CHRISTIAN MISSION AND THE ENGLISH PUB

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Jeremy Paxman humorously states, "we all know God is an Englishman," in order to make the point that although religion is now considered largely irrelevant, the Christian faith once held a position of prominence in English society.[1] Unfortunately, in recent years, the Church has often been perceived as distant and unloving, culturally inappropriate and irresponsible, and generally outdated. This is largely due to the intertwined nature of the Church of England and the state, a primarily political association with little effect on the spiritual development and personal convictions of lay individuals. For this reason, the English have seemingly moved on from faith, entering into a post-Christian or post-religious era, while clinging to secular institutions and philosophies that claim to support the pluralization of society by pushing religious adherence out of the public and into the private spheres of life. In other words, faith is considered fine so long as it is kept to oneself. Kate Fox, an English social anthropologist, articulates this point well, saying, "our benign indifference [toward religious convictions] remains benign only so long as the religious, of any persuasion, stay in their place and refrain from discomforting the non-practising, spiritually neutral majority with embarrassing or tedious displays of religious zeal."[2] The fundamental assumption underlying this article is as follows: The Church's primary calling is to profess "the story of God's mission to redeem sinners who seek his salvation, the story of Jesus who came as a missionary, and the story of God's Spirit who works in the hearts of those who hear," in culturally relevant and

1.   Paxman, *The English*, 93.
2.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 490.

insightful ways, with discipleship as the ultimate goal of ministry.[3] The question for devout Christians in the English context then becomes *how do we disciple people to Christ in post-Christian England?* In order to address this question, I will first outline the current religious climate of post-Christian England, then discuss the significance of the English pub as the center of community life, and finally suggest that Christians contextualize methods of evangelism and take advantage of the relaxed nature of the pub environment in order to address the felt needs of the English people and reach them with the gospel.

Understanding the English Context

Secularization and Pluralization

In regard to the current religious situation in the greater context of Europe, it has been observed that "regular churchgoing is a middle-class activity across much of the continent,"[4] and that "women are consistently more religious than men."[5] Church attendance has seen a steady decline in Europe since the fifteenth century due to modernization, the "process of social and intellectual transformations . . . brought about by industrialization and the growing dominance of technology in all of life."[6] From this point forward, religious groups throughout Europe, particularly adherents of Christianity, began to experience a shift from places of prominence in the socio-political arena to that of silent observers or passive participants in society. Religious seats of influence have steadily been replaced by secular philosophies, claiming that equality and tolerance naturally result from the growing diversity of pluralistic European societies rather than from religious adherence; a pattern that this paper seeks to understand and address in regard to the English context specifically.

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3.   Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 17.
4.   Berger et al., *Religious America, Secular Europe?* 98.
5.   Berger et al., *Religious America, Secular Europe?* 99.
6.   Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity*, 42–43.

Now, it is true that "the Christian tradition has had an irreversible effect in determining the most basic categories of human existence (time and space) in this part of the world."[7] In England, although the majority of people "see themselves as a relatively unchurched, nationalistic, optimistic, satisfied, conservative, and moralistic people," the Church's foundational influence on this nation is evident in several ways.[8] A significant example of this is highlighted by Fox, who observes that although "religion as such is largely irrelevant to the lives of most English people nowadays . . . the rituals to which Church of England vicars irreverently refer as 'hatchings, matchings and dispatchings,' and other less momentous transitions, are still important."[9] Moments of transition and rites of passage generally continue to be carried out by religious rather than secular institutions. Significant Christian influence is also evident in architecture, the widespread observance of holidays, and political ties to the national government. However, it is also clear that religion is no longer the primary voice speaking into the values, beliefs, and worldviews accepted by a majority of the English people. Like that of many other European countries, the prominent voices of power and influence are now rooted in secular ideologies and institutions.

But is England *really better off* because religion has been moved from the public to the private spheres of life? Can a purely secular society exist, and does secularization necessarily result in equality? It is within the context of an increasingly secular and pluralistic England that this article will attempt to address these questions as we enter into our discussion regarding the current religious climate in England, how the Church of England has addressed or failed to address modern issues, and the obstacle that social dis-ease poses to the development of relationships and the establishment of close-knit communities.

In order to understand how England has been shaped by secular beliefs and values, it is important to begin by clarifying cer-

7.   Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 4.
8.   Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 20.
9.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 484.

tain definitions. The term *secular* refers to a "central modern category . . . [meant to] construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from 'religious.'"[10] *Secularization*, then, describes the historical shift away from religious institutions and concepts toward fundamental reliance on secular institutions;[11] and *secularisms* "refers more broadly to a whole range of modern secular worldviews and ideologies."[12] The interconnected nature of these three terms informs modern European societies and has inspired the current resistance toward the Christian faith in the English context.

Lesslie Newbigin, however, argues that secular nations have failed to produce the promised environment of unbiased scientific understanding, and that efforts to do so are in fact futile. He contends that "it is impossible to pretend that children in the state schools of Europe are not being taught to accept certain beliefs about human origins, human history, all shaped by certain assumptions," the primary difference being that these assumptions are now determined by secular values, when in the past they were shaped by the Church.[13] In this way, although secular societies may claim that secular values and beliefs are unbiased, the reality is that these societies have simply adapted methods of empirical science in place of religious convictions; they have traded one ideological approach, with its corresponding presuppositions and motivations, for another—albeit non-religious—ideology.[14]

While secular ideologies command society's public spheres, individuals are seemingly welcome to assume whatever religious convictions they prefer within the comfort of their own homes and communities. In this way, secular ideologies hold influence over public domains (i.e., politics, education, social, and cultural norms), while individual convictions, religious practices, and beliefs remain privy to the individual's preferences within the pri-

10. Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 54.
11. Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 54.
12. Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 55.
13. Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," 47.
14. Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," 47.

vate spheres (i.e., family life, church attendance, observance of the sacraments). Subsequently, individuals are only truly free to embrace faith publicly so long as their religious convictions remain in accordance with and act as an aid to the established "[secular] social order by inculcating the right principles, [without] becoming a threat to this order by launching a challenge against it."[15] By all accounts, this model of a secular society does not grant true freedom of religion at all, but confines religious ideologies to the private spheres of life under the guise of equality and tolerance, while publicly accepting and promoting secular ideologies that have limited religious voices of all kinds. In other words, religious equality in the English pluralistic society has become the equality of silence and privacy, rather than that of public practice or conviction.

In the recent past, Christianity was the primary—if not the only—acceptable religious option in England. However, Nigel Rooms observes that "with globalization has come continued immigration into this country and in encountering the 'other'—that is, anyone who looks or acts differently from ourselves—we are bound to ask questions about ourselves."[16] Charles Taylor concurs, saying, "belief in God, or in the transcendent in any form, is [now] contested; it is an option among many."[17] Accordingly, there is a mistaken assumption amongst the English people that because belief in God is seemingly optional, "it is therefore fragile," and that any true religion or God would be unrivaled, and therefore pluralism is evidence to the fact that no religion is true or at least none is more true than another.[18] However, I would argue that although the English may claim to be "the least religious people on Earth" and justify such a claim by affirming the mistaken conclusions above, in reality successful pluralization requires that individuals and communities develop the necessary religious vocabulary in order to engage in fruitful conversation with those that think and believe differently from themselves and

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15.   Taylor, "Western Secularity," 35.
16.   Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, 28.
17.   Taylor, "Western Secularity," 49.
18.   Taylor, "Western Secularity," 49.

from the majority.[19] Respectively, Grace Davie disagrees with the assertion that religion is inconsequential to the functioning of pluralistic societies, and argues that this assumption has presented a critical challenge to the responsible growth and evolution of English pluralistic society because of the suppression of religious conversations. She states,

> On the one hand the process of secularization continues; on the other, religion persists as a topic of discussion, indeed dispute, in the public sphere. The combination is hard to handle for an obvious reason: at precisely the moment when they are most needed, [the English] are losing the vocabulary, tools and concepts that they require in order to have a constructive conversation about faith. The result all too often is an ill-informed and ill-mannered debate about issues of extreme importance to the democratic future of this country.[20]

Furthermore, Davie argues that while secularity has led to "an inevitable decline in religious knowledge as well as in religious belief," the pluralization taking place in England necessitates the accommodation of "new populations who bring with them very different ways of being religious."[21] Essentially, societal rejection of religion in an attempt to promote diversity and unity actually presents a stumbling block to informed conversations that lead to the deeper understanding of people, places, and cultures that differ from each other. These conversations require a fundamental understanding of religious and social systems that are now being restricted or rejected in public spheres of life due to secularization. Subsequently, the masses are not adequately prepared to engage in relevant and meaningful conversations regarding the topics of spirituality, existentialism, and philosophy.

Ultimately, the elimination of religious vocabulary, education, and vocal presence in public spheres cripples attempts to connect both on personal and global scales because operating within a tolerant pluralistic society requires the development of high religious literacy. Therefore the assumption that pluralization should lead to secularization is false, and in fact quite the

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19. Fox, *Watching the English*, 484.
20. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, xiii.
21. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 12.

opposite is true: the more religiously-diverse a nation becomes, the more necessary it is for religious conversations to remain in and inform public spheres of life so as to equip citizens with the necessary skills to engage in intelligent conversations regarding how faith affects both the daily lives of individuals as well as the development of society as a whole.

The Church of England

It is impossible to appreciate and understand the current religious environment in England without a brief analysis of the Church of England. Although the historical significance of this institution cannot be overstated or ignored, it is imperative to acknowledge that the Church of England has struggled to invigorate the hearts of the English people throughout its history; the observation of low church attendance and decreased religious enthusiasm is not new to the twenty-first century. In the 1940s, George Orwell wrote: "the common people are without definite religious belief, and have been so for centuries. The [Church of England] never had a real hold of them," thus "churchgoing, for the English, has long been more of a social activity than a religious one."[22] It would seem that the primary motivation for participation in religious activities and regular church attendance has been historically tied to compulsory feelings of obligation and a desire to socially engage, rather than a reflection of passionate convictions and active faith.[23] For these reasons, the Church of England should be understood primarily as a political institution, with historical ties to colonial efforts and the expansion of the British Empire. As previously discussed, religious influence in the public sphere has diminished and been replaced by that of secular ideologies. However, as Fox describes it, it remains common practice for the majority "to put yourself down as '[Church of England]' . . . on a census or application form . . . [although this] does not imply any religious observance or beliefs whatsoever— not even a belief in the existence of God."[24] Interestingly, al-

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22.   As quoted in Fox, *Watching the English*, 458.
23.   Berger et al., *Religious America, Secular Europe?* 98.
24.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 485.

though the English "prefer their religion as they used to like their clothing and cars, understated and reasonably reliable, there when you need it," the Church of England's connection to national identity as a political institution and social club persists even amongst non-religious and anti-religious individuals.[25] Association with the Church of England is considered part of one's national identity, rather than a reflection of active faith and devotion to the Word of God. In this way, "the deep-seated links between religion and power . . . have endured for more than a millennium," leaving behind a permanent impact on the English psyche and culture.[26]

At this time, it is important to identify two distinct elements of religious involvement: that of external cumulative tradition, and that of the inner faith of individuals. Up to this point, our discussion regarding the Church of England has dealt primarily in terms of external cumulative tradition, which refers to "religious buildings, sacred scriptures, doctrines, moral codes, rituals, legal and social institutions"[27] However, the individual faith and beliefs of the English people requires a more in depth analysis of two significant concepts: believing without belonging and vicarious religion. The phrase *believing without belonging* refers to the fact that, "between half and two-thirds of British people assent to 'belief in God' in more general terms, and roughly similar proportions touch base with the institutional churches at some point in their lives, often at times of crisis," though they are not necessarily directly associated with a particular congregation.[28] These beliefs are linked more to religious practices that have cultural or social significance, rather than discipleship and active faith. During rites of passage and periods of transition, individuals within the religiously passive English majority may occasionally desire to "make contact with the institutions with which they [loosely] identify."[29] Accordingly, the concept of *vicarious religion*, then,

25. Paxman, *The English*, 97–98.
26. Berger et al., *Religious America, Secular Europe?* 99.
27. Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity*, 21.
28. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 5.
29. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 81.

refers to "the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but appear to approve of what the minority is doing."[30] Vicarious religion attempts to combat the issue of compulsory worship and obligatory religious participation by encouraging people to engage in a variety of religious activities and rituals, without committing to elements of institutionalized faith in which they have no interest. In this way, "churches and church leaders perform rituals on behalf of others; church leaders and churchgoers believe on behalf of others; church leaders and churchgoers embody moral codes on behalf of others," providing physical and spiritual spaces for passive believers and non-religious individuals to participate in elements of corporate faith apart from active commitment to the group.[31]

Significant Challenges to Consider
Although the Church should be encouraged by the fact that a majority of the English population "continue to believe in a personal God or some sort of spirit or life force," the passive attitude toward faith which is supported by the concepts of believing without belonging and vicarious religion present complex challenges to Christian evangelistic efforts in the English context that should be unpacked.[32] The first important challenge to consider is that "those who believe are more likely to practice, those who do not are more likely to lead consistently secular lives."[33] There is a significant connection between what someone does and what they believe that cannot be overlooked (cf. Jas 2:14–26; 1 Pet 1:13; 1 John 3:18). By encouraging vicarious religion, the Church of England has greatly jeopardized the practice of authentic Christian worship and obedience to God's Word. Unfortunately, the acceptance of spiritual inactivity and non-commitment through the concepts of believing without belonging and vicarious religion has led to the normalized expectation of salva-

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30. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 6.
31. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 81–82.
32. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 188.
33. Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 78.

tion and piety through nominal Christianity. The result has been catastrophic: though it has kept its place at the table, the Church of England has given up its voice, and subsequently that of other Christian voices, to speak out against passive faith and conformity to the world in the public spheres of life. David J. Bosch, however, reminds believers of the Church's true calling and purpose, saying,

> Evangelism that stops at calling people to accept Christ is incomplete and truncated. The church exists for the world, not the world for the church, as a reservoir from which the church draws. It is not simply to receive life that people are called to become Christians, but rather to *give* life.[34]

Herein lies the major ecclesiastical challenge facing churches in England: the English people have been so deprived of spiritual nourishment and motivation that the introduction of passionate faith is often seen as fundamentally extraneous and promptly rejected.

In light of this, the conformity of the Church of England and its silence in the face of increasing secularity has been irresponsible. Though it must be stated that "while there is nothing inherently wrong with trying to make religion more easily available, the 'experimental' alternatives adopted by the Church of England have no durability: their purpose is to be relevant only in a particular time."[35] This is not enough. The aim of the Christian faith must be to adapt and contextualize the gospel continuously, without compromising core tenets of belief or ignoring how cultures change over time. It should be noted that it is not my intention to shift all blame to the Church of England for the current challenges facing Christianity in this context. However, it cannot be avoided that the Church of England, which has historically held substantial power and influence over both social and political areas of life, made a series of choices that have contributed to the suppression of religious voices and repeatedly offered the English people "an unattractive religiosity without much true

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34.   Bosch, "Evangelism," 15 (italics in original).
35.   Paxman, *The English*, 105.

spirituality at its heart."[36] In order for future evangelistic and discipleship efforts to take root and cultivate movement, it is imperative that we address the issues surrounding and involving the Church of England's connection to the now secular socio-political public sphere of the English context.

The second major challenge of note is that of the problem of social dis-ease, which Fox describes as "a shorthanded term for all [the English's] chronic social inhibitions and handicaps."[37] Social dis-ease refers to the anxiety and uneasiness ingrained into every aspect of English life and manifests itself in various ways throughout all levels of society. It is the unavoidable reality which is reflected in this observation by Rooms: "we [i.e., the English] seem to be 'socially challenged' in social interaction, we are embarrassed, insular, awkward, perverse, oblique and fearful of intimacy."[38] Unsurprisingly, the issue of social dis-ease greatly limits the building of significant relationships, leading to the development of a very lonely people fearful of social interaction, the closeness it brings, and the establishment of safe spaces to engage in spiritual and existential questions. Generally speaking, the English "don't find it easy to initiate friendly conversation with strangers, or to develop closer relationships,"[39] and often "lack the spontaneous warmth that characterises other less inhibited cultures."[40]

There are two primary causes of the issue of social di-ease that concern us here. The first is that social dis-ease is not a reflection of personality or preference, but rather a subconscious conformity to cultural norms and expectations, especially in regard to the English social taboos against "'causing a scene,' 'making a fuss' or 'drawing attention to oneself' in public."[41] The second contributing factor that must be taken into account is the English form of courtesy: that of *negative politeness*, which "is concerned with other people's need not to be intruded or

36.   Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, 113.
37.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 548.
38.   Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, 44.
39.   Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 64.
40.   Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 51.
41.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 226.

imposed upon," as opposed to *positive politeness*, which is concerned with "inclusion and social approval."[42] Negative politeness, then, shapes the English cultural expectation of public behavior and taboos against outbursts, interruptions, and even engaging strangers unless absolutely necessary, and thus contributes to social inhibitions and anxieties. Now that we have discussed some of the primary factors that help to cause the issue of social dis-ease amongst the English, we turn to a discussion of how the English have established their own exceptions and solutions to this cultural norm, and thus how the Church should strategically enter into these spaces with the gospel.

How to Proceed

It is important to recognize that no single proposed solution will be sufficient to address the extent of the challenges to evangelization in post-Christian England. However, it is clear that if the Christian faith is going to penetrate the hearts of the English people and call them into authentic discipleship under the authority of Christ, several theological factors must be assessed.

The first is that of the importance of anthropological considerations in regard to mission strategy. The anthropological perspective requires that missionaries "learn the context of culture to the point that they can explain how the people of a particular culture or context understand the world, and how diverse aspects of their lives come together," at a particular time and place.[43] Craig Van Gelder asserts that "All ecclesiologies must be seen as functioning relative to their context . . . New contexts require new expressions for understanding the church."[44] There is no such thing as the *Church-independent-of-culture*. In light of this, it is important to recognize that England's secularized culture does not pose an unassailable threat to the gospel. Nigel Rooms offers encouragement in this regard with some practical advice for Christians who wish to engage the issue of contextualized ministry in England as follows:

42.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 233.
43.   Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, 13.
44.   As quoted in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 111.

> If we choose carefully, we can identify some of these universal English metaphors and aphorisms as starting points for the theological reflection that will enable us to place Englishness in dialogue with the gospel. We can create English "worlds" from them to be examined theologically.[45]

It is in these spaces that the Holy Spirit has called the Church to enter into; it is therefore the responsibility of people of faith to respond to that call by first acknowledging the role of culture, the issues present in society, and the avenues in place that already address felt needs, so that the gospel can step into places the Spirit has already prepared for evangelism and discipleship.

The second theological understanding to note is that the Church must take on a posture of humility and think creatively as it attempts to apply biblical principles of evangelism in contextualized ways. The challenge here is that the Church may be required to adapt unfamiliar forms and practices in order to judiciously present the truth of the gospel and cultivate discipleship in the face of post-Christian obstacles in England. In this way, it is imperative that "constant adaptation and reshaping along missional lines remains a fundamental part of what it means to be faithful."[46] Accordingly, Newbigin contends that "True contextualization happens when there is a community which lives faithfully by the gospel and in the same costly identification with people in their real situations as we see in the earthly ministry of Jesus."[47] In this way, Christians should partner together in the pursuit of implementing evangelistic methods and discipleship principles in flexible, reproducible, and contextualized ways so that Scripture is presented responsibly and lived out accordingly.

In an attempt to integrate and apply these theological convictions, keeping in mind the challenges to evangelistic efforts in the English context, the remainder of this article is devoted to a discussion of the English pub as the ideal location for the implementation of disciple making movements in post-Christian England.

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45.   Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, 66.
46.   Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 244.
47.   Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society,* 154.

The English Pub

The English pub is a fascinating context to study. Pubs serve a variety of functions that are integral to the cohesion of English society, the social development of the English people, and the facilitation of growth within the local community. The pub is a cultural frame, "a social setting that has its own subculture—its own beliefs, rules of behavior, material products, symbols, structures, and settings," in its own right.[48] This is significant to the overall health of the local community because, as Paul Hiebert brilliantly articulates:

> All human relationships require a large measure of shared understanding between people. They need a common language, whether verbal or nonverbal, a shared set of expectations of one another, and some consensus of beliefs for communication to take place. In other words, they must share to some extent in a common culture. The more they have in common, the greater the possibilities of interrelating.[49]

In many ways, the pub fulfills social needs and combats anxieties that have been created by the issue of social disease through the creation of this cultural frame.

In order to more fully understand the impact of English pubs and to appreciate the potential this context has to be the ideal setting for disciple making movements, this section will explore the essence of the English pub, address common practices within and characteristics of pubs, and discuss the various roles the publican fills because of his or her significance as a leader within the local community.

The Significance of English Pubs
The pub has evolved from and combined different elements of historical alehouses, inns, and taverns in order to create the modern "public house," or "pub" for short.[50] In regard to the cultural relevance and historical significance of pubs, Pete Brown states

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48.   Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 41.
49.   Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 51.
50.   Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature*, 1.

that "pubs have been the cornerstone of British social life for at least a thousand years. History books may be full of kings, queens, politics and wars, but the real history of Britain—the history of the vast majority of the population—happened in and around the pub."[51] In England, the local pub provides the ultimate "combination of security and freedom . . . the pub is the one place where we [i.e., the English] can socialise, show off and enjoy ourselves, without obligations and constraints, but in a safe, protected, home-like environment," [52] and offers regulars a "pleasant release from the daily grind."[53]

The pub provides a variety of services within its local community and is the ideal place "to lose the everyday, careworn self, and replace it with unthinking contentment."[54] The first service the pub provides is the removal of social barriers that saturate other aspects of English culture. The pub is considered to be "the greatest 'leveller,' the true 'classless society' where builders' labourers are to be found playing pool with professors, and market-stall vendors discuss the recession with their counterparts on the stock exchange."[55] People are assessed by their taste in beer, the type of pub they frequent, and how well they perform at local pool tournaments, rather than according to race, gender, or social class. An individual's "position in the 'mainstream' social hierarchy is irrelevant," once they walk through the pub doors; all people are welcome just as they are.[56]

Secondly, pubs provide diverse opportunities to overcome the obstacle of social dis-ease. In most public settings, the English do not easily "strike up a conversation with a complete stranger."[57] The pub, however, is the primary exception to this rule by creating a safe space that promotes "social sustainability, through encouraging face-to-face meetings, bringing together people from different backgrounds and providing opportunities

51.   Brown, *The Pub*, 6.
52.   Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 7.
53.   Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature*, 1.
54.   Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature*, 1.
55.   Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 22.
56.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 143.
57.   Fox, *Watching the English*, 130.

to make new acquaintances."[58] The pub environment is virtually free of social dis-ease, at least as much as is possible in English society, due to several significant factors. The first is that of pub games, activities, and rituals that act as "props and facilitators to help [the English] engage socially with [their] fellow humans."[59] These props diminish the awkwardness of meeting strangers and allow pub-goers to turn their attention toward the activity rather than the person with whom they are attempting to interact. A second significant factor is that the pub provides a safe space for the practice of social drinking rituals. In regard to the significance of social drinking rituals in English pubs, Kate Fox and Desmond Morris suggest that:

> The magic was twofold. First, it acted directly on the physiology of the drinkers, reducing their levels of anxiety. This helped to free them from the cares of the day, and from the social inhibitions which their fears and anxieties had created . . . Second, the alcohol provided them with an on-going diversion to occupy them during their friendly coming-together. They were not drinking to quench their thirst . . . They were instead drinking as a way of enhancing the social time spent together.[60]

The social cohesion that results from participating in pub games and activities, the magic of social drinking rituals, and the general pub atmosphere all contribute to the development and sustainability of the local community in a unique way, thus solidifying the English pub as "an integral part of normal social existence."[61] Now, it is important to recognize that while the pub does combat the issue of social dis-ease, the English do not abandon all social norms and values of courtesy and propriety when they enter the pub, but rather adjust cultural expectations within the pub environment in order to address the felt needs of the community:

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58. Roberts and Townshend, "Young Adults and the Decline of the Urban English Pub," 455–69.

59. Fox, *Watching the English*, 366.

60. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 4.

61. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 15.

> This is the "special alchemy" of the pub, whereby the disinhibiting effects of beer are balanced by the gentle restraint of etiquette, a sense of freedom is combined with a reassuring familiarity and every ritual practice is designed to promote friendly interaction.[62]

Pubs have their own rules of engagement and cultural norms; "every traditional pub game, from darts to dominoes, cards to cribbage, has its own etiquette, and its own 'coded' language."[63] The key, then, is to take on a posture of a humble learner, willing to invest the time to observe and participate in the practices and rituals that the English pub has established according to the *rules* set in place, in order to effectively build relationships within this safe yet open environment that serves as an exception to the issue of social dis-ease.

Pub Culture and Characteristics of the Pub
It is important to note that "there is no such thing as a typical British pub."[64] In fact, when assessing liquor licensing in the 1970s, a departmental committee led by Lord Erroll contended that "It is impossible, in our view, to generalise about the public house. Everyone has his own ideal image."[65] Subsequently, there is a pub available to meet virtually any need, music taste, time preference, or occasion that a customer desires. Each pub atmosphere is unique, "a function of the environment, the people, the time of day, and most of all, the person who orchestrates all these elements into a seamless, pubby whole. It can't be bottled and it can't be replicated."[66] Regardless of the type of pub one frequents, a variety of 'props' for social bonding will be available, though the kinds of games, music, activities, events, and so on will vary from location to location. Although the options are practically limitless, the overall goal of pub activities is essentially the same: to provide "toys and games that get [people] in-

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62. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 64.
63. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 52.
64. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 13.
65. Jennings, *The Local*, 212.
66. Brown, *The Pub*, 20.

volved with each other."[67] Although different types of pubs may attract customers with different tastes and motivations for going out, the underlying purpose of all pubs remains the same: to provide a safe context for social bonding. The extent to which social bonding occurs, with whom, and the activities that are provided and engaged in will all depend on what type of pub best suits the needs of individuals or groups that frequent that particular establishment.

Pub Regulars and the Publican
As one would imagine, the more time invested in a location, activity, or group of people, the more enhanced one's sense of belonging becomes. It is for this reason that "over 50% of pubgoers are 'regulars' in a particular local pub."[68] In order to establish oneself as a pub regular, Fox offers the following advice:

> Once you have found the right friendly local, demonstrate loyalty by visiting this pub as often as possible—at *least* 3 times in a week, preferably including at least one weekday evening and one Sunday lunchtime. Going on weekday evenings will show that you are a serious regular pubgoer, not just a casual Saturday-night-out visitor.[69]

Some benefits of becoming a pub regular include: consistent social bonding, contribution to the pub atmosphere, and the formation of deeper friendships through pub games, events, and activities.[70] In a sense, pub regulars become part of the pub scenery, shouldering some of the responsibility of the pub's success as participants on pub teams, as well as contributing to the "best source of information and advice on local matters."[71] Although pub regulars may rarely meet outside of the pub or pub-related activities, "The publican, bar staff and regulars in your local are people who take a genuine interest in you, your activities and your concerns," and it is not uncommon for long-lasting friend-

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67. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 64.
68. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 25.
69. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 71.
70. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 72.
71. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 73.

ships to form as a result.[72] It is unsurprising, then, that "people who have a local pub in which they are a regular are happier, have wider social networks, and even drink more responsibly," than those disconnected from a close-knit community of this kind.[73]

Likewise, the publican is extremely important to the success and character of the pub itself, taking on a variety of roles within the local community. Fox and Morris contend that a successful publican must be "a psychologist, an entertainer, a social worker, a surrogate parent, a police officer, a judge, a lawyer, a fund-raiser and a local news service—[on top of] trying to run a profitable business!"[74] Significant to our discussion of evangelistic efforts in post-Christian England, is the observation that due to the processes of secularization and pluralization, and the subsequent shift of religious voices from the public to the private spheres of life, "the publican has, in many communities, taken over the role and status of the parish priest."[75] It is the pub, not the local churches, in which a majority of the English seek out community, life coaching, counseling, and friendship. Subsequently, it is the publican, not the local priest, who has become the primary confidant within the local community, and is highly respected and trusted by pub-goers.

Disciple Making Movements in the Pub Context

In an attempt to present a potential solution, with consideration to the current religious climate, significant cultural challenges, and an understanding of the pub as an environment designed to combat the issue of social dis-ease, this section is devoted to re-defining *Church*, presenting an argument for the implementation of disciple making movements along with the affirmation of several missiological understandings, and finally a discussion re-

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72. Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 73.
73. Brown, *The Pub*, 17.
74. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 42.
75. Fox, *Pubwatching with Desmond Morris*, 41.

garding direct applications that can be made within the pub setting in post-Christian England.

Redefining Church
In order to affirm the Christian belief that "the Bible speaks to all people and all cultures and that Jesus Christ is the only faithful example of divine love in interpersonal relationships and communication," intentional actions must be taken to implement incarnational ministry efforts in the English context.[76] *Incarnational ministry* refers to Christian ministry that mimics the life of Jesus Christ, with special regard to dwelling amongst the people of the world and walking alongside them throughout their spiritual journeys. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers make the following connection between Jesus' life and ministry and the call to Christian mission today:

> The first significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus came as a helpless infant. In Luke 2:7, we read that he was born as Mary's child, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and placed in a manger. It is noteworthy that God did not come as a fully developed adult, he did not come as an expert, and he did not come as a ruler or even as part of a ruling family or a dominant culture. He was an infant, born into a humble family in a conquered and subjugated land . . . The second significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus was a learner . . . It is because of cultural blindness that we must [also] begin as learn-ers [of] culture and adopt many of the priorities and values of the people we wish to serve. We must begin as a child and grow in their midst. We must be learners and let them teach us before we can hope to teach them and introduce them to the master Teacher.[77]

As Christians take on the posture of humble servants, they must die to themselves and their own desires, thus shedding personal agendas so that the Holy Spirit will guide and develop the ministry. In this way, "The message, the messenger, and the communication of the message should be seen as a whole, based upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[78] Finally, New-

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76. Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 2.
77. Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 4, 10.
78. Gruder, "Incarnation and the Church's Evangelistic Mission," 176.

bigin suggests that the presence of Kingdom realities will be made known to non-believers and seekers alike primarily through three elements of contextualized mission: "by a certain kind of shared life, by actions, and by words that interpret actions;" this, then, is the goal of incarnational ministry.[79]

For the purposes of this article, it is also crucial to stress the necessity of leaving imperial concepts of 'Church' behind in order to separate from the notions of colonialism and political power. These connections have been rightly condemned as manipulative and coercive throughout England's history. However, this need not discourage contextualized biblical evangelistic efforts. Ultimately, "[genuine] evangelism is not the effort of Christians to increase the size and importance of the church. It is the sharing of the good news that God reigns," which can most certainly be done outside of traditional methods implemented in England in the past.[80] 'Church,' in the sense that I am advocating the word may be used in my proposal regarding disciple making movements in English pubs, refers to a gathering of believers and seekers alike who are striving to "follow their master [i.e., Jesus Christ of Nazareth], able to do so because they have been instructed in his way of life, both his aim and his practice of embodying that aim," and who "with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, [and] are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18, [NIV]).[81]

Disciple Making Movements
For the purposes of this paper, the phrase 'disciple making movements' refers to "*a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment,*" and should be understood as essentially interchangeable with "church planting movements."[82] The assumption here is that the disciples meeting together form a

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79. Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," 50.
80. Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," 52.
81. Brueggemann, "Evangelism and Discipleship," 230.
82. Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 7 (italics in original).

'church' in accordance with the definition proposed in the previous section of this paper. An *indigenous church* "is primarily composed of and led by local believers," who have submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their efforts to implement biblical principles in culturally responsible and reproducible ways.[83] The goal of disciple making movements, then, is to establish "*multiplying kingdom communities of believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to fulfilling biblical purposes under local spiritual leaders.*"[84] These movements have grown in popularity over the past several decades because of the potential for rapid multiplication through "a staple of Bible reading, storytelling, personal accountability, and prayer."[85] Disciple making movements are flexible so as to meet the needs of the gathered community, are instigated and led by lay people, and emphasize the discipline of obedience to the Word of God in order to put faith into action.

Several determining factors of disciple making movements are relevant to our discussion. The first is that of multiplication DNA and the implementation of reproducible methods of evangelism from the beginning of the ministry. Craig Ott and Gene Wilson elaborate on this in their discussion regarding the essential elements of movement ministry:

> Thus, evangelism must be done in a way that new believers can easily imitate, and those new believers must be taught to become the next evangelists. Similarly, as the first believers are discipled, they should be discipled in ways that they can in turn use to disciple others. As the first [groups] are formed, they should be led in such a way that new [group] leaders can be apprenticed to take over the leadership and then train others to do the same (2 Tim. 2:2).[86]

The multiplication of discipleship movements depends on the application of reproducible methods and practices that are contextualized and integrated into the foundation of the work. From the very beginning of a movement, those gathered should be focused

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83. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 16.
84. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 209 (italics in original).
85. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 105.
86. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 80.

on training new leaders, strategizing to meet the needs of the community, and establishing new groups.

The second significant aspect of disciple making movements is that initiators of movements must begin mentoring and training potential leaders to evangelize others in contextualized and reproducible methods early on in the ministry effort. The role of the mentor is to bring new believers and seekers alongside them, encouraging full participation in the ministry, and teaching them the skills to identify people of peace (cf. Luke 10:6) and disciple others in obedience to the Word of God. Ideal multiplication is achieved "when local believers themselves are able to train the next generation of leaders," enabling the movement to be rooted in indigenous efforts and freeing mentors and initiators to move on and begin new groups.[87] The key emphasis here is on the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, whether missionary or seeker, young or old, male or female.

The third major element of disciple making movements is that of the "*vitality* of prayer in the missionary's personal life that leads to its imitation in the life of the new church and its leaders."[88] Prayer cultivates a posture of humility and dependence on God; the recognition that life transformation and salvation can come only from his direct involvement. Prayer should saturate all other spiritual disciplines as well as the entire mentor-disciple relationship. A major goal of disciple making movements is to train in character traits, such as that of genuine dependence on God, humility and teachability, embodying the fruit of the Spirit, emphasizing people, flexibility and empathy, open communication, and others, which is done through prayerful reliance on the Spirit, along with the "study, memorization, and meditation on God's word."[89] Another way to talk about this is in terms of *spiritual formation*, which Ranjit DeSilva defines as "the development of the inner life, so that a person experiences Christ as the source of life, reflects more Christ-like characteristics, and

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87.   Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 83.

88.   Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 33.

89.   Moreau et al., *Introducing World Missions*, 178.

increasingly knows the power and presence of Christ in ministry."[90]

Finally, the fourth defining factor of disciple making movements is the emphasis on obedience to the Word of God. Within the context of the growing faith community, disciples and mentors come together not only to discuss spiritual questions and profess general beliefs in God, but to directly apply Scripture to their lives. The application of biblical principles is what gives disciple making movements their shape; active belief in practice sets the movement apart from the passive faith and nominal Christianity that has become the norm in post-Christian England. Furthermore, disciple making movements argue that Christians are not identified by knowledge or name alone, but by how they live their lives and put their faith into action.[91]

The principles of disciple making movements provide spaces for seekers and believers to engage in spiritual discussions through non-traditional means, without the ecclesial baggage associated with political ties to institutionalized Christianity, while combating the concepts of believing without belonging and vicarious religion through the lived realities of intentional obedience and active discipleship.

Redeeming the Pub: Bringing Jesus into Lost Places
D. A. Carson wisely states that "Christian love can be understood, and best practiced, only when it is seen to be a reflection of God's love in its varied dimensions."[92] This kind of love requires that Christians workers "become all things to the people we serve (1 Cor. 9:19–23)."[93] In the English context, this requires an understanding of how the processes of secularization and pluralization have affected views toward public displays of religion, how the Church of England has supported the concepts of believing without belonging and vicarious religion, and the underlying cultural issue of social dis-ease that limits intimacy in

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90. As quoted in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 229.
91. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 351.
92. Carson, "Love," 649.
93. Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 65.

almost every aspect of society. Imitating the Apostle Paul's missional love also requires that Christians are aware of how the English have already attempted to address these challenges in their society.

The local pub provides an outlet for stress and anxiety, props to initiate social bonding, and a safe space that combines the niceties and security of the home with the excitement of venturing into the unknown and daring to try something new. Regarding the centrality of the pub in many communities, Paul Jennings comments that "as a social institution the pub [is] more important than church, cinema, dance hall and political organisation put together," and is often the most frequented place outside of one's work and home. [94] The pub has filled the role of community center that was once occupied by the local parish; the publican resembles "the tribe, the high priest, the leader," and accepts the accompanying responsibilities as such. [95] In other words, the pub provides a place of security where people are ready and willing to engage. The reality is this: the pub is where the people are. Not only are they physically present, but also socially and emotionally present in a way that does not occur naturally in many other aspects of life due to the issue of social disease. By entering a pub, an individual opens themselves up to the possibility of friendships with strangers, the introduction of new ideas, and venturing outside of their comfort zone. In this way, the pub is the perfect place for Christians to meet new potential seekers, strike up conversations with strangers, and participate in intimacy-building activities that release stress and eliminate awkwardness.

It is important to remember that the pub, although it provides a variety of helpful opportunities to overcome major challenges facing English society, is insufficient to address the spiritual and existential concerns of the community apart from the Church's involvement. The work of the Holy Spirit is that of "bringing spiritually dead human beings to new life."[96] The social cohesion

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94.   Jennings, *The Local*, 211.
95.   Fox, *Passport to the Pub*, 30.
96.   Ott and Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 241.

crafted by pubs "bringing together people from different backgrounds and providing opportunities to make new acquaintances," cannot grant eternal life.[97] Salvation is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christians should take advantage of the pub environment as centers of community out of which disciple making movements can naturally multiply.

This, then, is the calling for the community of faith: "it has to live within a culture and cannot really exist apart from culture, but by its very presence in that culture it has a transforming effect."[98] The English will be spurred to active faith even in the face of post-Christian challenges through the intentional efforts of obedient disciples of Christ to come alongside them, to meet people where they are already gathered, in a place where they have come to willingly introduce themselves to new opportunities, friendships, and ideas.

Concluding Thoughts

The intent of this article is not to oversimplify how the Church should address the complex issues of post-Christian England or the cultural challenge of social dis-ease. Rather, it is to provide insight into how Christians should begin to engage these issues, offering one potential solution to be used as a tool within God's larger mission. I would like to suggest that ultimately the purpose of the Church is "to draw people to Christ and make them like Christ."[99] The Apostle Paul warns the Church against submitting to the expectations of the world in his letter to the Romans, saying, "do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:2, [NIV]). Furthermore, I believe that as time goes on God will reveal which methods of evangelism and discipleship will be the most effective in the pluralistic and

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97. Roberts and Townshend, "Young Adults and the Decline of the Urban English Pub," 458.

98. Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, 8.

99. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 102.

socially dis-eased English context, and that this process will require Christians to be flexible, patient, and in-tune with the Holy Spirit. However, throughout the course of my research it has become clear that the traditional methods that have been implemented and the promotion of concepts such as believing without belonging and vicarious religion have proven themselves to be insufficient, if not damaging. Taylor states that "the process of disenchantment, which involved a change in us, can be seen as the loss of a certain sensibility, which is really an impoverishment (as opposed to the simple shedding of irrational feelings)."[100] Passionate Christian conviction and worship, obedience to the Word of God, and faithful discipleship under the authority of Christ all enrich human life in ways that secular ideologies simply cannot. For these reasons, the time has come for Christians to begin thinking creatively, seeking to understand the needs of the people, and to step outside of the comfort zones of religious tradition or noncommitment.

The pub context provides a potential venue, the pub environment supplies potential outreach opportunities without certain limitations that are evident throughout other aspects of society, and the people who frequent pubs are often more open minded and willing to engage in conversations and relationships that might otherwise evade them. Disciple making movements are the ideal means by which to evangelize and train spiritual seekers because of the emphasis on direct application of biblical principles, the spiritual intimacy of small groups, and the prioritization of the development of local leaders and the multiplication of ministry efforts. This method is flexible and can be adapted to fit the needs and environment of any kind of pub, while maintaining its overall purpose of developing Kingdom communities.

Ultimately, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the Son who has then commissioned his people to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teachings them to obey" (Matt 28:19–20, [NIV]). Because of this fact, Christians can engage their communities in informed ways with confidence,

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100.   Taylor, "Western Secularity," 39.

knowing that the Spirit of God is moving within the harvest (cf. Matt 9:35–38).

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