ It does not need to become an excuse for powerlessness but it shifts the balance away from holding God ransom to fulfil promises and towards an embracing of his sovereignty and freedom. Daniel Castelo has argued that patience waiting is essential to walking in mystery. He suggests that it is dangerous to hold God ransom to fulfil promises, or to control his activity through faith requirements.⁷⁵² A reformed understanding of mystery is required within the Bethel Church context so that not only is God not held ransom to questions, but also to promises. This reformed understanding could be articulated as such:

⁷⁴⁷ Castelo, ‘Patience as a Theological Virtue’, p.245.

⁷⁴⁸ Johnson & Johnson, *Momentum*, p.35.

⁷⁴⁹ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.55 – ‘An intellectual gospel is always in danger of creating a God that looks a lot like us; one that is our size. The quest for answers sometimes leads to a rejection of mystery’.; DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.458 - ‘The Kingdom culture celebrates what God is doing without stumbling over what God didn’t do. We must resist the temptation to build our theology around what didn’t happen’.

⁷⁵⁰ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.55.

⁷⁵¹ Castelo, ‘Patience as a Theological Virtue’, p.241,245; HH Knight, ‘God’s Faithfulness and God’s Freedom’.

⁷⁵² Castelo, ‘Patience as a Theological Virtue’, p.241-245.

We believe God is good and it is His will to heal. We believe that God can do this fully and immediately in a crisis moment. However this is sometimes not experienced in reality. Sometimes there can be a process through which healing is fully received and experienced. Sometimes healing is not received and we don't know why, this is a mystery. Mystery is an important part of faith and patience is important in the process of waiting for a healing experience.

Johnson's belief in mystery must translate into his theology of healing. There needs to be an alignment between the embracing of mystery and the embracing of experiences where healing is not received fully or immediately. The tension between crisis and process is achieved through valuing mystery.

8.3.4 Eschatology

Building on the process/crisis tension and the importance of embracing mystery, one of the key recommendations for renewal comes in the form of raising the profile of suffering and disappointment. Where the 'now' experience of healing is not realised and the case is temporarily assigned to the realm of mystery, the focus is not on wrestling with disappointment but on pursuing 'breakthrough' until the case can be reassigned to a 'now' experience.⁷⁵³ As such disappointment is not given much of a place in the conversation; indeed it can be regarded as dangerous.⁷⁵⁴ Castelo argues that where expectancy is not fulfilled, honest and vulnerable conversations are required.⁷⁵⁵ Herein lays the importance of bringing disappointment into the conversation. Those who are feeling disappointed in relation to the lack of a 'now' experience need to be able to acknowledge this. It is insufficient to respond to a lack of a realised healing experience with 'I don't understand' and 'keep

⁷⁵³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.149-50.

⁷⁵⁴ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.125.

⁷⁵⁵ Castelo, 'Patience as a Theological Virtue', p.243.

contending for breakthrough'.⁷⁵⁶ It is important that those who are still suffering are allowed to acknowledge their disappointment in order that they can process that emotion and continue to actively wait in patience for their 'now' experience. Depriving healing experiences of that vulnerability risks more damage as people are forced to deny their feelings of disappointment. In relation to renewed praxis, it is important that on occasions where healing prayer does not result in improvement to health or a need being met, that the conversation following healing prayer gives opportunity for the person being prayed for to acknowledge if they are feeling disappointed. This in turn raises the possibility for encouragement, and if desired, prayer to help the individual process disappointment healthily.⁷⁵⁷

Currently, it seems that when healing is not experienced, the responses include 'I don't understand'; 'I won't create a theology for what God has not done'; 'I know God is good' and 'I will continue to contend for breakthrough in this particular area of healing'.⁷⁵⁸ A reformed response would give opportunity to discuss disappointment:

I don't understand. I'm sorry you're experiencing pain and suffering. I understand that you might feel disappointed. Disappointment is an understandable response and it is important you can talk about it. God is still good; He is with you in your suffering and can bring comfort. You can worship Him through the pain, suffering and disappointment. We can continue to pray for healing.

⁷⁵⁶ DeCenso Jr., *Amazed by the Power of God*, p.458 - The Kingdom culture celebrates what God is doing without stumbling over what God didn't do. We must resist the temptation to build our theology around what didn't happen. The world around us cries for an authentic display of Christ. And we become that answer if we don't stumble over what didn't happen'; Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.152 - 'We simply live in a world of conflict and sin. Bad stuff happens. While I may not understand 'why', I do understand that neither God nor His covenant is deficient'.

⁷⁵⁷ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.156- 'Any disappointment that does not get touched redemptively by God will fester and fester, bringing infection into our souls'; Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.157 - 'Some people just need to weep before God in an honest baring of their souls. This kind of openness before the One who never rejects us is vital. Make sure to block out enough time for this process'. - Although reference is made to processing disappointment healthily, the attention given to this in the primary literature is minimal. This thesis argues for an increased profile for suffering and disappointment.

⁷⁵⁸ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.125-7, Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.151-2.

It is important that the experiences of disappointment and suffering in general are given more attention in the wider rhetoric and dialogue. Discussions concerning disappointment and suffering do not have to threaten or contradict the activity of ‘contending for breakthrough’ nor do they need to temper the end goal of bringing heaven to earth. Such discussions are necessary for presenting a rounded theological discourse and for shaping the negative as well as positive experiences of the Christian life.

8.4 Recommendation for renewed praxis: healing practices

The recommendations thus far impact the healing practices insofar as they shape the beliefs that underpin the action or practice. It is the shift of such beliefs, or theory that will address the change that has been proposed. The healing practices that have been identified include Healing Rooms, congregational ministry and post service prayer. All three of these healing practices have the potential to be shaped by the proposed changes to the beliefs/ theory. The table below outlines how the proposed changes to the theoretical elements discussed above would impact the healing practices that have been identified as the primary means of outworking beliefs concerning healing.

Table 1.

Practice	Current praxis	Renewed praxis
Healing Rooms	Participant signs form and explains condition.	
	Introductory session to explain process and begin healing prayer.	Acknowledgement that healing can be received as crisis or process experience and that mystery needs to be embraced.
	Participant moves to ‘Encounter Room’ to worship and rest ‘in the presence of God’.	

	Participant moves to room where they will receive healing prayer.	
	2-3 team members pray for healing for the participant.	
	Healing prayer may include laying on hands and sharing words of knowledge.	
	Prayer language is often commanding – consisting of ‘speaking to the condition’.	
	Participant transitions to class on ‘stewarding healing’.	If healing not experienced, pray for comfort, patience and hope in suffering.
	Participant leaves Healing Rooms.	Provide opportunity for those who have not experienced healing to be honest about disappointment and be encouraged in relation to healing as a process/ mystery.
	During worship or sermon, leader shares ‘word of knowledge’.	
Congregational ministry	Those in congregation who ‘word of knowledge’ refers to are invited to stand or indicate their inclusion in some form.	
	Congregation close by to the identified individuals are asked to gather around.	
	Congregation pray for participants while directed by leader.	
	Team members will pause to allow participant to assess whether or to what extent healing has been experienced. Those who claim to have	

	experienced healing are asked to identify themselves, e.g. by raising their hand.	
	If healing not experienced, often prayer is repeated.	Emphasis placed on healing as process/ mystery; acknowledgement that healing is not always a crisis experience.
	Leader will direct and close this healing prayer ritual.	Opportunity for disappointment to be acknowledged as a valid response to not experiencing healing. Opportunity for prayer for comfort, patience and hope in suffering.
	As the service is closed by the delegated leader, members of congregation are invited to approach the prayer team at the front of the room for prayer for any need, healing is often explicitly referred to.	
Post service prayer	Participants will be partnered with 1-2 members of the prayer team.	
	Participant will be asked to briefly disclose their prayer need.	
	Team members will pray for participant, often laying on hands and 'speaking to the condition' or need.	
	Team members will often pause to give opportunity for the participant to assess whether or to what extent they have received healing.	

	If healing has not been experienced, the team members will continue to pray again until healing is received or they feel they have prayed sufficiently.	Emphasis placed on healing as process/ mystery; acknowledgement that healing is not always a crisis experience.
		Opportunity for disappointment to be acknowledged as a valid response to not experiencing healing. Opportunity for prayer for comfort, patience and hope in suffering.

Recommendations for renewed praxis: healing practices

This table has outlined concrete and substantive proposals for change in relation to the healing praxis of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. The table identifies the convergence between beliefs/ theory and actions/ practices; as such it is the shift to the beliefs and theory that will create change in the practices. It is apparent that the healing practices have the potential to be most impacted by the raised profile of mystery, suffering and disappointment.

Throughout the discussions of the healing practices one of the identifiable dialectics is the relationship between the small scale healing prayer experience and the large scale network formed by the small scale interactions. IR theory offers a strong lens that brings clarity to both the small and large scale interactions and the relationship between the two.⁷⁵⁹ This dialectic can also be viewed alongside another tension that holds together the significance of an individual in a congregation or assigned to a prayer team and the brokers of social capital such as Bill Johnson. The small and large scale dialectic is also outworked through this tension that exists between the average member of a congregation and the leader of a

⁷⁵⁹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

network. The healing practices identified within the context of Bethel Church are indicative of the belief that all members of that community or indeed any Christian community have the potential to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and thereby enabled to participate in the transformation of people, cities and nations by bringing heaven to earth. In the context of Healing Rooms, congregational prayer, and post service prayer those offering healing prayer are qualified by virtue of their conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶⁰ There are a vast number of people enabled to engage in healing prayer and in this sense there is a democratization of the practice of healing prayer.⁷⁶¹ Nevertheless, there is also significance placed on leaders of this global movement and the network facilitates the growth of their significance. Such leaders, including Bill Johnson, have formed and developed their own ministries and have an increasing platform on the global Pentecostal/ Charismatic scene.⁷⁶² In the case of Bill Johnson, his ministry, which emphasises miracles, signs and wonders including healing miracles, serves to both endorse the democratization of healing prayer as well as elevate Johnson's own ministry. It could be argued that these dimensions of the tension are at odds with one another. Johnson is held up as a leading figure in relation to healing within the Bethel Church community and a broker of social capital within the global network and simultaneously teaches that all who are empowered with the Holy Spirit should engage in healing prayer as a means of bringing heaven to earth. However, these two dimensions do not necessarily have to be understood as being at odds with one another. By virtue of Johnson's status as a broker of social capital within the global network he is able to empower the global church to engage in this practice.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶⁰ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.33.

⁷⁶¹ Any member of the congregation; 600 Healing Rooms volunteers - <http://bethelredding.com/ministries/healing-rooms/leadership> [accessed 30.03.15].

⁷⁶² Bill Johnson ministries - <http://bjm.org/> [accessed 30.03.15].

⁷⁶³ Bill Johnson life messages - <http://bjm.org/category/life-messages/> [accessed 30.03.15]; 'When Heaven Invades Earth' - <http://bjm.org/heaven-invading-earth/> [accessed 30.03.15].

In the local context, the leader versus the church member tension is played out in relation to healing. The congregational prayer practice identifies these two roles clearly, whereby the leader calls out a word of knowledge and the congregation participate in healing prayer in response to this word of knowledge and in response to those who identify themselves as needing such prayer.⁷⁶⁴ It is possible to argue that on a smaller scale, these leaders are facilitating the participation of large numbers of people in the practice of healing prayer. Likewise it could be argued that they are acting like Johnson in empowering individuals to believe they can participate. On the other hand, these roles could be perceived as undermining the goal of empowering the church to participate in healing prayer. Elevating some as leaders, even within the local context serves to create a dichotomy between those worthy of being given that status and those who are not. Creating a hierarchy of status in relation to healing practices could result in a divergence between the message being taught and the reality.

Although leaders are required in a practical sense to facilitate such practices in the local context, and are beneficial to the extent to which they act as brokers of social capital in the global context, attributing too much significance to leaders could serve to undermine the goal of empowering a body of believers to engage in healing practices. This is less of a recommendation for renewed praxis and more of a warning of a potential area of oversight. It is apparent that Johnson's goal is to empower local communities and global communities to see heaven established on earth through the transformation of people, cities and nations and he works towards this goal by calling individuals to be filled with the Holy Spirit and appropriate what has been made available through the work of Christ on the cross. In this respect, Johnson is more interested in empowering a people than elevating himself or his

⁷⁶⁴ Field notes [Friday service, 7pm, 14.02.14].

ministry. To this end it is important that the praxis, that is the beliefs and actions, endorse this end.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has moved the case study from investigation, analysis and evaluation to a return to praxis and identifying recommendations for change. The majority of the recommendations relate to the beliefs that drive the practices. The practices will be shaped by virtue of a shift to the beliefs. This chapter has suggested that Bill Johnson, and indeed the Bethel Church community at large would benefit from engaging more meaningfully with academic theology. This engagement would serve to strengthen and sharpen the popular theology that is emerging from within the local community and is shaping the global network. Moreover, it is important that Johnson in his desire to redress perceived imbalances in understanding does so with an awareness of presenting balanced, nuanced and thorough theological frameworks. Engagement with academic theology would be beneficial in the context of Christology in order to develop a moderate kenotic position that also engages with Spirit Christology. In addition, Johnson's notion of mystery needs to be expounded so that he not only refuses to hold God to ransom by questioning what has not happened but also so he would not hold God to ransom to fulfil promises. It has also been proposed that Johnson needs to reconsider his response to situations where healing has not been fully realised; disappointment needs to be given a stronger voice in the dialogue. Finally, it has been suggested that a greater awareness of the dialectic between empowering all believers to participate in healing prayer and the elevation of specific leaders and how these two elements impact one another. Although these two dimensions can coexist there needs to be an awareness of maintaining a healthy balance.

9. Conclusion

This chapter will provide a summary of the research project, as well as a summary of the research findings, highlighting the overarching thesis. In addition, this chapter will address the strengths and weaknesses of this project, identify the originality of this thesis to the body of research and suggest recommendations for future research.

9.1 Summary of research

This thesis has explored the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church in Redding, California. In addressing the issue of praxis, the espoused and operant theologies have been teased apart. As such the beliefs have been pulled out of the actions or practices and both dimensions of praxis have been explored and analysed. This distinction is artificial on the premise that praxis is inherently the intersection between espoused and operant theology and indeed there is no action that is not shaped by belief. Nevertheless this distinction is helpful in answering the ‘why’ question of praxis as well as the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions.

To this end, this thesis has provided an historical overview of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church, acknowledging the overlap of histories between the two and the influence of one over the other. It has also mapped out the contemporary position of the church on the global Pentecostal/ Charismatic stage and identified synchronous links with other healing/ renewal ministries. This thesis has then begun the exercise of identifying the beliefs that comprise the espoused theology element of praxis. As part of this exploration, Johnson’s beliefs regarding Christology, soteriology and eschatology have been analysed. These theological beliefs are significant in building the espoused healing theology. In addition, the beliefs relating to the

origin of sickness, the nature of God and when healing does not happen all contribute to the formulation of Johnson's theology of healing.

The action element of praxis has been unpacked through the identification of three forms of healing practices. Healing is practiced within the Bethel Church community under the influence of Bill Johnson's espoused theology in the form of Healing Rooms, congregational ministry in response to words of knowledge, and post service prayer. These three practices embody the beliefs relating to healing.

Having identified the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church by distinguishing between and exploring the espoused and operant theologies, this thesis engaged with social scientific voices. Randall Collins' interaction ritual chains theory has provided a strong lens through which to view the micro scale interactions which repeatedly occur between individuals and within groups, as well as the macro scale network that is formed through the multiplication of micro interactions and enhanced by brokers of social capital such as Bill Johnson. The social scientific dialogue was enriched through further engagement with theorists who developed Collins' IR theory through their own applications.⁷⁶⁵

The reflective stage of this thesis identifies the shortcomings of this theory which arise as a result of the lack of cohesion between the beliefs and values and the theory itself. Although the theory projects well onto the action/ practice dimension of the praxis, it fails to account for some of the considerations that arose under the exploration of the espoused theology. The reflection and return to praxis stages of this thesis propose reforms to the espoused theology

⁷⁶⁵ Robbins, 'The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism'; Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism*; Brown, *Testing Prayer*; Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*.

including a deeper engagement with academic or formal theology, as well as a tempering of the kenotic Christology that forms the basis of Johnson's justification for contemporary healing experiences and the need to publicly acknowledge disappointment and mystery when healing does not occur. In addition, the return to praxis stage of the thesis has considered how these changes to the espoused theology would impact the operant theology.

This thesis has considered the central beliefs held by Bill Johnson in relation to healing as well as the most common practices of healing prayer amongst the community of Bethel Church. This thesis has considered the convergence between the beliefs or espoused theology and action or operant theology and determined the cohesion between the two. Social science theory has been used to shed light on the healing phenomenon that is taking place within Bethel Church addressing both the small scale interactions and global impact of the espoused and operant theology of Bill Johnson.

9.2 Original contribution to research

In the absence of research addressing Bethel Church, or Bill Johnson, this project is the first to consider either one of these entities. References have been made to Johnson from those working on the 'Godly Love' project, and Brown has placed him within the revivalist movement that connects with individuals such as Randy Clark and Heidi Baker, as well as with networks such as Catch the Fire, Global Awakening and Iris Ministries.⁷⁶⁶ In addition, Wilkinson and Althouse allude to the practice of soaking prayer originating from the Toronto Blessing and influencing Bethel practices.⁷⁶⁷ However there has thus far been an absence of research devoted solely to the exposition of Bill Johnson or Bethel Church. As such it is evident that this project makes an original contribution to research. This thesis considers the

⁷⁶⁶ Brown, *Testing Prayer*, p.287.

⁷⁶⁷ Wilkinson & Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, p.4-5.

influence of Bill Johnson's espoused and operant theology in relation to Bethel Church, and acknowledges that this influence extends beyond the local church to the global stage of the Pentecostal/ Charismatic in general, and renewal/ revivalist streams specifically. This research addresses the healing theology in particular, recognising that there are many other theological contributions being made by Johnson and Bethel Church at large to the body of evolving renewal theology.

9.3 Summary of conclusions

Through utilising the pastoral cycle to explore the healing praxis of Bill Johnson as outworked in the context of Bethel Church, this thesis has formed a number of conclusions. It has been asserted that Johnson would benefit from engaging more meaningfully with academic theology. Regardless of intention, Johnson, by virtue of the stage he possesses and influence he carries within the renewal streams of Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity, is formulating a popular theological discourse. At present he is doing this on an ad hoc basis, building theology on revelation. In addition, in his attempt to redress what he perceives to be an imbalance in popular theology, Johnson often emphasises one dimension of truth that should sit in tension and dialogue with another. In redressing this balance Johnson pushes the pendulum too far and the tension is lost. As such this thesis argues that given Johnson's profile, he has a responsibility to present both sides to a tension in order to present a balanced popular theology. Meaningful engagement with academic theology would bolster Johnson's popular theological discourse and afford it strength in the face of academic critique.

As a result of engaging with academic theology, this thesis suggests that there needs to be a reform of theology in relation to Christology. Johnson conveys an underdeveloped kenotic Christology that fails to address the hypostatic union. As such, this thesis proposes that

Johnson develops his Christological position with reference to a modified version of David Brown's Christology. This thesis has constructed a new Christological position that draws Kathryn Tanner and Oliver Crisp into David Brown's construction and then engages with Ralph del Colle's Spirit Christology. This modified construction presents a Jesus who is both fully divine and fully human, and performed miracles, signs and wonders in his humanity. This Christological construction allows Johnson to pursue his functional goal of empowering humanity to perform miracles, signs and wonders replicating the model of Jesus.

In addition, this thesis proposes that the now and mystery paradigm developed by Johnson should be redressed in light of the concept of mystery. Although Johnson ascribes significance to mystery, he does so to the degree that mystery, or the unknown can become known. According to Johnson, mystery is an invitation to seek God and discover revelation. It seems that in the context of healing, mystery is the explanation for when healing does not happen but this is an unsatisfactory place to settle. Johnson will persistently push for a now experience of healing. In this respect, mystery is deemed insufficient. Furthermore, Johnson's soteriology embraces both crisis and process. The notion of process is given attention in literature. Nevertheless, in the context of healing, process, like mystery is deemed unsatisfactory in the face of a potential now experience. Given the significance placed on the concepts of mystery and process, it seems these concepts should have more of an impact on Johnson's theology of healing. This thesis proposes a greater degree of alignment between the importance of these concepts and Johnson's healing praxis.

Furthermore, in light of an increased emphasis on mystery and process, this thesis suggests that Johnson needs to develop a better response to occasions when healing is not experienced. It is important that disappointment is given space in the rhetoric and opportunities to voice

and process feelings of disappointment are available in the healing practices. Moreover, it is suggested that Johnson formulate a theology of suffering.

This thesis employs IR theory to explain the significance of healing prayer in relation to healing interaction rituals. IR theory offers a means of understanding how healing interaction rituals have formed chains, and in turn a healing network. It is through the lens of IR theory that the current revival being experienced at Bethel Church can be understood. This case study modifies IR theory by suggesting that IRs can occur in the absence of interpersonal relationships. Strangers, by virtue of familiarity with the ritual of healing prayer are able to partake in the interaction rituals. In addition, this case study suggests that healing interaction rituals can occur in the absence of bodily presence. Through multimedia and Skype, participants are able to engage in healing IRs to the extent that emotional energy is obtained and sufficiently strong enough to perpetuate the chain. Finally, IR theory identifies the significance of symbols that are charged with emotional energy and perpetuate IR chains, as well as brokers of social capital who facilitate the transference of emotional energy throughout a network by establishing bonds of trust. This dimension of IR theory gives explanation for the significance of Johnson within the healing network that has emerged from Bethel Church. Johnson can be perceived as both a symbol and a broker of social capital.

To conclude, this thesis has explored the healing praxis of Bill Johnson identifying areas of both theology and practice that require reform as well as providing a theoretical explanation for the significance of Johnson and Bethel Church within Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity.

9.4 Evaluation

9.4.1 Strengths

The overriding strength of this thesis lies in its pioneering of exploration into an area that has thus far been left untouched by academic research. Given the reach of Johnson's influence and the controversy of his theological leaning it is surprising that he is yet to form the subject of academic enquiry. Similarly, considering the notoriety of Bethel Church within Pentecostal/ Charismatic circles it is again interesting that there has been a distinct lack of qualitative or quantitative study. Both Johnson and Bethel Church as discrete and connected entities are influencing the global Pentecostal/ Charismatic scene through their prolific publication of material and use of mass media. In addition, Johnson and other ministries emanating from Bethel Church are increasing the regularity and reach of their travel, with conferences being held all over the world, including the USA, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Such research is important on the premise of the far reaching influence of both Johnson and Bethel Church. With a global platform comes the possibility of being subject to academic enquiry.

This project is strengthened by virtue of its emic approach. The insider perspective that has shaped this thesis affords a depth of understanding to the first order discourse. It has been of benefit that this first order discourse is familiar and can therefore be understood in context. The challenge has been to step outside of the first order discourse and insider perspective and engage with the academy in order to elucidate the experiences being explored and discussed. In this specific case, the insider perspective has guaranteed that Bill Johnson and Bethel Church are understood on their own terms before being held up against academic scrutiny; they have been afforded a level of understanding by virtue of the emic approach. The author's familiarity with the subject of this thesis, through the influence of Johnson and Bethel Church

on their personal church experience meant that there was a history and background experience of both entities providing a context on which this academic study could build.

9.4.2 Weaknesses

Engaging in empirical research contributes to both the success and weakness of this thesis. Although engaging in empirical research to the degree that was permitted enhances the credibility of this research project, it is evident that the restrictions drawn around the empirical research equally contributes to the weaknesses of this research project. Permission was granted for observational material gained during two one month visits to the site of study. This material was drawn from attending Friday and Sunday services, as well as attending Bethel Healing Rooms and other conferences taking place during the field research trips including Randy Clark's School of Healing. The observational material qualifies as empirical research and has boosted the research findings. However this project could have been further enhanced if interviews had been permitted by Johnson. It would have been to Johnson's benefit to have engaged in an interview in which questions of clarification could have been posed to guarantee an accurate understanding and interpretation of his theological position and statements.

In addition, this research project has been hindered by the required narrowing of the content and substance of the research material. It is clear that the healing praxis that exists within and is projected from Bethel Church extends far beyond Bill Johnson's influence. For the sake of clarity and focus this research project has a limited remit that has considered the interaction between Johnson's theology and practice in relation to healing, and Bethel Church. Johnson and Bethel Church are difficult to study as separate entities as they are connected by virtue of Johnson's leadership and shaping of the church, and its beliefs and practices. The healing

praxis of Bill Johnson cannot be examined without considering the environment in which this praxis is outworked and most closely impacted by it. As such it is impossible to explore the healing praxis of Bill Johnson without considering Bethel Church as well. However it is important to acknowledge that Bethel Church as a community has been directly and significantly influenced by a variety of other individuals and movements. Local influences on the healing praxis include Kris Vallotton, Danny Silk, Chris Gore, Chris Overstreet, and Chuck Parry. Influences from further afield would include John and Carol Arnott, Randy Clark, Heidi Baker and John Wimber. Both local and global voices will have inevitably shaped both Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. This thesis is limited to considering Johnson's influence on Bethel Church in relation to the formulation and outworking of healing praxis. In effect, this thesis considers the influences on Johnson, and in turn the way in which his healing praxis has influenced and shaped the Bethel Church community.

9.5 Recommendations for future research

As this is the first substantive research project with Johnson and Bethel Church as the subject, there remains vast potential in relation to future research. Nevertheless, this research project has identified particular areas that deserve attention. It would be beneficial for a full biography of Bill Johnson to be constructed. This would require his cooperation, and would be best undertaken by an insider of the Bethel Church community. A qualitative study of healing testimonies combined with a quantitative study of medical testing in relation to healing prayer in the context of Bethel Church would be an important contribution to the field. This would require Johnson to concede and allow medical testing of those who have received healing, as well as the scrutinising of healing testimonies. Although this is an unlikely prospect, it would indicate significant headway in relation to academic studies on Johnson and Bethel Church and would again be most successful if undertaken by an insider

to the community. In addition, a comparative study of the healing theologies of significant figures in the renewal movement would be an interesting contribution to research. Such a study might compare contemporary leaders including Randy Clark, Bill Johnson and Heidi Baker. Finally, as has already been proposed a theological construction of a theology of suffering would be an important addition to the body of research on Bill Johnson. Suffering is presently an implicit discourse in Johnson's popular theology; not only should it be made explicit, but a theology should be developed to balance the emphasis on healing.

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Appendix 2: Index of key terms/ concepts

Apostle:

A father and cultural transformer. Bill Johnson is identified as holding the office of apostle, but is more concerned with function than title.

*Apostles are called to be fathers, and not just teachers.*⁷⁶⁸

*The word apostle in the New Testament means 'sent one'. Apostle was originally a secular term used by both the Greeks and the Romans to refer to the leader of a special envoy. That leader had the job of establishing the culture of the empire he represented into the daily lives of the citizens the empire conquered. Leaders had discovered that the citizens of conquered lands went back to their previous way of life rather quickly without a transforming influence. It was extremely frustrating to see no change result in a conquered nation, which nullified the purpose of the conquest. For this reason, they came up with a strategy to transform the culture of a conquered city so that when the empire's leaders visited, it would feel the same as home... The position of apostles was created in response to this need. Jesus adopted the term to reveal His intentions. His apostles lead a special envoy of people who have the job of establishing the culture of the empire of heaven into the daily lives of the citizens they serve.*⁷⁶⁹

*The leader is an apostle, one sent to establish the culture of heaven on earth. Those who follow an apostle are those who seek to have heaven manifest in their lives, and to be sent out to release heaven wherever they go.*⁷⁷⁰

Breakthrough:

The idea that persistent prayer in relation to a particular condition, sickness or need could result in sudden and significant increase in success.

When we pursue healing as the responsibility of every believer, we realise breakthroughs as we seek to serve those around us. This creates a momentum in the Spirit and increases our

⁷⁶⁸ http://www.kvministries.com/sites/default/files/downloads/documents/lesson_-_apostleships_-_bssm2_2014-2015_-_kris.pdf

⁷⁶⁹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.117.

⁷⁷⁰ Vallotton, *Heavy Rain*, p.67.

*understanding of how God works in the miracle realm. This gives us greater confidence when we must deal with those closest to us who need a miracle.*⁷⁷¹

*Pray until there's a breakthrough. Then exercise the authority given to execute His will over the circumstances at hand.*⁷⁷²

Core value:

The things believed and perceived to be true by the Bethel Church community. The core values of the community are shaped by key figures within the community, including Bill Johnson.

*Therefore, the things we believe to be true determine the way in which we interpret life. These "things" are called "core values." Core values are the lens or eyes of our heart. It is important for us to realize the incongruence between what our core values presently are and what we really want them to be. Often, the things we say we believe and the things we actually believe are not the same. We must understand that it is not the truths that we believe in our head that are our core values, but rather the ones we believe in our heart. The things we perceive to be true determine the way we respond to the world around us and to God who lives within us.*⁷⁷³

The core values of the community are identified as follows:

*We are about revival... We are a community of believers who are passionate about the things of God: Relationship with God, Freedom through Salvation, Supernatural Ministry, Impact through Love and Power, A Glorious Bride.*⁷⁷⁴

*We have a passion for people, our city and our world. Our culture is characterized by worship, the presence of God, family, revival, miracles and healings, and honor. These core values have been shaped by our rich history and leadership of multiple generations.*⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.153.

⁷⁷² Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.66.

⁷⁷³ <http://www.ibethel.org/articles/2006/02/01/the-power-of-a-vision>

⁷⁷⁴ <http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 26.04.2015]

⁷⁷⁵ <http://bethelredding.com/about> [accessed 26.04.2015]

Church: This term can refer to the local church, i.e. Bethel Church, located in Redding, California. This term can also refer to the universal church, i.e. the global community of believers. Implicit in any reference to the church is an understanding of the church's (local and universal) assignment which is to bring heaven to earth.

*We are first and foremost a people of God's presence. The Church is the eternal dwelling place of God.*⁷⁷⁶

Encounter: References to encounters or 'power encounters' indicate the way in which an individual experiences a 'face to face' meeting with God. This concept is closely connected with the concept of the 'presence of God'.⁷⁷⁷ Encounters can be of great significance, i.e. shaping a person's individual life purpose, however Johnson encourages regularly 'face to face' meetings with God.

*We also have to recognize that full repentance and transformation can only take place through real encounters with God – through actual experience with His power and grace.*⁷⁷⁸

*But more important to me than the lack of education or mentoring in the supernatural was that I had never had what I will refer to as a power encounter with God. Almost everyone I had ever heard of who had a miracle ministry could take you back to the time when they experienced their special moment with God. It was in that encounter with God that the call of God was given them.*⁷⁷⁹

*In October 1995, I had an encounter with God that would mark me [Johnson] for life.*⁷⁸⁰

Impartation: The transference of gift or anointing through the laying on of hands, or other means including spoken words.

⁷⁷⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, p.165.

⁷⁷⁷ 'Face to face' is not a literal term, but a term used to reference Moses' experience in Exodus 33:11 – 'The Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend'.

⁷⁷⁸ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.72.

⁷⁷⁹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.38.

⁷⁸⁰ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.45 – The encounter referred to is Johnson's intense experiencing of power in during the night.

Pursue the men and women of God who live a miracle lifestyle and ask them to lay hands on you and pray. You can obtain a grace for miracles this way. This is one of the things that the apostle Paul taught (see 1 Timothy 4:14). This is not the only way to receive impartation, though. Sometimes we can receive it through the influence of their ministry and the heart of honor we cultivate for the Holy Spirit upon them and the gift they carry. And remember, gifts are free, but maturity is expensive.⁷⁸¹

Inner healing/ wholeness: Inner healing is the idea that emotional health is as important as physical health. The notion of ‘wholeness’ is premised on the anthropological position that each individual is tripartite, made up of spirit, soul and body. As such, healing is required for each part of the person. Healing to the Spirit is received through salvation and if needed deliverance ministry, healing to the soul is received through inner or emotional healing and healing to the body is received through physical healing. Inner healing is connected to the concept of Sozo.

God’s intended realm of health is more than being able to get healed it involves a realm of mental and emotional health that was seen clearly in the person of Jesus. He lived without regret, hatred, selfish ambition, greed, unforgiveness, anxiety, shame or guilt. He lived with the ability to bring a heavenly answer to every earthly problem. He spoke, changing the atmosphere and reality that surrounded the hearer. His miracles spoke of His nature and His intentions for the earth. He is still the Creator, carrying the perfect sense of purpose for every situation, knowing that heaven indeed must come to earth. He brokered another realm, another world into this one. He provided an example that went beyond avoiding sin. He revealed purpose and destiny. He revealed the unlimited resources available to anyone who would embrace this assignment. Jesus alone illustrated life in the black as His great purpose was to reveal the Father, the source of all these things.⁷⁸²

On earth as it is in heaven: This is Johnson’s interpretation of the church’s (local and universal) assignment.

The Lord’s Prayer is an apostolic prayer. On earth as it is in heaven. Make this world like that one. That does not mean you

⁷⁸¹ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.151.

⁷⁸² Johnson, *Essential Guide to Healing*, p.181-2.

have to be an apostle to pray it. It means that the purpose of the prayer is a clear expression of the apostolic mandate to transform the thinking and lifestyles of the nation so that they are the same as the governing nation – in this case, heaven. This becomes the mandate of the Church when it has a full expression of healthy leadership. It astonishes me that we can spend so much of our Christian life doing everything but working to transform society. The hunger for heaven must stop making us irresponsible with this moment God has given us in history. The more the Church realises who she is, the less she wants to be rescued. The Lord's return is beautiful and will be the ultimate culmination of events, but our assignment is not to go to heaven. It is to bring heaven to earth through prayer and obedience, by embracing the ministry of Jesus⁷⁸³.

Our co-mission comes from our sub-mission to His primary mission: 'on earth as it is in Heaven'.⁷⁸⁴

Presence of God:

It is believed that God is omnipresent but can be specifically present in particular places at particular times. As such God can be manifestly present in a tangible way. The concept of the 'presence of God' is connected with the concept of 'encounter'.

The quest for the face of God has two central dimensions –the quest for His presence and the quest for His favour.⁷⁸⁵

Some are bothered when we talk about God coming into a situation, His Spirit falling upon us, or the Holy Spirit moving in a meeting, etc. Often, as we get ready to minister to people, we will invite the Holy Spirit to come, in the John Wimber fashion. The question is, 'Why invite God to come when He is already here?' It's a good question. It makes no sense whatsoever to pray that way unless we understand that there are different measures and dimensions of God's Presence. When He is here, there is always more to come. It's important to hunger for and invite that increase. Isaiah had a perception of this reality, saying, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple' (Isa 6:1). The word filling implies that His robe filled the temple,

⁷⁸³ Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.117-8.

⁷⁸⁴ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, p.38.

⁷⁸⁵ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, p.18.

*but then continued to fill it. He came, but He kept coming.
There is always more!*

*This is at least a partial list of these measures of His Presence;
each one is an increase of the previous:*

- *God first inhabits everything and holds all things together (see Col 1:17). He is everywhere, the glue that holds His creation in place.*
- *A second dimension of God's Presence is His indwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of those who have been born again. He specifically comes to make us His tabernacle.*
- *A third dimension is seen when believers gather in His name. As He promised, He is 'there in their midst' (Matt 18:20). This is where the principle of exponential increase comes into play.*
- *A fourth measure or dimension occurs when God's people praise Him, for He says He 'inhabits the praises of His people' (see Ps 22:3). He is already in our midst but has chosen to manifest Himself upon us more powerfully in that atmosphere.*
- *A fifth measure is seen when the Temple of Solomon was dedicated: God came so profoundly that priests were incapacitated (see 1 Kings 8:10-11). No one could even stand, let alone play instruments or sin. They were completely undone at that measure of Presence.*

I mention these five levels only as principles, in an effort to give a snapshot of how He longs to increase His manifestation upon His people. The day of Pentecost and the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit may in fact illustrate all of these principles combined as an entire city came under the influence of God's manifest Presence.⁷⁸⁶

Revival:

Revival is understood as cultural transformation of a person, church, region, nation and the world, whereby heaven is established on earth in each of these spheres. Revival is not regarded as a one-time event but desired as a continuous, increasing experience.

⁷⁸⁶ Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, p.99.

In revival, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit brings an invasion of the presence of the King of Heaven, which displaces the prince of darkness. The result of this displacement is that people experience the life and power of the Kingdom. Bodies are healed, souls are delivered and saved, believers grow in unity, and ultimately, society and the earth are transformed. True revival not only calls people to pursue God, but also to pursue their purpose in history and to partner with Him in establishing His dominion over all things.⁷⁸⁷

True revival is an outpouring of the Spirit that brings the Kingdom until there is transformation unto reformation. The nature of the Kingdom is continual advancement. It follows, then, that revival is meant to be sustained through the generations, until 'the knowledge of the glory of God' covers the earth 'as the waters cover the sea' (Hab 2:14).⁷⁸⁸

Sozo:

Sozo is the Greek term interpreted as 'saved, healed and delivered'. Sozo ministry offers healing prayer for the whole person including inner/ emotional healing and where required deliverance ministry.

Sozo ministry is a unique inner healing and deliverance ministry aimed to get to the root of things hindering your personal connection with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With a healed connection, you can walk in the destiny to which you have been called.

A Sozo session is a time for the Sozo team to sit down with you and with the help of the Holy Spirit walk you through the process of freedom and wholeness. Sozo is not a counseling session but a time of interacting with Father, Son and Holy Spirit for wholeness and pursuing of your destiny.⁷⁸⁹

Testimony:

Testimonies are stories about people's experiences of the goodness of God. Johnson believes it is important to remember and share these stories to become familiar with God's nature and because they can act as prophecies towards other people's situations.

What I have discovered is that our ability to fulfil this calling and commission depends largely on one vital thing – remembering. Our capacity to remember what God has said

⁷⁸⁷ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.49.

⁷⁸⁸ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.49.

⁷⁸⁹ <http://bethelsozo.com/> [accessed 02.05.2015].

and done in our lives and throughout history – the testimony – is one of the primary things that determine our success or failure in sustaining a Kingdom lifestyle of power for miracles.⁷⁹⁰

When we do this with the testimony, there are two primary results. First, when we fill our hearts and minds with the record of what God has done through conversation and meditation, we sustain a constant awareness of the God who invades the impossible. This posture of awareness and expectation creates the hope, faith, courage, and hunger that we need in order to respond to the impossibilities around us.

But the second thing is that, by in effect prophesying over ourselves with the testimony, we release something in the unseen realm that actually draws us into real experiences where we see the impossibilities around us transformed by the God of the testimony.⁷⁹¹

Worship:

Worshipping God is understood to be the primary purpose of humanity. It is an important part of revival, that is establishing heaven on earth. Worship is understood as ministering to the Lord.

Worship is the primary call of mankind (sic). It is not an egotistical choice on God's part to give us that place in life. Love chooses the best. And considering that we always become like the One we worship, there is nothing better that God could desire for us.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹⁰ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.25-6.

⁷⁹¹ Johnson, *Release the Power of Jesus*, p.87.

⁷⁹² Clark & Johnson, *The Essential Guide to Healing*, p.112.