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**The Incorporation of an Individual
into the Liturgical Action
of the Church of England**

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M.A.Thesis submitted by Rev'd Deborah Dewes

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1995



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Abstract

The question central to this thesis is: how the 'incomer' experiences the liturgy of the Church of England. The discussion focuses mainly on the occasional offices of baptisms, weddings and funerals, and their impact upon the mission of the church.

Part One examines some of the dynamics which operate within communities, and within the church community in particular. Determinative for the incomer's perception is the church's self-understanding as presented through the liturgy, whether it is an open or closed community, and what conception of God it offers. Of particular importance is the way in which ritual, symbol, language and story help to create community, as also more explicit concepts such as the Trinity and the body of Christ.

Part Two then turns to a more detailed consideration of the impact of the occasional offices upon the incomer. Rites of passages are discussed. The chapter about weddings includes an examination of the service in the Alternative Service Book 1980, and a discussion of co-habitation and the re-marriage of divorcees. In the chapter about funerals there is discussion about the pastoral care of the liturgy and ritual, about cremation and the lack of appropriate imagery in present liturgy, about life-centred funerals (sacred or secular) and about the assumed faith status of the dead. In the chapter about baptism the tensions between baptism as a rite of passage and/or initiation are explored, catechesis as part of the baptismal rite is discussed, and changes are suggested to reclaim baptism as the rite of initiation by a process of welcome, education and nurture.

Part Three examines some of the less verbal messages in the liturgy and the missiological implications of the bridge or barrier which weekly worship constitutes to the incomer. Attention is paid to care of the individual through worship, in particular through using shalom as a model for personal and corporate wholeness. There is a discussion of the elements of worship in functional and phenomenological terms. In ch 7 elements of worship in a Sunday service and their effects on the incomer are examined through the focus of story. The use of the bible and lectionary, prayers, and the role of music in services is discussed. There is a brief examination of participation in and mingling of stories, particularly related to the catechumenate.

My conclusions are as follows:

- 1) It is time to enrich the liturgy.
- 2) There is a need for greater participation and inclusion in liturgy.
- 3) It is time to allow for greater honesty in liturgy.
- 4) The church needs to take mission seriously in its liturgy.

The mission of the church in worship should be consistent with the mission of the church in proclamation, social action and pastoral care. If worship is not shaped and informed by the perceptions of modern thinking as well as historical accuracy it will become irrelevant.



CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	1
Fields of Reference	2
Part One	4
Part Two	5
Part Three	5
<u>Chapter One - A View of the Church</u>	
1.1 The Community of Faith	7
1.2 'The Form of a Servant'	11
1.3 The Body of Christ	13
1.4 The Boundaries of Community	16
1.5 St Utopia and the Trinity	18
<u>Chapter Two - The Community of Faith</u>	
2.1 Invisible Threads	22
2.2 Ritual, symbol and language	25
2.3 Story and the Formation of Community	29
2.4 Community, distance and the Mystery of God	33
<u>Introduction to Part Two</u>	
Rites of Passage	37
<u>Chapter Three - 'To have and to hold'</u>	
3.1 The Wedding Ceremony	42
3.2 From Cohabitation to Marriage	46
3.3 'Till death us do part'?	49
3.4 An Honourable Estate	54
<u>Chapter Four - 'The Snares of Death'</u>	
4.1 The Sting of death	57
4.2 'Ashes to ashes'	64
4.3 Sacred or Secular?	67
4.4 'Sure and Certain Hope...'	70
<u>Chapter Five - Initiation</u>	
5.1 Rite of Passage?	73
5.2 The Catechumenate	83
5.3 Baptism and Thanksgiving Towards 2000	86
<u>Introduction to Part Three</u>	90
<u>Chapter Six - Worship, Mission and Pastoral Care</u>	
6.1 'A Significant By-product'	91
6.2 Making Shalom	95
<u>Chapter Seven - Sunday Worship</u>	
7.1 Story and Sacrament	101
7.2 Use of the Bible	104
7.3 Words and Music	108
7.4 Story and Identity	112
<u>Conclusion</u>	
Changing the Liturgy	117
<u>Endnotes</u>	122
<u>Bibliography</u>	129

Introduction

At the centre of the christian life of faith are the two great commandments, to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself⁽¹⁾. Much thought has been given throughout the ages as to what the two great commandments might mean and how they might look if they were the basis for all life. In an age when 'back to basics' is the cry of many, this thesis is an attempt to address what is basic in all christian life and embedded in the heart of the two great commandments: in this work the emphasis will be focussed on the church's worship and the church's mission. This is not to look back but to find a way forward on firm foundations for the future. It seems important that these questions should not simply be abstract but should involve some real situations which impinge on real people. With that in mind the discussion will be based on the Church of England.

For most people in the pews of the Church of England most of the time, worship and mission belong in very separate compartments: worship is what 'we' do on a Sunday in our liturgy, and mission is what 'they' do when they can ('they' always means someone else, whether agencies or other churches of other traditions). This is a view which defines worship only as church services and mission only as 'more people coming to church'. This is a problem of perception which will take time, energy and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to solve. The 'view in the pew' is, however, somewhat different from the view from behind a dog-collar. Much of the contact the clergy have with those who are as yet not part of the worshipping community is through the 'occasional offices', baptisms, weddings and funerals. In these services people come in to church for a specific reason requiring specific celebration, thanksgiving, blessing or care. In this thesis these people who come in to church will be referred to as 'incomers'. This is intended to be a value-free term which does not judge the reasons why someone wants to come in to church, nor what their state of faith might be, but simply indicates the coming in of a person who does not regularly attend church.

Central to this work is the question of how an incomer experiences and is drawn into the liturgies of the Church of England. Because of the emphasis on mission and the incomer, the liturgy of the eucharist will not be discussed in any detail. The eucharist is primarily a service intended for those who are part of the church. The whole movement of the service is



towards receiving bread and wine which is perceived (deliberately so) to be a privilege of the committed. The proclamation of the Lord's death 'until he comes' is undoubtedly a missiological theme which could be explored. It is, however, beyond the scope of this work.

Fields of Reference

Both worship and mission are complicated to define, so rather than attempt neat definitions there follow some fields of reference within which the argument of the thesis will unfold.

a) Worship and Liturgy.

Worship is a part of christian existence which is at the heart of loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. Worship is not confined to praise and thanksgiving, to prayer and liturgical acts, but is found at the heart of the christian life as the life of a christian becomes a life lived in worship of God. This is, then, the broadest field of reference within which all else has its context. As this thesis is primarily concerned with incorporating an individual into the liturgical action of the Church of England, this will be the focus of the discussion about worship, but it must not be imagined that liturgical action is all that worship is. When St Paul says 'Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship'⁽²⁾, he is not only referring to liturgical worship. The essence of liturgical worship is the essence of worship itself 'We love God because he first loved us'⁽³⁾, and although particularly the discussion of the occasional offices will often focus on the functions of such liturgy, the premise and promise of any service is that it is a service of worship before, after and in all else. It is also important to remember that a service of worship is best understood as a response to the gift of God's love. Liturgy is often the focus through which worship in the christian life is expressed, it focusses the development of loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. But it is also often the only place where the ongoing worship of the heart can find the words, culture and environment which give shape and meaning to worship as a whole. In liturgy the worship of one is joined with the worship of another, with the body of Christ, with the communion of saints and with angels and archangels, and this gives a meaning

and significance which is 'greater than the sum of its parts'⁽⁴⁾

The roots of the word 'liturgy' are the Greek *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). Liturgy could therefore be taken to mean 'the people at work' or 'the work of the people'⁽⁵⁾. This 'work' is the formalised, ritual loving of God and this love is part of the realisation of the kingdom of God. 'Christianity does not exist for its own sake; it exists for the sake of the coming kingdom'⁽⁶⁾. Another part of the 'work' of the coming kingdom commanded by Jesus is the love of the neighbour, in this context, the work of mission.

b) Mission

The term 'mission' has been one of the most problematic words the church uses. Often the idea of mission is greeted with suspicion or misunderstanding ('Mission is essentially an aggressive activity' is one such misunderstanding⁽⁷⁾); or perhaps a pre-conceived package full of pictures of mud huts and tweeded Victorian ladies. Mission obviously feels threatening to people; it implies change and contains risk. It has not always been so.

Until the sixteenth century the term 'mission' was used only to refer to the doctrine of the Trinity, the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son⁽⁸⁾. It was not until a conference in 1952 that Barth conceived the idea that mission was part of the nature of God and was therefore not concerned primarily with doctrines of the church or salvation but with the Trinity. The classical doctrine of missio Dei was seen to extend to the sending of the church into the world, and the idea of mission was to participate in God who sends. Mission, therefore, was not so much an activity of the church but an attribute of God.

There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.⁽⁹⁾

The commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself' is often fulfilled in creating a loving environment within the church which may or may not be flexible enough to welcome others. The love of neighbour is also often fulfilled in service in the community, though this need not be accompanied by any overt proclamation. Mission is often seen as an optional activity for those who are interested, or is seen only in terms of evangelism, which is important but is a narrowing of the concept of participating in the missio Dei. It often seems that there are

more problems associated with mission than solutions; sometimes life just will not conform to expectations and hopes. But there is another side to it which must be held with all else: '...the essence of mission and evangelism is in the intrinsic worth, beauty and love of God, and the joy of knowing and trusting him'⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Trinity is at the heart of much of the thinking in this thesis, particularly concerning the nature of the church and the missio Dei, and the thesis itself falls into three parts.

Part One

'It is not good that man should be alone' ⁽¹¹⁾. From the beginning it can be seen that human beings are created to be social, to form societies and relationships, to live in communities. Part of the essence of being human is to be in community with others. There are many different aspects of our human existence which bind us to others, such as family, shared interest, or work. But it is easy for these bonds to become traps for those within, and bars for those without. The greater the number of elements in our community life which hold us together, the more difficult it is to welcome those who are not part of our community. This creates a dilemma: the more the church is united the less it may be open to the world.

The missiological significance of the liturgy is at the centre of the discussion of this thesis. The meeting of liturgy and mission cannot be conceived in a vacuum. In Part One the theology of the church and the creation of the community are to be explored with particular reference to Trinitarian theology: 'The world and all in it takes its creation and recreation from the Trinitarian relatedness of Father, Son and Spirit'⁽¹²⁾. This exploration is vital for it creates the possibility for the discussion of liturgies in a context. The theology of the church and the creation of the community are theoretical discussions. It must be said from the outset, however, that the work in Part One cannot be seen as solely theoretical, but also comes from observation of the Church of England, particularly in the diocese of Durham. This observation has led to a picture of a church which is struggling to find a role in a society which is more and more separate from it. Some understanding of the framework of church and community is essential in order to be able to find a way forward for the church's mission and liturgy in the

future.

Part Two

In part two baptisms, weddings and funerals are examined; the 'hatch, match and dispatch' of the church's life. All three of these services are also seen as rites of passage where there can be a development from feeling to meaning. In anthropological terms these rites of passage are part of what creates and maintains the fabric of society. In part one elements of belonging will be explored, so in part two we see liturgy, and particularly rites of passage, are a way in which belonging is fostered.

The more widely and actively people participate in a ritual, the more they experience it as their own, as part of their identity, and the more connected they tend to feel with the other participants.⁽¹³⁾

This belonging happens in the events themselves, families and friends 'pull together' in major life events and people come to the church not so much to manage the events (except possibly in the case of funerals), but to create opportunity and regulate some of the social, psychological and familial elements of the event in a ritual way⁽¹⁴⁾.

But these liturgies, at their best, are not simply concerned with belonging or ritual but are still and always services of worship. The liturgy does draw people together in a particular way enabling them to find a place in their network of relationships, but it also turns their attention away from one another towards God, the Triune God who reaches out out to them in love.

Part Three

In the final part of the thesis some elements of the culture of the church are examined: the messages the church gives not just in words but by implication and subtle signalling of all sorts. The question at the heart of this whole work is how the church is to encourage the belonging of its regular, committed members (with the signs, signals and language which develop in such a group as a part of their belonging) without discouraging those who may feel some sense of belonging to the institution but have as yet to find their way into the culture. Part three is an attempt to look at issues of identity, community and proclamation, the encouragement of the faithful and the encouragement of faith.

Missiologists and liturgists do not seem to have much contact. Certainly the literature seems to fall into one subject or the other. Some work about ritual and pastoral care can be seen to be part of mission, but as far as can be ascertained, the historical study of liturgy had more effect on the compilation and writing of The Alternative Service Book 1980 than did the missiological significance of liturgy. There is an important relationship between them: both are centred in love.

Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.⁽¹⁵⁾

There is mission because God loves people, there is worship because God loves people and they respond. In the Trinity is found the sending love of God and the saving love of God, and both worship and mission are a response to that love and part of that love. As Christians continue to live out the two great commandments, the kingdom of God in the now and not-yet continues to be incarnated and the love of God known, shown and shared.

CHAPTER ONE

A View of the Church

1.1 The Community of Faith

The understanding of the doctrine of the church is at the centre of the understanding of the incomer and the liturgy. Without an understanding of the church, or at least an idea of how the church sees itself there is no real understanding of the missiological significance of the liturgy. The doctrine of the church has been interpreted by many theologians; systematic ecclesiology seems to be the only way to understand identity, and identity, therefore, is the foundation on which all mission and liturgy are built. Without a reasoned ecclesiology the church becomes little more than a means of meeting others with similar ideology, a club, a leisure activity, therapy, and all notions of truth and redemption in community become lost in the desire to deal successfully with the exigencies of life. As human beings are made in the image of God, the identity of the christian community is surely best expressed in God. God is Trinity, three persons in endless and seamless unity; how this relates to church identity is the theme of this chapter.

By its very nature the church is a corporate body, a group of people together; it is impossible to be 'a church' alone. At the heart of some of the difficulties experienced in the corporate life of the church is a legacy of thought from the period of the Enlightenment which lays great stress on the individual self. The Cartesian emphasis on the lone individual exploring deep into the self to achieve rational explanation of self and the empirical world, has led to an epistemology and view of rationality which has damaged relatedness between people. In Kantian thought the self becomes not just another entity in the world, but, in a sense, the creator of the world: 'the reflecting self does not just know itself, but in knowing itself knows all selves, and the structure of any and every possible self'⁽¹⁾. Such a focus on the ego vitiates the New Testament conception of the people of God as an interdependent body. It also undermines all ways of 'knowing' the truth except in relation to certain empirical and so-called scientific criteria:

In a universe of private opinions all belief is relative, and the word itself has come to connote something essentially tentative or fallible. In earlier centuries belief was contrasted with unbelief; today it is contrasted with knowledge.⁽²⁾

The problem is not only epistemological. The Cartesian notion of 'I' as the only reality has been questioned in philosophical terms this century by such writers as Wittgenstein. The Wittgenstenian thesis in his Philosophical Investigations is that the notion of private language (which can be seen as a logical conclusion of Cartesian solipsism) is a philosophical nonsense, and that language can only be created in and by community. Language in this sense can be seen to mean more than words; it involves also ritual, movement, symbol and culture. These are some of the strands which hold any society, and the church society together.

The human sciences have much to say about life in the world, and even about life in the church, but in the view of most theologians the human sciences can only explain part of how community life in the church is made and maintained; the rest is their domain and concerns matters of truth and belief.⁽³⁾

An area of confusion in the definition of the church is the multiplicity and confusion of ideas as to how the relationship with the world ought to be managed and maintained. There are many models of understanding. Some see the church in opposition to the world; some see the church in cooperation; some fall into almost gnostic dualism concerning the sanctity of the church and the depravity of all outside it, whereas Schillebeeckx, in attempting to find a Christian anthropology, discovered that 'Christian believers did not regard the world as something outside themselves, but as their own lives'⁽⁴⁾.

One way of explaining the relationship between the church and the world can be seen in the earliest writings of the Christian church: the word used of the church in the New Testament was ekklesia. In secular Greek this simply meant an assembly. The word is derived from ek and kaleo and is literally 'calling out or forth'. Hodgson and Williams have explained the term 'ecclesia' in the following manner: the Christian community in the New Testament referred to itself as 'ecclesia' not 'synagogue' because it wanted to break free from the cult-specific connotations of 'synagogue'. 'Ecclesia', they say, was both non-cultic and non-sacral, which has been significant both historically and theologically because it meant that there was space to

create a new meaning for the word 'ecclesia', quite separate and distinct from any other use of the word. They go on to say that 'ecclesia' was an old word ready to be filled with new meaning and seems to suggest both the actual process of congregating and the congregated community itself. Hodgson and Williams relate this to the biblical witness by suggesting that in the New Testament the major thrust of the writings concerning the church is relational, structures were just beginning, but the important thing seemed to be the way the community of faith was 'ecclesia', both to each other and to God, and what made them a 'peculiar people'⁽⁵⁾. This view would not be universally accepted. Some would suggest that to differentiate the Old Testament view from the New Testament was a division impossible to make. The word which was translated as 'ecclesia' in the LXX was the Hebrew word 'qahal' which referred to those within the covenant rather than 'the stranger in your midst'. It does seem clear, however, that among those who spoke Greek in the Christian community 'ecclesia' was the word regularly used from an early date to denote both the local Christian community (Gal 1v2; 1 Thess 1v1) and the whole Christian community (for example, 1 Cor 12v28)⁽⁶⁾. This is very different from the Enlightenment view of the church and the world because 'ecclesia' is essentially a communal model of the life of faith.

There are many ways of understanding what it means to be 'ecclesia', and many theologians have put forward models of understanding. Here there is not the space to rehearse all views on this matter, but I believe 'ecclesia' refers to a social view of the church which continues to be a call to re-order the relationship of the church and the world. How this re-ordering is to be effected relates, often quite specifically, to how the nature of God and the nature of community are understood. The basis of all understanding is in the definition of 'ecclesia' as relational and dynamic which is also a view of the nature of God.

In recent years much thought has been given to the idea of the church as an agent of liberation. This notion has often been explored with a supposition that the church is a dynamic and relational body. Leonardo Boff's primary understanding of 'being church' is in community life. But he is quite clear that community is not enough on its own; community must have the liberation of the truth of Christ to become 'church'. Boff believes that this liberation and re-

creation 'demands the transformation, the conversion, not only of the individual but also of structures'(7). Boff's ideas are of a community based on God and finding identity within the salvation of God expressed as liberation (both individual and corporate).

One of the problems with some liberation theology is its cultural specificity and the need to re-work ideas within a more universal frame of reference. There are elements of ecclesiology which are particular and some which are universal. Barth has identified three aspects, which he calls 'moments', in which the community fulfils its existence: in gathering, in upbuilding and in mission. These he suggests are universal 'moments'. The community of the church is created, renewed and transformed by the spiritual presence of the risen Jesus exercising prophetic ministry through his Holy Spirit. The centrality of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit may be said to be two of the essentials in the life of any community of faith, may in fact be said to be marks of identity in any Christian church(8). These marks of identity may be seen to be operating in the church worldwide as well as in the life of any parish church in Britain. In finding identity in terms of universal theological truth rather than in redeemed structuralism the particular is in harmony with the universal.

Some theologians have spoken of the church essentially having an horizontal and a vertical identity and have explored this in terms of relationship: between God, the church community and the community of the world. J.G.Davies suggests that authentic worship (one of the identifying marks of the church) can only exist when the vertical and horizontal elements of faith are held together in balance, both in communion with the transcendent God and in mission in the world. This should be seen in relation to summary of the law which Jesus gives to the scribes (as recorded in Mk 12v28ff and parallels).

Where, contrary to the New Testament, disunity of worship and mission prevails distortions inevitably arise... The most obvious distortion is that of worship in isolation which tends to introversion... The distortion to which mission itself, apart from worship, is most prone is that of self-glorification and self-aggrandizement.(9)

There is no simplistic relationship between worship and mission; it concerns the definition of what makes a person and a community specifically Christian. This is inevitably and inextricably bound up with identity and relationship, and universal and particular ways of being the church.

The church takes not only its identity from God, but also its model of being as seen in the model of humanity, Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see the relationship between mission and worship perfectly incarnated. Most models of the church which are Christocentric implicitly or explicitly point beyond themselves to a Trinitarian model. There are problems when, for example, a Christological model is allowed to be utterly determinative with no account taken of a more Trinitarian view. Some of the models which are to be discussed have this danger inherent in them.

1.2 'The form of a Servant'⁽¹⁰⁾

In this section we discuss two writers who derive their ideas of the church from God as Trinity, but who approach this from very different starting points. In Avery Dulles' first book Models of the Church he discusses the church as institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, and servant. These models are not Trinitarian in formation. He writes about the positive and negative aspects of each model and to some extent is not entirely satisfied with any model as a single aim or identity. He does seem to suggest that one model, that of the church as servant, could be a controlling metaphor. This model he sees as being derived from the being of God as seen in Jesus Christ. In other models there is a sense in which the church's mission is something done to the world, whereas the church as servant makes mission into something done for the world in the world.

The house of God is not the Church but the world. The Church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else's house, not his own.⁽¹¹⁾

Dulles recognises that this model has no specific biblical foundation, and sees also a certain ambiguity in the terminology of servanthood. But it is in the dimension the Bible gives to servanthood, not least in the relation of the person of Jesus Christ to the Servant songs of Isaiah and the Song of Christ's Glory in Philippians, that Dulles' perspective is to be found.

If the church is to derive its identity from God and reveal the life of God at all, the spirit of servanthood must be in its being. Deep in the heart of Christ in his dealings with humanity

as a person in history is the nature of servanthood. Already mentioned are the Suffering Servant theme in Isaiah and the Song of Christ's Glory in Philippians. These are clear enough in themselves, but there is also the self-revelation at the Last Supper. Jesus begins the last evening with his disciples teaching by example, taking the form of a servant and kneeling to wash their feet⁽¹²⁾.

In some ways Dulles' Models of the Church is the forerunner of his book The Catholicity of the Church which is a more detailed and deep exposition of his ideas of what the church is and should be. He sees church community life in terms of catholicity.

Only the fulness of God, communicated through the Holy Spirit, can give the church the dynamism and inclusiveness implied in the concept of extensive catholicity.⁽¹³⁾

His understanding of the identity of the church is inseparable from his understanding of the nature of God which is both inclusive and expansive and which he sees as vital and inherent in the church's very ontology.

As the church spreads her faith, she shows forth the transcendence of the gospel and the universal working of the grace of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the church actualises her own catholicity.⁽¹⁴⁾

Dulles holds in common with Davies the belief that it is only when a godly understanding of the nature of human relationships is held in balance with an understanding of the love of God expressed in Jesus and communicated in the Spirit that the true identity of the church is apparent; a Trinitarian view, the vertical in balance with the horizontal. Love for God and neighbour is expressed in building loving community and reaching beyond any boundaries to include all into the love of God.

From the Orthodox perspective, John Zizioulas wrote a book called Being As Communion which examines what it means to be a eucharistic community. He believes that personality is formed in relationships and communion, and that the eucharistic community is a paradigm of that formation. The identity of the community of the church is expressed in relationship with each other and with God, and these relationships are the expression of communion. Zizioulas goes on to explain that the church can be thought of as being 'instituted' by Christ, a once for all foundation, and 'con-stituted' by the Spirit which is the

ongoing work of building up, creating and renewing the church. The institution is a temporal reality as Christ's incarnation is a temporal reality situated in time, but the constitution is something that involves the community of faith in the being and becoming of the church with ('con') the Holy Spirit and each other. This dynamic model derives from the being of God as Trinity. Zizioulas comes to his understanding of God as communion from the midst of a debate in the Orthodox church about the priority of Christology or pneumatology in ecclesiology. As he says himself it is difficult to make divisions when a unity is involved, and runs the risk of 'separating where we should be only distinguishing'⁽¹⁵⁾. The problem is one which is not confined to the Orthodox tradition. In the mystery and paradox of a three-in-one God there are inherent dangers of imbalance, when the Trinity can become tripartite rather than triune. Often this is a question of emphasis rather than underlying doctrine, but it is part of the confusion of identity for the church which finds itself created and re-created in the image of God.

1.3 The Body of Christ

In his ecclesiology, Karl Barth might plead guilty to emphasising one person of the Trinity, for though he certainly did not ignore any person of the Trinity, his ecclesiology can be seen to be almost entirely Christocentric⁽¹⁶⁾. He speaks of community in terms of its reality in the eternally elected and electing Jesus Christ. The objective reality of the church is explained as being in the person and work and word of Jesus Christ, and the subjective reality is seen from the point of view of the ongoing prophetic office of Jesus Christ in the power of His resurrection. He also sees the church as involved in the eternal life to be summed up at the eschaton. His understanding of the church is clearly seen to depend on Christ and that is undoubtedly his emphasis, but he also says the following:

The Holy Spirit is the quickening power with which Jesus the Lord builds up Christianity in the world as His body ie. as the earthly-historical form of His own existence, causing it to grow, sustaining and ordering it as the communion of His saints, and thus fitting it to give a provisional representation of the sanctification of all humanity and human life as it has taken place in Him.⁽¹⁷⁾

Barth sees the church as being constituted by the word being proclaimed and faithfully heard, a

herald of Christ's Lordship and of the future kingdom, and he expresses all this as the church being the event which is because of the Holy Spirit; a Trinitarian ecclesiology. This seems to be the conclusion in most work about the theological discussion of the nature of the church. Whatever the emphasis within the Trinity, it seems clear that the church is in existence only because of God, and God is understood as three-in-one. The church, therefore, must have its foundation and sustenance in the Trinity.

There are many who, like Barth, take the biblical image of the church being the body of Christ as axiomatic. In the New Testament, Paul seems to make clear that life in Christ is life in the body of Christ. Christ's body has already been transformed for the church by the eucharist, and in the eucharist the body of Christ is seen to be the ultimate symbol of self-giving love. The body of Christ, the church, is then defined and constituted by the unique communal structure given in self-giving love. It is seen to be organic in the sense of a dynamic, living organism which has life and which expresses the life of God in finite terms in the world. Paul's teaching is that life in the body of Christ involves the identification of the Christian with Christ's death and resurrection, in faith, baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Christian is made a member of Christ, and Christ's body functions through the mutually interdependent service of the members in the life of the community together, through preaching, prophecy, teaching, miracles, healing, and other gifts of the Spirit⁽¹⁸⁾.

Some of Avery Dulles' views of the church have already been explored; however, in his book Models of the Church he also examines the model of the body of Christ. Taking this model, he says, allows for democracy and emphasises the immediate relationship of all believers to the Holy Spirit who directs the whole church. Dulles feels that needs are met for individual believers by accentuating the personal nature of the church. A large and impersonal structure, as the church may be perceived to be, is offset by the emphasis on the personal and communal. The weaknesses of such an image, as explained by Dulles, is that the organizational and hierarchical aspect of the church runs the risk of appearing superfluous. Also, if the church is seen as the body of Christ it can appear to be almost divinised in its own right, thus removing the focus of purpose as glorifying God. This seems a surprising conclusion. Such a removal of focus may happen in some models of the church which do not have a sufficient

place for Christology, but it is unlikely in a church which truly sees itself as the body of Christ. If the church can be seen to be self-divinizing then it cannot truly be said to be the body of Christ. Jesus' own understanding of himself (particularly as expounded in John's gospel) seems to be primarily to glorify God the Father. Thus, though Dulles sees problems in this model of the church, like other models discussed, it can be seen to point beyond itself to a model of the church which is Trinitarian.

It is not enough to explore the Trinitarian model of the church simply to explain its internal identity and way of relating to God. The Trinity of God is always reaching out beyond any boundaries which could be imagined. If the church is to be a reflection of the Trinity the church must be seen to be part of the missio Dei. The way the church functions as a missiological community is at the heart of much of the ecclesiological writings of J.Moltmann. He says of the church:

It is the community of the liberated, the community of those who are making a new beginning, the community of those who hope. Their fellowship serves to spread the call of freedom in the world and, as new fellowship, should itself be the social form of hope. Fundamentally, all Christians share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and are witnesses of the gospel.⁽¹⁹⁾

Moltmann calls for the church to be in solidarity with the world even as it is in the world to serve; this is participating in Christ's priestly, self-giving ministry. The major thrust of his missiology is in the idea of the open church: 'Christian fellowship is a fundamentally open fellowship and not merely a community of fellow-believers'⁽²⁰⁾. In his book The Church in the Power of the Spirit he speaks of friendship: our friendship with each other and with Christ, and he believes that this is the basis for open church fellowship. In friendship he focusses on accepting one another, seeing this as a human need which is often not met in worship services. He explores the theology of baptism and the eucharist and comes to a conclusion which would be for many the inversion of their own tradition. He suggests that baptism should be a sacrament offered only to those who are really committed, but that the Lord's supper should be an 'open feast': 'the communion is the answer to Christ's open invitation'. His view of the sacraments is derived from his image of Christ as being the friend of all and living in open friendship with all those who are open to him. In his ideas once again we find the image of

God as the directing presence in the way the community of faith is to live:

The friendship of Jesus cannot be lived and its friendliness disseminated when friendship is limited to people who are like ourselves and when it is narrowed down to private life... When we compare the ancient and modern concept of friendship it becomes clear that Christians must show the friendship of Jesus in openness for others, and totally.... Open and total friendship that goes out to meet the other is the spirit of the kingdom in which God comes to man and man to man.(21)

It may by now be seen that one of the issues inherent in the relation between the incomer and the liturgy focusses on the doctrine of the church, what view of God is determinative, and whether the community of the church is open or closed.

1.4 The boundaries of Community

The discussion thus far has been in terms of what one might describe as a theology of relationship. In discussing the question of open and closed community it becomes immediately apparent that the discussion becomes less abstract and begins instead to refer to the structures of the church (in broad terms). It is a matter of further discussion whether the church can be described in structural rather than relational terms, but perhaps it is enough to suggest that both views can enlighten the view of the church in which mission occurs and in which liturgy is important.

The question of an open or closed community was discussed in a book from the Grubb Institute called The Parish Church? The two models that are described for the discussion of the essays which follow are the models of the 'communal' church or the 'associational' church. The communal church is an open model with the communal church seen as the focus of the spiritual well-being for that area, whereas the associational church is more closed in the sense of having a clearer boundary and will assess its effectiveness in terms of whether people are willing to attend and to join the church. In an associational church relations are seen in terms of specific relationships, whereas in the communal church there is much more a general feeling of relatedness. A communal church might have an influence upon the community so that members of the community come to think of the church as theirs whether they attend or not, whereas an associational church may be barely conscious of the local community, with few members living

geographically close, and little commitment to the surrounding area. The Core Group of the report write as follows:

We believe that much of the current debate about ministry and mission and many of the uncertainties and concerns being voiced in different ways by clergy and people can be illuminated by thinking through these two models and their implications.⁽²²⁾

The outline they produce of these two models is necessarily somewhat polarised: the reality in any one church is likely to be less clear cut. The book is, to an extent a discussion of what this definition might mean.

The relationship between church and society has often been based on a view of the church which is not balanced in itself. For too long the church has considered itself in either/or terms such as The Parish Church? outlines. As a tool to enable a re-assessment of purpose and practice there is value in such analysis, but one of the ways in which the church is perceived in society seems to be that the church is divided. Who understands the sectarianism displayed so violently and vividly in Northern Ireland? What does society in general understand by 'high' or 'low' church?

We have seen how some of the models of the church formulated by theologians such as Barth, Zizioulas and Dulles rest on Christology and yet seem always to point beyond themselves to a Trinitarian model. The idea of the church as the body of Christ is incomplete unless it includes Christ's concern to glorify his Father (Jn 17v1ff). Whatever the emphasis of individual theologians which have been discussed, the writers concur in the necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit to constitute the church. The church is required by this self-understanding to look beyond itself not only to God the holy Trinity who creates and sustains it, but to the incomer and to the world which the church is called to serve.

Much of the discussion of this chapter has been concerned with the theological framework within which universal and particular ways can be found for the church to become a more close reflection of the life of God. In conclusion it seems reasonable to outline both the particular view of an ideal local framework for a church, and the universal truths within which such a utopia is contained.

1.5 St Utopia and the Trinity

First, a picture of the local church, St Utopia. St Utopia is a church which is well on the way towards perfection because of its understanding of the Trinity as determinative in the church's life. The church's life is lived in the open relationship of the Trinity which is why the church has open relationships with each other and the world. The strength of the community exists in the mystical unity of the Trinity, a unity which the church wishes to express in its own life. There is a need for a strong centre in any community, so it must be apparent that there is a community to join with, a group with a distinctive identity. This means that many of the strands which create such a community must be acknowledged, magnified and explained. For example, the ritual, linguistic, social, and spiritual threads which give a church its particular character need not be a matter of division in themselves, but become a means of expressing and communicating the life of God in the church. There can be a problem if a strong sense of community becomes a barrier to entry. But the open relationship of the Trinity will reflect in the church by careful thought and planning, a concern to take trouble with the way the church building looks, what welcome is received, what books are given out, how the symbols of the church and service are interpreted and used, how the community responds to a newcomer and so on. The openness of such a centre reflecting the life of the Trinity creates a flexible boundary.

The love of God shared and expressed in such a community creates an atmosphere of inclusiveness; there is no exclusivity in the life of the Trinity. All are included in the life of the church as far as possible, and the signals of whether a person is 'in' or 'out' cease to be so much an issue of the judgment of others and become a matter of choice for the individual. The love of God also shows clearly in the outwardness of the vision of such a church. As God's heart is a heart of love reaching out to humanity, so he sends people to show that love; the church is part of the missio Dei. As the church expresses the life and love of God in its community life, others can be drawn in to experience God's love in community. In short, St Utopia can be characterised as having a strong heart of love and inclusivity and the vision to reach out in love and service to others. This approach is seen neither in purely structural terms,

nor purely organic, but finds appropriate structures to allow the freedom of the organic life of the church to find expression. This view of a church approaching the ideal will be given more specific direction, patterning and practice, implicitly or explicitly, throughout this thesis. The fact that St Utopia does not exist is part of eschatological tension; 'now' is a constitutive part of 'not yet', and what we see in the church now is a part of what the Holy Spirit is doing to make every church more like St Utopia in the 'not yet'.

Finally, we set out some of the universal elements of ecclesiology which form a matrix within which the local can operate and find its true identity. The relationship between ecclesiology and the view of God is the most interesting aspect of the discussion. All views of the church reflect, either implicitly or explicitly, the view of God which has shaped and formed them. In various ways and with varying emphases many believe that because women and men are created in the image of God, the church also is in the image of God; it is the perichoretic interrelation of the Trinity which is expressed in the social nature of humanity.

Much ecclesiology has been dominated by one model of relating and has placed less emphasis on the Trinitarian ontology of God; neither monism nor hierarchy express sufficiently the being of God and using either as a basis for community life has resulted in bad ecclesiastical practice⁽²³⁾. Monism can be seen in many churches; the emphasis on uniformity, rather than on the diversity of the world and experience, leading to a very monochrome environment. Some would say that the more enthusiastic parts of the charismatic movement have lost any sense of the Trinitarian nature of God in their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. With a very clear sense of who is and is not part of the community and how the members of the community should behave, the church can be imprisoned in a set of boundaries admitting nothing outside what fits with their view of God as experienced in the Spirit. Perhaps the hierarchical church can be seen in the Roman Catholic church which encourages a high level of obedience to 'Mother Church' and where the magisterium, particularly in the Papacy, still has the power to direct the whole church in a way which guarantees obedience or dismissal. Other communities which have a non-personal metaphysic are bound to have a non-personal view of God as expressed in the church. Colin Gunton says:

The manifest inadequacy of the theology of the church derives from the fact that

it has never seriously and consistently been rooted in a conception of the being of God as triune.⁽²⁴⁾

He goes on to explain that God's being is a three-fold community of energies. He does not suggest that the church should be utterly analogous with the Trinity, but says that the church should be a finite echo of the infinity of communion in the Trinity. The church is to direct itself away from self-glorification and focus its activity, its being, on the source of its life 'in the creative and recreative presence of God in the world'. He expresses his thesis in a nutshell when he says:

..there is no timeless church: only a church then and now and to be, as the Spirit ever and again incorporates people into Christ and in the same action brings them into and maintains them in community with each other.⁽²⁵⁾

In this idea of the Trinity being reflected in the church is seen the most true understanding of what it means to be the church. It is inevitable that the view of God held by the church is reflected in its being, and it is just as inevitable that a church which recognises the living reality of the Trinity as the basis for its being will find a balance and harmony within it which is absent from any other view.

Taken as a unity, the Trinity continually dispels illusions and fantasies about God. It applies a corrective to any one type of language, whether talk about the transcendence of God in analogies, or sacramental and historical accounts of God's character and presence, or subjective, experiential witness to the immediacy of God. So the Trinity is a comprehensive 'negative way', refusing to let one rest in any image of God. It offers a ground rule: never conceive the Father apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit, or the Son without the Father and the Spirit, or the Spirit without Father and Son.⁽²⁶⁾

It would be simplistic to say that all ecclesiological problems would be solved if such a view were to be espoused by the church. The truth is rather different; the effect of such thinking would be so revolutionary, particularly in missiological terms, that the changes could be profound and far-reaching and might create as many problems as they solved. There is little doubt though that the way to understand the relationship of love in the church is to understand the relationship of perfect love in the Trinity. Embedded deep in the idea of perichoretic unity is the notion of dancing, and so of perfect movement and therefore perfection of understanding⁽²⁷⁾. The mutual indwelling of the Trinity, whereby one is as inextricably in the other two as they are in one, is a model of the universal and infinite which should in some way be a paradigm of how the church can express its essence in the particular and local. The fixity

and flexibility in the Trinity show a way for the tradition and identity which the church has transmitted to be re-interpreted.

CHAPTER TWO

The Community of Faith

2.1 Invisible Threads

In chapter one some matters of ecclesiology were explored to establish the nature of the church into which incomers might be incorporated, but there is more to the church community than ecclesiological considerations. It is important to understand some of the invisible threads which hold communities together so that the missiological implications of the life of the community and its effect on the incomer may be perceived. One of the paradoxes operating in the church is intellectual assent to the need for mission, possibly even missiological action, operating simultaneously with a psychological need to keep the church community stable. There can be great fear of change, and this fear can act in opposition to mission. Therefore it is important to examine some of the elements which create community in order to see more clearly how the incomer will perceive the community and how the community may react to the incomer, whether consciously or subconsciously.

The world is made up of a kaleidoscope of many different communities, large, small, overlapping, distinct, near, far, separated by oceans, joined by the fact that it is in the nature of humanity to be with other people. Everyone needs a 'web of social connection' within which to find their individual identity:

Coming to a sense of personal identity can be a struggle against social pressures, but it cannot be achieved at all apart from a social context for identity, the range of symbolic choices held out to us by those around us.⁽¹⁾

The communities to which people belong supply not only places where identity is found, but also groups of those who share, to some extent, the same view of life, where each person can be accepted and known as an individual who belongs. Every community has aspects which make it particularly itself and any model of incorporation into the community must take account of the elements which make each community as distinctive as the individuals in it.

It is possible to divide analysis of community into a number of different areas. One might distinguish between the economic, historical, political, religious, administrative and other

aspects of community and look at each in turn to find how these aspects are connected with one another. Or one might take the opposite approach and seek to ascertain what it is that binds economic, historical, political and other classes of data together as aspects of community. What are the invisible threads which hold together the network of relationships between people in a community? How are interdependencies created and maintained? The answer is undoubtedly a complex weaving together of many aspects of human behaviour and thought which include shared ritual, story and language. The question this poses is this: how is the church to encourage the worship of its own community in all its complexity without excluding the incomer? The answer to this question is, in a sense, the question at the heart of this thesis, and it is not altogether straightforward. This is because the problem lies in the centre of the conflicting strains in a community. Many church communities realise that without mission the dwindling of numbers in the church will eventually lead to extinction. The community, however, has created its own identity, and the identity of the individuals within the group is inextricably bound up in the community. Therefore, to threaten that is to threaten to the core not only the community but the identity of each individual.

Bonhoeffer perceived the problem quite clearly:

Exclusive interest in the divine mandate of proclamation, and, together with this, interest in the Church's mission in the world, has resulted in failure to perceive the inner connexion between this mission and the Church's internal functions.⁽²⁾

Of course the converse would seem to be equally true; concentration on the 'internal functions' of the church has resulted in a failure to perceive the connection between them and the church's mission. Bonhoeffer believed that this is a fundamental disunity between worship and mission and can be seen as a product of 'two realms' thought. Two realms ideology sees reality in two parts; Christ is perceived as partial and provincial and so there are realities outside the reality which is in Christ. So long as Christ and the world are seen as two opposing spheres there is a dilemma facing the individual: the individual must abandon reality as a whole in order to place himself in one or other of two spheres. 'He seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world without Christ. In either case he is deceiving himself.'⁽³⁾ For Bonhoeffer it is only in the ethical sphere, where one acknowledges the relationship of another person and God, that the

other is truly acknowledged and genuine society is established. Although Bonhoeffer identifies the importance of Christian faith for society and community living, he sees that Christianity is perceived apart from common social life in the world, in effect privatising the Christian contribution to social life. Bonhoeffer rejects this sort of theological and ethical dualism; he identifies a disjointed theology with disparate values and orientation and points out that Christ and the world are intimately and inextricably related.

The rejection of the dualism of the life of faith and the life of the world is central to the work of Lesslie Newbigin. His thesis is based in the idea that faith is not private either to the individual or society, and this is the basis for understanding the identity of church society and its mission. The crystallization of much that he has written elsewhere on the subject appears in his book Truth to Tell. In this book Newbigin is seeking to find a way of discerning truth which is not based on the perceived dichotomy of science and religion but which is a way of describing that which is the starting point for all truth; although the argument is epistemological, it is not confined to the realm of knowledge alone. Following Michael Polanyi he rejects the notion prevalent in the sciences that truth can exist and be described apart from any human subjectivity. Newbigin is convinced that there can be no knowing without a knowing subject and that the mind of the subject is involved in the knowing. In his exposition of public truth which does not fall specifically into the realms of either subjective belief or objective knowledge, Newbigin says: 'There can be no true evangelism except that which announces what is not only good news but true news', and this is the core of his thesis. He believes that science and religion should never have been subject to the extent of division which now exists, and that science should not have been given the monopoly of 'true knowledge', that is to say knowledge which is verifiable in only scientific terms.

Newbigin goes on to say that in learning what is accepted truth, we trust others first. In finding the truth, personal commitment in faith and personal judgement about evidence are required at all stages of the discovery, and therefore there can be no absolute separation of faith and knowledge.

We believe in order to understand. And at every stage we might be wrong... All knowing is the knowing of a fallible human subject who may be wrong but who can only know more by personally committing himself to what he already

knows. All knowing is a personal commitment.⁽⁴⁾

This may sound like a contradiction of what he has said about public truth, but in fact is what Newbigin believes to be the truth about all knowledge, including so-called scientific knowledge. That being so, the truth of religion is in precisely the same category of knowledge as science and should be treated as such, not just by those who believe but as a matter of the public domain. The truth of Christianity can be seen as the meeting place for knowledge and belief, and mission in the church as a way of making an answer to the charge of subjectivity.

When [the Bible] ... is the living language of a living community, its reliability will be shown not by validating it against some external criteria, but by the way in which it enables the community that uses it to make sense of the whole complex world of things and happenings which human beings have to face... Our faith is that this is the language which does make sense because the word of God, made flesh in Jesus, is that by which and for which all things were made.⁽⁵⁾

In this argument, Newbigin is trying to find a way forward not only for the unity of the church but also for dissolving the gulf between the church and the world in the truths they share. To do this some sort of cohesion is necessary. Newbigin has tried to explain that he thinks this cohesion comes by living according to the truths of the bible, and believes that this not only creates the community of the church, but has its power in the relationship of the community of faith with the community of those who have not yet found faith.

These views of Newbigin are regrettably not widely shared. The relativisation of truth into something that is 'true for me' has permeated much of the life of the church. This 'true for me' approach to truth creates a church which is relativised not only externally but internally and has difficulty in finding the same cognitive beliefs to create unity. If truth is relative then the truth is not a factor in connectedness. In churches where a wide variety of beliefs are held it is usually elsewhere that the unity is expressed, frequently in the ritual life of the church.

2.2 Ritual, symbol and language.

It was the work of Mary Douglas in her book Natural Symbols to show how ritual, symbol and language are part of the cohesion of any grouping in society and to find concordance between the symbolic and social experience. In her exploration of the invisible

threads of society she began her thesis by an examination of the work of Basil Bernstein who suggests that language shapes culture and not vice versa. She explains:

It will help us to understand religious behaviour if we can treat ritual forms, like speech forms, as transmitters of culture, which are generated in social relations and which, by their selections and emphases, exercise a constraining effect on social behaviour.⁽⁶⁾

As an anthropologist, Douglas is fascinating on the subject of ritual and how it affects communities. She is certain that to abandon ritual is a dangerous thing; it is hard to find a more appropriate ritual to replace the one that is lost, and to lose ritual altogether is disunifying and undermines identification. This is perhaps best illustrated in the third chapter of her book in which Douglas writes about the Irish immigrants in London and their adherence to abstinence from meat on Fridays under the title 'The Bog Irish'⁽⁷⁾. For the Irish immigrants, Friday abstinence became the most important badge of their faith. Originally it was a way for the Roman Catholic church to remember Good Friday: it referred directly to the redemptive nature of the events of that day.

Symbols are the only means of communication. They are the only means of expressing value; the main instruments of thought, the only regulators of experience. For any communication to take place, the symbols must be structured. For communication about religion to take place, the structure of the symbols must be able to express something relevant to the social order. If a people takes a symbol that originally meant one thing, and twists it to mean something else, and energetically holds on to that subverted symbol, its meaning for their personal life must be very profound.⁽⁸⁾

The Catholic hierarchy in this country decided that for the church in Great Britain the symbol of not eating meat on Fridays had lost its meaning and should therefore be abolished. The assumption was 'that a rational, verbally explicit, personal commitment to God is self-evidently more evolved and better than its alleged contrary, formal, ritualistic conformity'. But the symbol retained a potency for the Irish community. Certainly for the immigrant Irish in London it became the comfort, the sense of solidarity, which was denied them by London society. Their sense of exile and the boundaries drawn around them by their surroundings was ameliorated by the signs of home: Irish dances, Mass, the welcome of family, however distantly related, and Friday abstinence. When Friday abstinence was abolished, more was lost than a mere symbol which had a transmuted meaning: a sense of belonging and togetherness

was abolished with the symbol. To remove that symbol was not a guarantee that a 'rational, verbally explicit, personal commitment to God' would follow; Douglas feels that it would have been more sensitive to enrich the existing symbol rather than assume anything could replace it mechanistically.

Where natural symbols have been ignored or abandoned society has often taken them up and made them into a secular symbolic system. The rainbow in Genesis 9 was a symbol from the natural order of the covenant established between God and Noah; this symbol is now the sign of many involved in the 'New Age'; also the wearing of a piece of rainbow ribbon means that the wearer supports those who have HIV or AIDS. Similarly with language: a 'mission statement' may mean something to a church community, though this can often be a very negative image, but it has come to have a precise meaning in the business world; a mission statement in the business world is a statement of intent, a set of goals for the next financial year. The whole symbolic language of Christianity can become a new form of double-speak as those outside the church invest the language with a new meaning. As it is clear that symbolic language is an important part of community life it would seem that the way forward is not to abandon such language, but to enrich its meaning and meaningfulness.

It is generally recognised that the creation of unity and coherence in a community by participating in ritual fulfils pastoral needs within communities and individuals. If people are enabled to participate in the rituals of the church they quickly begin to feel that they belong and this gives the church part of its identity; not only in the meaning of the ritual itself but in the identity which ritual gives as a shape to the community and individuals within that community. The core of community identity exists in the rituals of worship. Where mission questions this ritual is in the endeavour to see how ritual may be best able to speak on behalf of the community, create unity in the community, and be readily understood by all who are attending to the ritual. The missiological challenge is to find a way towards unity in ritual, symbol and language which create a community which is a cohesive whole whilst enabling others to participate. The task is not, however, to try to abandon ritual, symbol and language to create a culture and community which is devoid of any particularity, but is to find a way to create a strong sense of the importance of such things, an importance based on honesty and the

possibility for others to join and share.

But we have seen that those who are responsible for ecclesiastical decisions are only too likely to have been made, by the manner of their education, insensitive to non-verbal signals and dull to their meaning. This is central to the difficulties of Christianity today. It is as if the liturgical signal boxes were manned by colour-blind signalmen.⁽⁹⁾

It is arguable from both Mary Douglas and from sociologists, notably Bernstein, that society creates and maintains community by means of speech patterns and symbolic codes. It is also to be noted, with some chagrin, as Douglas remarks: 'There is a sad disjunction between the recognised needs of clergy, teachers, writers and the needs of those they preach, teach and write for.'⁽¹⁰⁾

In a book which explores the way story expresses the intricacy of congregational life, James Hopewell had the opportunity to watch one group of people carefully as they formed a new 'church' and tried to do so without the formality of the structures they were trying to grow away from. He concluded after a year that a group of people cannot regularly gather for what they perceive to be a religious purpose without developing a complex network of signals and symbols and conventions. What Hopewell observed in one religious community for one year is born out by anthropology and sociology in the observation of the life of secular society in any place and in any time⁽¹¹⁾. Is this a problem? Many believe that it is a problem, and one which needs to be addressed:

Remembering that the Church is a 'peculiar' society with a 'peculiar' conversation, yet which is constituted of persons who also live in the world, are we not in danger of presenting our people with a choice of being either schizoid or an ostrich? The cross may be foolishness or a stumbling block to those who will not or cannot accept it, but must it be clothed in unintelligible speech and ideas?⁽¹²⁾

So what is the answer? Returning for a moment to St Utopia to find a way forward, the whole idea of having a strong heart in the community means that the community should be strong in terms of its corporate life, the corporate life which is a reflection of the life of the Trinity. This life reflected in the church is bound to include ritual behaviour, symbol and language. The task for the community is to find a way to express its identity honestly and carefully in its rituals and symbols without the rituals and symbols becoming unintelligible and seen as an end in themselves. And the task in the language of the community is to use language

which is honest and true expressing the tradition in a way which is understandable and therefore to which real assent can be given. In liturgical terms we can see this in the Church of England as it pulls in different linguistic directions. Some champion experimental liturgy which uses language in a more idiomatic and contemporary way (for example, in the work of Jim Cotter, or in books such as Patterns For Worship), and some holding on to the way language has 'always been' (such as those involved in the work of the Prayer Book Society). Both extremes of language identify the problem for the community and its mission quite clearly: in one the community may be alienated by something new and constantly changing but the incomer may feel more at ease, in the other the community remains itself and bonded by its language but the incomer may feel less at ease. This will be explored further, particularly in the chapters on baptisms, weddings and funerals. It will be discussed not so much in terms of old versus new, but in terms of words with integrity and intelligibility being one way in which the church can welcome the incomer to its liturgical life.

2.3 Story and the formation of community

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the part which story (or narrative) plays in the Christian experience of God, understanding of faith and life in community. Narrative theologians have become concerned to deal with narrative in its own terms, and to draw upon modern insights into the way in which narrative has meaning and to appropriate those insights for theology. Jesus did not teach doctrines or construct a systematic theology, he taught his disciples in story; he told them stories and parables some of which, it seems, he explained and some of which he did not. Similarly in the book of Acts, the sermons attributed to Peter and Stephen are a telling of the story of events in Christian and Israelite history⁽¹³⁾. Much of the bible is narrative; "Typically, the Bible does not say "This is what you must believe" but "This is what happened"⁽¹⁴⁾. Like ritual symbol and language, story is an aspect of human lives which is universal. Human beings communicate with each other in narrative much more and more readily than in abstract ideas⁽¹⁵⁾ and in these narratives are some

of the invisible threads which hold communities together and make them story-formed communities.

It is worth noting that there is considerable debate in some quarters as to whether narrative theology exists at all. This debate seems largely to be a question of the definition of theology, whether performative and missiological or abstract and philosophical (not using those terms as mutually exclusive). Sykes has a very particular definition of theology as 'a conceptual discipline issuing in regulative propositions'⁽¹⁶⁾, and therefore in the light of that definition sees narrative as the 'raw material' for theology but not theology itself. H.R.Niebuhr would hold the opposite view that narrative theology constitutes a radically new way of doing theology, and would suggest that the sphere in which revelation is to be found is in 'the story of what happened to us'⁽¹⁷⁾. Whether narrative theology exists or not is not a primary concern to the discussion here, but it will be apparent that such differing views exist and therefore shape the material in a particular way.

Following on from the discussion of the work of Lesslie Newbigin we can see the contribution which story has in the community life of the church. The notion of private belief contrasted with empirical truth is obviously at variance with the idea of story as a vehicle of truth-telling; participation in truth-telling story creates a community based on corporate truth. Story contains truth in a way which is not scientifically verifiable and is essentially a community activity. Themes of community and truth seem to be at the heart of much narrative theology. In a church community the story of Christianity and the story of the community will be unfolded gradually to newcomers; newcomers will gradually become part of the story and so part of the community. The story of the Christian faith, the community story and the individual's story become informed and shaped by each other. This interweaving of stories is a vital part of the incorporation of an individual in the life of the church as a whole.

The research into the significance of story would argue that as human beings we live in a world made up of 'layers upon layers of interwoven story'⁽¹⁸⁾. This being so there is a need to identify the different types of story and understand that these stories not only describe the world, but also create a world. The notion of story creating a world is a very important concept

in the understanding of the influence of story on the inquirer and the community. Alasdair MacIntyre has isolated seven distinct uses of narrative in life and learning. Among these seven are the claims that human life is fundamentally narrative in shape and that narrative shapes lives and lives shape narrative. At the centre of his argument is the claim that narrative and tradition are inextricably interrelated⁽¹⁹⁾. This has obvious implications for the life of a church which is created by tradition and which seeks to understand the process of togetherness in a way which makes them accessible to those from 'outside'. Story, understood in MacIntyre's terms, can be either a weapon against the inquirer, or a way of extending welcome.

MacIntyre is not alone in recognising the link between story and tradition. Scholars such as Niebuhr and Newbigin maintain that the history of Christianity, and its historicity, is made real and actual by being seen in creative conversation with the story of those now involved in the faith; this is at the heart of much of the catechetical process. Epistemologically, they suggest that Christianity must be known from the inside, as it were, for it to be seen to be true: '...Christian faith... has found that [others] can speak with it of its God only if they have been schooled in Christian history'.

Newbigin believes (as detailed above) that rather than trying to accommodate Christian belief in categories of subjective (and therefore relative) truth, or objective (and possibly scientific) truth, that there should be an understanding of Christianity as public truth. Niebuhr describes this as external history being the medium which contains internal history. This gives crucial importance to knowledge of the external history of Christianity which is, in his view, why narrative is so important⁽²⁰⁾. There is a sense in which Newbigin's notions of public truth need to confront the views of MacIntyre. Criteria of truth cannot be judged within a community alone but must have some external testing. There is a weakness in MacIntyre on this point; all story as vehicles of truth must face external history and be created in dialogue with it.

Central to the book A Community of Character by Stanley Hauerwas is the notion of a story-formed community. Interestingly, Hauerwas uses the idea of story not purely as an epistemological device, but as the basis of forming a Christian ethic which in turn shapes a Christian community. Hauerwas believes that moral guidance is received more from stories

than from principles. He suggests that too much contemporary ethic is discussed with reference to extreme, and therefore unlikely, situations. He writes of discussing difficult moral choices in isolation from what goes before or after them, and trying to apply a universal principle in a situation which, in context, would be entirely inappropriate. His view is that this is no way to do ethics and many would agree with him.

In chapter one of his book Hauerwas uses a story by the writer Richard Adams, Watership Down, to demonstrate how narrative acts both describe and provide the identity of a group. He introduces several different aspects of the link between social character and story. As description, story expresses a narrative coherence for the events and characters which make up a community. In this way, story recounts social character. But telling the story also creates group identity and so can change group identity and alter corporate behaviour. By using the community story as paradigm it accounts for social character⁽²¹⁾. Certain behaviour is to be expected if one understands the background to it which is told in the story. He sees story as both describing and directing the community. In the Christian story Hauerwas adds another action that is normative: in the Christian community is embedded the Christian story that judges and redeems the other actions of narrative. This judgment and redemption transforms group character.

By recovering the narrative dimension of christology we will be able to see that Jesus did not have a social ethic, but that his story is a social ethic. For the social and political validity of a community results from its being formed by truthful story, a story that gives us the means to live without fear of one another. Therefore there can be no separation of christology from ecclesiology, that is, Jesus from the church. The truthfulness of Jesus creates and is known by the kind of community his story should form.⁽²²⁾

Just as MacIntyre regarded it as important to analyse the elements in narrative to understand how they are functioning, so Stephen Sykes has used the analysis of the grammar of story from 'some recent experimental psychology'. The interweaving of layers of story would begin for the incomer most fundamentally in the creed. Sykes explains that a central aspect of initiation into the church is the learning of the creed and suggests that the creed is a form of brief sequential narrative. The creation of the world gives the setting to the story, then the theme of redemption is introduced, thirdly the plot is given in the account of the deeds of

Christ, and finally the resolution is seen in the eschatological clauses.

These four elements, setting, theme, plot and resolution are not only part of the story in the creed, but are universal features of true story. Apparently if any element is missing or misplaced the story becomes harder to remember and understand: 'The suggestion is that the grammar of story is a fruitful way in which to approach human cognition'⁽²³⁾. But the creed is only the first element in the layers of story. It provides a focus for all other stories and becomes richer in meaning and resonance as, for example, the re-telling of the last supper in the eucharist becomes part of the tradition handed on.

All elements of the liturgy are open to this 'recollected amplification' as the individual fills in story outlines; this is part of the 'layers upon layers' of story which make up our understanding of the world. As more detail is known and further thought and reflection is given, the elements of the story begin to act as 'prompt lines for meanings of which the worshipper need not necessarily be conscious'⁽²⁴⁾. To say the creed is to repeat a story which carries in it many other layers of story, emotion and implication. Teaching a catechumen the creed is like 'handing over the key to a symbol system of enormous subtlety and power'. It is a matter of debate as to whether the creed can be considered strictly to be story, or whether it is better categorised as a covenantal statement, but in either case it is obviously the centre of the story of faith, which is the implication of all other stories of faith.

2.4 Community, distance and the mystery of God.

Story is important in becoming part of a community and the grammar of a story is important for learning, but there are other reasons why it is helpful to use and understand the functions of story in a community. Story also allows a psychological distance between the individual and the material, and in the case of an individual trying to join a community system of stories and rituals which already exist this distance allows closer participation than a more direct approach might. Kierkegaard suggested two modes of communication: the direct mode which is appropriate for transferring information and the indirect mode which can elicit action

from within the listener. The text for Kierkegaard's method was 1 John 2v21: 'I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it...' Knowing about the truth is not the same as having that truth as the inner dynamic in one's life. Kierkegaard was primarily concerned, not to add information to an individual, but to enable an individual to appropriate internally the truths of the gospel. This appropriation is made possible by a psychological distance enabled by the more indirect approach of story⁽²⁵⁾.

David Ford approaches psychological distance from a different angle. He uses the theory of 'middle distance' as a means of understanding perspective, a concept borrowed from J.P. Stern. Middle distance perspective gives the listener to the story a picture of an ordinary social world of interaction. It also enables the truth to be told in a central form whether the detail is doubtful or the world view dubious.

It is clearly of great importance for Christianity that the testimony to Jesus Christ is in the form of realistic narratives which, in their very diversity of detail and modes of generalization, seem to underline the middle-distance identification of Jesus (supremely in his passion, death, and resurrection) as the primary thrust of their witness⁽²⁶⁾

In the mission of the church the story told in the liturgy (using story in its widest sense) creates ways for the person who does not regularly experience communal worship to find appropriate distance, a middle distance from God and a middle distance from other worshippers. This creates safety in a way which allows a person to move in closer and become more involved without threat or to move away without feeling trapped.

It may seem strange that the idea of distance should allow the necessary space for a person to come closer, but it can be seen to be true in our social interactions on many levels, not just communal and not just that of story. To take one example, it is normal and appropriate in our culture to shake hands with someone on meeting them. This is a ritual action which expresses some measure of peace or at least a framework of politeness, it is also the correct distance. If on the other hand someone to whom a person was introduced decided that a kiss on the mouth might be the appropriate form of greeting, under any normal circumstances in our cultural setting the person being kissed would want to withdraw from that meeting and would approach any further contact with the 'kisser' with much wariness. So it is in community life

together. Story can build up trust and participation in others' stories and the telling of the story of faith can be a very unifying and cohesive attribute of life together. Inappropriate story, a story of the faith told in a way which is incomprehensible, inappropriate action, kissing instead of shaking hands, ritual which is inappropriate, either because it is unintelligible or not the whole truth, can be alienating and not only destroy the chance of the incomer to participate, but cause friction and uncertainty with those who are already committed to the community of faith.

This is a concept vital to the discussion in the second section of this thesis. How the community of faith receives those who come to the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and what ritual and story are involved in the liturgy and rite are ideas central to any discussion of liturgy and the incomer. The necessity for liturgy and ritual which is both intelligible and the whole truth becomes more and more vital when the perceived gulf between church life and those 'outside' seems to widen with every passing survey. The formal education process has been given responsibility for teaching the Christian faith (amongst other faiths) in schools, attendance at church and Sunday school has dropped steadily in recent years; consequently there is growing up a generation of people who are increasingly 'unchurched'. For many in an older generation because of their upbringing in the church and worship in schools being normative church life is not alien, merely unfamiliar. It is true, however, that increasingly large sections of the population of this country find church to be an utterly alien environment. The church often succeeds in alienating people further by the way the occasional offices function as unintelligible and not the whole truth. For a church to reflect the life of the Trinity there must be integrity and inclusiveness in worship. It is the inclusion in story and explanation of story which is important in missiological terms.

In the life of any community there are many different factors which bind human beings closer to other human beings. Similar world view, similar background, shared enthusiasm, and such like, all have a part to play, but in the life of the church there is also the ritual, language and story to be recognised as part of the creation of the community. This is a cause for celebration in the community of faith and a caution in mission.

There is one other aspect which is impossible to quantify, but which can be understood by reading the New Testament and seen as a pragmatic reality in many churches: the life of the

church is more than the sum of its parts because the life of the church is a reflection of the life of God. Where the church is truly seeking to be the finite echo of the Trinity, there is a unifying factor which is difficult to categorise intellectually. The service of Holy Communion proclaims it, 'The Lord is here: His Spirit is with us'.

In the understanding of the invisible threads of community life there is also a need to recognise the mystery of the presence of God in the midst of people, not only individually but also communally. There is the same miracle in the communion service in saying, 'We are the body of Christ', as 'This is the body of Christ'. Both statements call out something far beyond the norm in human society, because each statement, if it is to be believed, has about it an element of the supernatural.

In the exploration of how the community of faith is able to bond together to form a cohesive body of people, it is vital to understand some of the invisible threads which form that bond. The threads of ritual, symbol, language and story create the pattern of life together, and the understanding of that pattern can lead more readily to the inclusion of the incomer. The notion of having a community strong in its own rituals, symbols, language and story has for too long been synonymous with exclusivity; when the church finds a way to live with openness and a strong central community gathered in word and sacrament, then the finite echo of the perichoretic unity of the Trinitarian God can echo a little louder.

PART TWO

Rites of life crisis are a universal feature of human society. These rites mark the give and take in life: the gift of a child, the taking away of the single status, the gift of a marriage partner, the taking away of a loved one. All races and people have ceremonies which mark important events in life and the differences between societies can be seen in what they regard as important. In Papua New Guinea the bride price feast can last three days marking the joining of a man and woman, whereas in a small Indonesian island the family income is saved to pay for a funeral, which can last for a week. The changes in our lives need a meaningful ritual to restore and re-order the community affected by these changes. The changes in our society brought about by baptisms, weddings and funerals are changes which cause people to seek the help of the church in the occasional offices. In birth, marriage and death there can be a sense of disorder and chaos, and it seems that the symbolic framework within which the church is seen to operate provides a large enough matrix for the disorder and chaos to be placed into a ritual context and contained or explained. In this section there is an examination of the rites of passage, baptisms, weddings and funerals, and as an introduction there follows a discussion of some of the work which affects all such rites.

Rites of passage

It is important in the discussion of weddings, funerals and baptisms, to understand some of the work that has been done on the rites of life crisis as this informs much of what each of these services is enacting. The rites of life crisis are otherwise known as rites of passage or transition, and some of the principles involved apply less to baptism than to weddings and funerals. Rites of passage are widely discussed in much of the literature with particular reference to the work of Van Gennep⁽¹⁾.

Van Gennep suggests that rites of transition are made up of three stages: separation, transition, and reincorporation. In this process the individual becomes separated from their original status (such as husband or single person), they enter a period of transition which is to

some extent outside normal social life until they find their new identity, and finally a time of re-entering society in a new role such as wife or widower. Van Gennep called these stages the pre-liminal, liminal, and post liminal stages. It is important to be clear about the distinction between rite and ritual in this context. The rite is the whole process covering the time from the beginning of transition to the end of the reincorporation, a process which may ultimately cover a number of years. The ritual is the part with which the church is more often involved, and that is generally speaking the service, including, in the case of a funeral, the undertaker, the flowers, the minister, the service, and the gathering of friends and relatives afterwards.

The service often expresses the rite of passage in ritual terms, as it were telescoping and enacting the stages in one ceremony. For example, the rite of marriage begins with the ceremony of the engagement, and ends after the honeymoon. The ritual of marriage (incorporating these three stages) is the wedding ceremony, which begins with the couple separated (pre-liminal), continues with their coming together to announce their intentions (liminal), making a series of promises and being pronounced husband and wife (post-liminal). The ritual ends as they are blessed and depart together to be integrated into the community as a married couple.

Van Gennep is not the only anthropologist to examine rites of passage. The work of Hertz has contributed much to the thinking of some involved in liturgies of transition⁽²⁾. Hertz's work was done chiefly in non-Christian cultures, but seems nonetheless to raise issues which are important. His primary research was in funerary rites. Hertz identified a double ritual, the first part dealing with the body itself, the second part of the ritual involving the bones, or in the case of cremation, the ashes. Hertz suggests that the meaning of cremation lies not so much in disposing of the body but more re-creates the body making it capable of entering into new life. This is very well illustrated as a viable theory by the relating of a tradition from rural Greece told by Tony Walter⁽³⁾. Two distinct phases of ritual can be easily perceived.

In rural Greece, for five years after the funeral the body lies in a splendid marble grave. Each evening, the widow or closest female relative comes to tend the grave, to pray for the

dead person, to remember. At their nightly vigil the women talk with each other and swap stories. At the end of five years they dig up the grave and inspect the bones, a traumatic business for the widow as she sees before her eyes what her husband or son has been reduced to. If the bones are white and clean, the women take this to mean that the soul is now cleansed of its sins and is in paradise. They collect the bones and place them in the communal village ossuary, and the mason can reuse the marble stone for the next burial. If the bones are not clean, they are replaced in the grave, prayer is multiplied, and another year or two elapses before the women try again.

All this seems very strange to Anglo-Saxon sensibilities that do not like to contemplate the decaying matter under the churchyard grass, and digging it up still less. However, it is all very logical. There are three actors in funeral and mourning rites: the corpse, the soul and the living. In Greece, what happens over time to each of these actors is mirrored in each of the others. The corpse is decaying. Its putrid flesh is consumed by the earth, till after a few years only clean bones are left. At this point the bones lose their individual identity as they are tossed into the ossuary among some unidentifiable bones of the ancestors. The soul is being purified, aided by the prayers of the living, on its way to paradise. The widow is mourning the loss of a husband or child. This pain is unique to her, but once the mourning is over even as the deceased moves from being uniquely grieved by one person to being one of the village ancestors, the mourner is re-integrated.

How the two-fold ritual would apply to a wedding is not clear, but it is important to take note of the fact that although many people, particularly those involved in rites of passage in the church (either liturgically or pastorally) still regard Van Gennep as axiomatic, there is obviously continuing work in this field.

For the person approaching the church for a liturgy to recognise their life change it is probable that the ritual can provide a way through the complexities of transition which contains and informs the rite and the feelings surrounding that rite. That is, in one sense, what ritual is there to do.

The human need to make sense of experience is universal and fundamental. Faced with the biggest questions of life and death, love and evil, the origin and destiny of the human race and the universe, we cannot pin down an answer in

logical formulas. We turn to symbolic expressions of our trust in that which grounds the goodness in our experience and shapes the tradition in which we make our meanings.⁽⁴⁾

In the liturgy minds can be focussed on a pattern and way of behaving which are to some extent expected norms; new forms of service may therefore be resisted. The patterning cannot be seen as normal if the liturgy does not conform to expectations. This applies not only to the words of the liturgy but also the version of the bible which is read. In liturgical terms it is also a matter of importance as to how the liturgy is performed. A couple wanting to be married in church because it makes the photos better can be very positively influenced by good liturgy well done. But it is probably also true that they will also react well to bad liturgy if it is well done.

There are those, however, to whom familiarity is of vital importance; it can make the whole ritual feel as though it is invalid if it is 'tampered with' and rendered unrecognisable in any way. The subject of resisting change has been discussed in the second chapter of the book by Robin Green, Only Connect. In this Green suggests that liturgy needs to develop so that it can remain true to our understanding of God and of ourselves. He goes on to explore the psychological resistance to change which is experienced within the church and says that this is often a strategy to establish individual uniqueness. This section is concerned with people within the church with whom there is an existing relationship which may or may not make it easier to overcome the 'walls of resistance'. For the incomer a modern form of service could be making a missiological statement, either positive or negative. For some, a modern form of service will be a sign of the church being concerned with communication, that the church understands and is trying to meet real needs. For others, it will undermine the patterning that is sought; a service which used to be familiar, when changed and modernised, can take away an element of being at home and being welcome and can weaken or destroy the process the ritual should enable. In a situation of chaos and disorder another unpredictable element can be problematic.

Conventions that apply to major life events change more slowly than everyday ways of behaving, partly because those events call for resources outside a person and draw on the wisdom of the past.⁽⁵⁾

It has been said that the new services 'are the creations of those who believe that content is supremely important. However, this is not the case'⁽⁶⁾. It is important to consider all aspects of

mission in our use of liturgy. This does not mean that change should not occur, but there are many who believe that mission should form a basis for our liturgy⁽⁷⁾, and as such all changes that do occur might be better approached from the point of view of the missiologist rather than the historian. It is, however, profoundly to be hoped that mission and history can inform each other in liturgy and not be set up in polarity.

Examples of changes in liturgy which have not worked are easy to find. The revision of the Lord's Prayer for The Alternative Service Book 1980 was always doomed to being only for the 'in church faithful' while the traditional form was still being taught in schools. There are points of reference within a service that are very important and changes in the words at those crucial times can be very difficult. It would seem to be unwise for the words 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' to be referred to as optional in The Alternative Service Book 1980 as they are probably the best known words in the funeral service. Likewise in the wedding service, the modernisation of 'What God has joined together let not man put asunder' is deemed by many to lack the note of warning and solemnity which is wholly appropriate at that point in the service. It is all too easy to criticise, however, and much harder to put right.

One of the principles of liturgical reform should be that the phrases which are well-known should remain within the service. The debate within the Church of England at present concerning 'common prayer' needs to take note of this principle. If the liturgy books of the future are to be more like resource manuals with many possibilities and permutations, 'knapsacks' full of helpful material⁽⁸⁾, it is vital that various 'trigger points' should be preserved so that it will still be possible to participate in a service even if the words in between such points are new. But there is more to a ceremony than the words so in the next chapter begins an examination of the wedding ceremony.

CHAPTER THREE

'To have and to hold...'⁽¹⁾

3.1 The Wedding Ceremony

When a couple ask the church to perform their wedding ceremony, this is normally a public declaration of an adult decision. There is often confusion or some obscurity about the decision due to external factors such as parental pressure or pregnancy, but in the marriage service itself questions are put to the two people getting married: it is their responsibility to answer for themselves⁽²⁾. The couple marry each other: the minister is there to manage the occasion contributing a venue, shape to the service, and the legal procedures.

The priest is, in a sense, the chief witness and the master of ceremonies, and, only when the couple is married, does he "take over", so to speak, to give them God's blessing⁽³⁾

If this is true then what occurs in the service needs to reflect the expectations of the couple being married. Does this mean a different service for each couple, a service which reflects their individual relationship? This trend is already apparent in America where many couples write their own vows and service. If this trend were to be followed it might become even more unclear as to why the church is involved at all. Part of the role of the church in the wedding service is to provide a universal statement and standard for marriage which individual vows and readings need not necessarily express. The sermon may be the place to express individuality and how this marriage is particular to the couple involved, but the shape of the service needs universality to some extent. This does not preclude a wider range of wedding services fitting different circumstances of marriage, but does reinforce the need for the church to uphold its beliefs about marriage and to be clear and honest about what it believes is taking place.

This is an area yet to be fully resolved, but the Alternative Service Book 1980 has succeeded in the service of marriage to conform to the changes in understanding of marriage since the Book of Common Prayer (1662) was introduced. This can be seen in the section of

the service where the text explains why 'marriage is given'⁽⁴⁾

The Book of Common Prayer gives three reasons for marriage: for children to be brought up as christians, as a remedy for fornication, and for companionship and comfort. The tone of the introduction with the sentence about 'carnal lusts and appetites like brute beasts' gives the impression that marriage is to legalise sex, and sex is naughty. In The Alternative Service Book 1980 the introduction to the marriage service says that marriage is given first that husband and wife might comfort each other. It goes on to explain bodily union as a delightful and tender expression within the relationship, and finally says that they may also be blessed with children to care for. The teaching and emphasis in this introduction is that marriage is a gift, not a concession to lust. This accords much more with the picture of marriage which is prevalent in our culture but also explains that marriage is something God himself celebrates and hallows.

The church's statements about why marriage is given, even though they have been updated, still cannot give an adequate picture of what people think they are asking for when they come to be married in church. In this last decade of the twentieth century the status of marriage is not always apparent.

A couple who want to marry may be asking for three things: a ceremony to make them married, a place at which to be married, and an official to marry them. How do these expectations fit what the Church provides?⁽⁵⁾

The way the church performs the rite of marriage and with whom it will perform it differs widely from incumbent to incumbent and this does not help those in the church or those outside the church to form a clear picture of the importance of the wedding, and what the church actually believes about marriage. It may be clear to those well versed in liturgy that within the service itself there is enough to explain the church's doctrine of marriage, but the issue in missiological terms is not always clear; what does someone not well versed in liturgy think they are doing? How easy, for example, is the introduction to the marriage to understand? Furthermore, if those within the church disagree on who should be married in church how can those not within the church make any sense of the inconsistencies?

Before the wedding it may be suggested that an exploration of what will happen in the

service and what that means will be helpful. This is undoubtedly part of the explanatory process. Marriage preparation is done very differently in different churches. Some churches have a long preparation process which involves lay couples befriending the engaged couple and having several evenings exploring what marriage might mean. In other churches the couple may have similar (though probably less lengthy) discussions with the incumbent. In other churches there is very little exploration and explanation. It seems that those who are involved in some sort of preparation find the service in some senses more meaningful and more 'user friendly'.

Some have found it helpful to use the introduction to the service⁽⁶⁾ as a basis for introducing the ideas particular to a church wedding. As already outlined this introduction is also part of the catechesis in the service itself and using it as a basis for preparatory work will help to make it understandable. The congregation will hear the words of introduction, the reasons why 'marriage is given', and they will have the opportunity to reflect on their own relationships as well as the marriage about to take place. There is a distinctly counter-cultural message in the declaration of assent⁽⁷⁾, the question is not 'do you love?', but 'will you love?', and so the expectation of this marriage being life-long partnership is declared at this stage also. This is counter-cultural in the sense that it focusses attention on the wills of the couple, not on the romance of the day. The expectation of the marriage being for life occurs in the introduction, the declaration of assent and in the vows. This is a statement about what the church believes marriage to be, and those being married may need to explore what that means.

In Van Gennep's terms, the phase of separation in the service where the bride's hand can be given from the father to the priest, is a remnant of the culture when a woman was her father's property until he gave her, or sold her by means of a dowry payment, to her husband. Many believe this to be demeaning to women and object strongly to the custom. In A New Zealand Prayer Book there has been an attempt to address this. This accords with the Van Gennep studies in that both sets of parents give the bride and groom to each other, publicly and symbolically showing the relinquishment of their parental role⁽⁸⁾. It is suggested that the parents should pronounce a blessing at this point to free their children to fulfil their new roles.

There could be obvious practical difficulties with this (none of which are explored in the prayer book from New Zealand): if there are difficulties in the relationship with the parents, or if the parents are divorced (and remarried), or if the parents of one partner have died; but it does seem to be a way of fulfilling a symbolic phase of separation. The wording could also be problematic depending on the beliefs of the parents, and this may be a place where a series of suggestions could be offered to choose from, or indeed the parents could write their own.

It is important both for the church and those being married to remember that a wedding is a community event:

Marriage is always a public affair, an individual act with social consequences. It is too difficult and too important a thing to be left exclusively to two individuals.⁽⁹⁾

It is a rite of passage for the couple being married but will affect relationships in all areas of life, which is why the possibility for people from all areas of life to witness the event is so important. The participation of as many as possible will be part of a community building process also. The community expresses itself in ritual and is formed by ritual. For those who come to the church, the church must enable the processes of rite and ritual to occur in a way which expresses the mission of the church, being the body of Christ, not only to the couple being married, but also to the community at large.

It is thought by some that marriage in a church is one of the clearest opportunities for mission:

In a world where relationships between men and women have been problematic, where union between persons is increasingly difficult and demanding, where commitment to another person is too often short-lived and self-centred - Christian marriage has become one of the most missional, evangelistic, and confessional of the church's rites. Our careful planning, education, and leadership for this rite can ensure that our celebration and blessings of marriage are also times of witness, proclamation, and enactment of the love of God in our midst.⁽¹⁰⁾

But Wesley Carr states that there is no such thing as Christian marriage. His contention seems to be (though he is not altogether clear on this point) that marriage is a creation ordinance and so there is not really a distinctively Christian element to it...'what God means marriage to be may be perceived in any marriage, whatever the particular beliefs of the partners'⁽¹¹⁾. It seems

clear that there is a sense in which both marriage as a mission opportunity and marriage as a human institution need to be held, not as opposites, but as part of the same relational matrix. As Carr says elsewhere:

God's love is wider than the love expressed in this one instance, yet for a moment this one instance also encapsulates that wideness and divine generosity.⁽¹²⁾

3.2 From Cohabitation to Marriage

How do the expectations of the church and the couple find a place of meeting? Some of the liturgical inconsistencies focus quite sharply when a couple come to be married in a church when they have already been living together for some time. The model of a big, church wedding, though still prevalent, is often a celebration of a situation which has already existed for some time, rather than the beginning of a new relationship independent of parents. In different ways it seems that there is an awareness that there is more to being married in church than the venue and the vicar. In missiological terms, this is a time for welcoming those not in the church community and building relationships with them, not only to provide support and care in their marriage, but to bring them further into the church community as they reassess their life in their new state as married people. The fact that one in three marriages end in divorce in this country means that the former ideals of permanence about the married state have been considerably eroded. For the incomer, the importance of the life transition they are making as signalled by the wedding service will depend a lot on what the status of marriage is in their own minds. This can make the rite of passage as outlined by Van Gennep temporally disjointed; a wedding can be a rite for a passage that has already been achieved, for example, if the couple have been cohabiting.

There is no doubt that cohabitation is one of the areas in the church's views of marriage which is little defined and rather confused. Is a cohabiting couple already married? Are the couple 'living in sin'? What ought the response to be to their request for marriage of a traditional sort? It is a matter which has been debated at the General Synod (York, July 1991); a report has been commissioned from the Board for Social Responsibility to look into the

question of the family with reference to cohabitation. There has been debate in the church press. Books and pamphlets are written on the subject⁽¹³⁾. The responses to the problem cover a wide range. One suggestion is that the clergy should tell cohabitant couples that they are living in sin and ask them to repent⁽¹⁴⁾. Another response is to suggest that the marriage service should be a confirmation of an already existing marriage⁽¹⁵⁾. Whatever the ethical debate may be, one thing is clear: the liturgy does not reflect the fact that such a thing as cohabitation exists.

Many in our society now believe that it is the the norm to live with a partner before marriage; what does the church have to say to this? Can the church provide a unified, cogent and pastorally sensitive response to this? Society's views have shifted from seeing cohabitation as wrong, to accepting it as part of the whole process towards finding fulfilment with a partner. There is no longer any great stigma about cohabiting. The difficulties for the church start when the couple come to ask for a church wedding.

...The average wedding is now more like a service of confirmation than a christening. The traditional order of things has been the wedding, first, followed by moving in together. Under the new arrangements moving in together comes first and the wedding, like confirmation, comes much later and, like confirmation, its function is not to start something but to ratify publicly and celebrate an existing relationship of faith and commitment.⁽¹⁶⁾

It might be said that the same confusion which often surrounds the meaning of confirmation also surrounds the wedding of a cohabiting couple.

One way of approaching this has been to try to find a good definition of what marriage is and see how the cohabitation relationship coincides with that definition. Some have said that marriage occurs when two people are engaging in sexual intercourse and have cited 1 Cor 6v16-17 to support this view. The opposite end of the spectrum is to say that a couple is only married if they have been through a wedding ceremony of some kind (whether in church or in a registry office). The legal situation in England follows this view, whereas the law in Scotland allows for common law husband and wife relationships where no ceremony has taken place.

An alternative method to define the status of a cohabitation relationship has been to look at the sociological requirements for a valid marriage, and then to use these requirements as the measure for whether the particular cohabitation relationship can be considered to be a marriage.

This view seems to lean a long way towards the judging of each relationship by separate criteria, but the author of it is keen to allow and recognise 'grey areas':

..we should look to affirm and deepen that in a relationship which corresponds to the Christian ideal, rather than condemn it for what it appears to lack. Such an approach to morality may appear to be compromise, and will be less comfortable than a precise black and white view. It may pose problems of definition to the lawyers, but will I hope enable us all to live in this grey world.⁽¹⁷⁾

The difficulty in liturgical terms in this and all the other views which have been put forward is the lack of acknowledgement of the situation in the marriage service itself. Of all places where the church and those in it need honesty, the liturgy is one of the most important. To read the introduction in The Alternative Service Book 1980, publicly outlining the church's view of marriage in a wedding ceremony, and not to acknowledge that the couple involved in the wedding have been living together and have already started the process of marriage, smacks of naivety, or hypocrisy, or both, to those who come to such a service. The highest ideals of marriage must always be outlined in the service; part of the purpose of the wedding is to celebrate the highest ideals of love, fidelity and commitment. This, however, should not preclude some way of acknowledging a journey already begun. Some have suggested that if the couple have been living together there is no point in the father of the bride 'giving her away', since in every real sense she has already gone and been accepted by another. The practical outworking of which might be to have the couple arriving together at the service rather than separately. This does not rule out parental blessing as a formal 'letting go' from the family; in order to cleave it is important to leave and some formal and ritual acknowledgement of this can be very significant.

There have been many other suggestions as to how one particular view of cohabitation could be acknowledged in the wedding rite; one of which is that the couple should repent publicly of their living together having separated for a time before the wedding. Such a couple would also be excluded from receiving the eucharist. If the church really wants to say that cohabitation is a sin then this approach is logical and consistent. But it would be very difficult to ask clergy to do this if they could not agree to such an extreme theological stance, and would be a missiological nightmare.

The issue of whether cohabitation is sin is focussed more sharply when a cohabiting couple bring their infant for baptism. They will be asked during the baptism service whether they repent of their sins; if cohabitation is a sin then the logical corollary is that a cohabiting couple do not repent of their sin of living together and so their child should not be baptised. Is it right to ask parents to be married before their child can be baptised? Is it right to baptise a child with 'unrepentant' parents?

There are many problems in the area of cohabitation and marriage, and many ethical and pastoral problems which ensue which cannot be explored fully here. The difficulty, for the purpose of this thesis, focusses in the liturgy itself and the honesty with which cohabitation is dealt with in the church service. Revision of The Alternative Service Book 1980 is due in the year 2000, and it will be important to take account of the trends in society at that point, perhaps with a service of marriage specially written for those who have already lived together for some time. This would not be a second best service, but a service which can be honest and affirming about the nature of the existing relationship whilst helping the couple to move on to a new phase of their relationship, in which they are asking the church to help them, and God to bless them. In the mean time perhaps it would be helpful to have some centrally agreed guidelines with optional prayers and symbols (such as coming into the church together and dispensing with the 'giving away') so that the church is not seen to be colluding with a general silence about what is known to be true⁽¹⁸⁾.

3.3 'Till death us do part'?⁽¹⁹⁾

The problem of how best to acknowledge and care for those who have been divorced and seek to be remarried in the church is one which has vexed the church for some years now as it has sought to hold together a pastoral ministry with perceived biblical ideals. The distancing of the law of the land from the law of the church has forced the problem to be encountered more and more frequently in the last thirty years. The Church of England officially has an absolutist stance; Canon B30 is the starting point of all argument and it states quite

clearly that second marriage is not permitted. In the late seventies a paper was published 'Marriage and the Church's task'⁽²⁰⁾ which can be seen as the church trying to relieve itself of its absolutist stance. In the years 1981-1985 the General Synod of the Church of England failed to find an agreed policy on the subject of re-marriage, but the right of local clergy to officiate at the marriage in church of divorcees was asserted. The House of Bishops does not have the power to impose a policy on the clergy and so it withdrew from the debate leaving the matter to the discretion of local clergy, a situation wholly unsatisfactory in terms of Church of England policy as a unified entity. This has led to variation in practice from parish to parish and a general confusion amongst those wanting to be married in church after a divorce as to whether they will be able to or not.

Since the Reformation there has been a continual tension and debate between the 'indissolubilist' and the 'non-indissolubilist' position on marriage. One view of divorce is taken from Deut 24v1-4 and concludes that the passage does not approve of divorce but has pastoral suggestions should a divorce have occurred; it is to be noted that in this passage re-marriage is assumed. In the examination of the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of Paul on divorce some would allow divorce (and re-marriage) on two grounds only, because of one partners serious sexual immorality or because a believing partner was deserted by an unbelieving partner. These two exceptions are the subject of much debate, perhaps particularly the Matthean exceptive clause (Matt 5v32 and 19v9).

There is much doubt about these verses. Some take them to be the words of Christ, others say that the Luke and Mark versions of these sayings (Mk 10v11-12; Lk 16v18) are more accurate and that the Matthean exceptive clause crept in because of the way Matthew's community dealt with divorce, rather than passing on the teaching of Christ. With the Matthean exceptive clause disputed, the question at issue becomes rather the nature and purpose of the teaching of Christ: was he giving prescriptive legislation, or was he setting out an ideal and a principle, the application of which needed to be worked out by his followers in their contemporary situations?

The church is called to be, among other things, the agent of the mission of Christ in contemporary society. That mission includes proclaiming and creating the possibility for the

living out of God's will for marriage. It also includes being the ministers of reconciliation and forgiveness in situations of personal failure. Holding these two elements in creative tension is difficult, and it is living in this tension which has caused the church to be seen as confused or uncaring.

The problem becomes one which has tested ethical thought for a long time: is marriage a relationship or a contract? Society seems to agree that marriage should be once and for life. It is reckoned that 85% of people still believe this; the church cannot agree what happens if that turns out to be impossible. If a valid marriage has been made, can divorce dissolve it? If it can, then re-marriage is obviously possible, if it cannot, then re-marriage is not to be permitted. If marriage can, in some circumstances, be dissolved, what counts as a marriage breakdown? It seems that in our present society a strict application of scripture leaves many pastoral gaps. Is becoming 'one flesh' just about sex? If sex does not make a marriage, what is the concern over sex with more than one person? If becoming 'one flesh' is only a matter of sex then there are many people whose promiscuity renders them polygamous, and yet that seems not to be the view of either society or the church. Can the church marry people who have lived with more than one partner? Does this count as marriage?

The view of marriage as covenant seems to be the view that the Church of England espouses, in it finding a way to express both scriptural integrity and pastoral reality, and this is certainly a viable way to resolve the contract or relationship debate. Prof. G.R.Dunstan compares God's covenant relationship with Israel with the marriage relationship and suggests that there are five elements common to both: an initiative of love, a vow of consent, obligations of faithfulness, promise of blessing and sacrifice⁽²¹⁾. Covenants are not made to be broken, but it is actually possible for one party to leave the covenant relationship. If marriage is a covenant it is then possible that the covenant can be broken and the marriage ended; this then allows the way for re-marriage. This means marriage is not indissoluble.

Taking Prof. Dunstan's five marks of covenant it is clear to see that the teaching of the Church of England, as outlined in the marriage service is that marriage is a covenant. The initiative of love is apparent implicitly throughout, and explicitly in the words of the introduction. In the introduction to the service there is, in the second paragraph, a reference to

the couple being 'united in that love as Christ is united with his church'. This is an allusion to Eph 5v21-33 which quotes Gen 2v24 and speaks of the covenantal relationship of Christ with his church. The element of sacrificial love is strong with reference to Christ giving himself up for the church; it seems that the elements of sacrifice and covenant are, in this area, very closely linked.

The second mark of a covenant is the vow of consent. The making of vows is very covenantal. The couple pledge themselves in promises about the nature of the life and love they give to each other. This is by its very nature a covenant. It is, of course, traditional to have vows in the marriage service, and the practice is not confined to church ceremonies, but however the covenant is made, and wherever it is made, the giving and receiving of the promise is the element which seals the covenant.

The third mark of a covenant is the obligation of faithfulness which is explicit in the questioning at the point of the decision: '..forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live?'. The promise of blessing, the fourth mark of a covenant, is also implicit throughout the service, in the introduction, in the exchanging of rings, and most explicitly in the blessing given by the minister after the proclamation of the union⁽²²⁾. Finally, the fifth mark of covenant, the area of sacrifice has already been alluded to in the nature of the covenant relationship between Christ and the church, and in the forsaking of all others. It can be said that sacrifice is also at the heart of the promise: 'All that I have I give to you', though this may be seen as sharing rather than sacrificing and does involve a process of reciprocity. This element is not one of the most explicit in the service, but is certainly apparent implicitly as a part of the love that is being celebrated throughout the service.

These five signs of the church's teaching point to the marriage service being a service of covenant. This is what the service says. But this is not how the church treats those who have broken the covenant they made in one marriage and who wish to make a new covenant, in good faith, in another. The example of Israel and its covenantal relationship with Yahweh would seem to suggest that a broken covenant has its own painful consequences, but that the breaking of one covenant does not prevent the making of another. In the Old Testament God remained faithful to his side of the covenant and it was Israel that breached the relationship; God's

faithfulness meant that God did not renege on his promises. In human terms it can be seen that in general it takes two to make a covenant and it takes two to break a covenant before a new covenant can be made. In Liturgy for a New Century, Stevenson suggests that this theology of covenant should be made more explicit in the revision of the Alternative Service Book 1980. He suggests stating in the opening exhortation that 'the bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation' thus joining creation and redemption in the service and making links with the baptismal covenant⁽²³⁾.

A further anomaly in practice in the Church of England at present is that some clergy will not re-marry divorcees, but will perform a service of blessing. If it is agreed that the couple are the people who make the marriage in the service and that the clergy are there to guide, bless and perform the legalities, then it seems rather strange that a service of blessing should be any different from a service of marriage. It is interesting to speculate on what a marriage service is other than a service of blessing. It seems reasonable that if it is right for a couple to marry then it is right to marry them in church. It is difficult to see how the service of blessing for re-marriage can be seen as anything other than a blurring of the issue. Uncertain of the status of the marriage, the church offers a service of blessing which is still considered to be inferior to the full marriage rite. The implication of this is that the marriage is half right and the former marriage half forgiven.

There are, however, still ethical problems in the re-marriage of divorcees which cannot be ignored. It would obviously be pastorally beneficial to be sure that some effort had been made to understand why the previous marriage had failed. There is a case for suggesting that the preparation process for a re-marriage should be detailed enough to ameliorate the problems to some extent. If the couple make the decision to marry and after preparation still believe that a wedding in church is the way they want to begin married life, the church, with all its teaching on the covenantal nature of marriage, must be available to them.

In practice, the whole area of re-marriage is fraught with difficulties. The idea and ideal of marriage seems to have changed in society so that it is sometimes difficult to know whether a failed marriage is the fault of those who were in the marriage or whether the failed marriage can legitimately be described as a victim of society and its pressures. The significance in

missiological terms is that the church is giving a set of mixed messages. At present the church treats marriage as a covenant in everything except the practice of re-marriage for divorcees. Divorce is seen as the one unforgivable sin, and the message given is not that of a loving God who has embodied love and forgiveness in the incarnated Jesus, and who offers a new start to all. If the church preaches reconciliation and forgiveness, then the actions of the church in this area should be seen to match up to the words.

3.4 'An Honourable Estate'⁽²⁴⁾

The story is recounted of a man who had spent some years in non-parochial ministry returning to a parish and being horrified at the change that had come about in the event of the marriage service:

Being prone to slight exaggeration, he described the service as "a more or less equal mixture of the Chelsea Flower Show, Trooping the Colour, the Miss World Competition, and a Film Company on location".⁽²⁵⁾

There seems little doubt that the whole ritual and celebration surrounding the marriage ceremony has undergone as much of a revolution as the idea of marriage has altogether. Creating the needs of those getting married is now big business. Many couples postpone getting married for financial reasons, not a new phenomenon, but the postponement now is in order to live together and save up for the sort of wedding which appears in fairy tale books, television soap operas and wedding catalogues. It is the major celebration of their life and there is good reason for wanting to celebrate it, but it is to be wondered whether the surrounding paraphernalia to the wedding service have proliferated because the service itself has become trivialised and marginalised. The joining of a couple in wedlock is one of the most significant rites of passage and it is important that the church faces the difficulties and inadequacies in the present ceremony. If these difficulties and inadequacies cannot be resolved, the probability is that the church will cease to have a function in the ceremony at all, and the secularisation will be complete.

For the church to fulfil its mission to show the love and light of God to the world, it

must be consistent and honest in the matters of cohabitation and re-marriage. The implications of the present situation in the church are damaging to the view of the church held by those not yet within its community. There is a real need for the liturgy of the church to be revised with a view to the missiological implications.

Surely it is condescending to treat every ceremony as if it were part of a fairy tale. The church's integrity is at stake in the eyes of at least some of the guests at the wedding. The couple's integrity is also at stake. They may have a whole range of feelings about what has preceded the wedding, ranging from regret to pride, but it is unfair to ask them to pretend it has not happened.⁽²⁶⁾

It is neither helpful nor honest to involve people in a process of marriage which is not true to their own situation.

There have been suggestions that one of the ways forward for marriage in the Church of England would be to follow a pattern now being adopted by some Roman Catholics, that of a phased rite. The engagement itself would be part of the ritual in the church, the couple would be prepared for marriage and prayed for by the church community (this would also make sense of the banns), and that this process would eventually lead to the marriage service itself. This is undoubtedly a much more integrative model of marriage and has much to recommend it missiologically. Whether this model is viable as a practical reality in parishes who perform approximately one hundred weddings per year is another matter.

Ultimately one of the main priorities of the wedding service, and indeed services of funeral and baptism, is that the service should be a service of worship. The services have a function which may seem to be other than that of worshipping God but it is still the priority of the church to enable the worship of God in every liturgy it performs. Pastoral priorities can shape liturgy, missiological priorities can shape liturgy, but unless the object of any liturgy is primarily to worship God then our worship is not Christian worship. There needs to be the provision of a meeting place where, as much as human arrangements can enable it, God can meet humanity and both the pre-rite stage and the rite itself can be celebrated. There is a necessity for the church to approach this with absolute integrity of belief, not compromising its creeds, whilst also opening the way to worship for those who are not yet part of the church community⁽²⁷⁾. The gift of liturgy, the gift of God's love is a part of the give and take of rites

of transition in the life of the Christian. It is also the gift of the Christian community to those who do not yet believe.

CHAPTER FOUR

'The Snares of Death'⁽¹⁾

4.1 The Sting of Death⁽²⁾

Where psychologists have created scales of stress points which correspond to events in a person's life, the death of a loved one is always at the top of such a scale; it is the most stressful event that can occur. There is no doubt that the pain, grief and loss surrounding death are both fearful and bewildering. Death may have lost its sting in the eternal perspective, but there is still a lot of pain to be borne in the finitude of human relationships. To repeat a truism, death is one of the universal facts of life, and is therefore something with which all humanity must come to terms. Traditionally the church has played a large part in the funeral culture of this country, and the church has always seen itself as having something unique to offer to try to make sense of death. How far this is reflected in the liturgy is debatable and is certainly an area of concern in the mission of the church. If the church really has a gospel message about death then it must be certain that it is saying it in a way which can be readily heard and understood, and in a way which will help to deal with the 'sting of death'.

In a death-denying and death-avoiding society, the church is able to boldly and confidently face that which the world spends most of its time running away from. The church is able to do this, not because of our hope for eternal life, but because of our bold and confident faith in the eternal love of God.⁽³⁾

One of the main features which separates the funeral from other rites of passage, rendering the rite and ritual more difficult for all concerned, is the lack of choice; not choice in the sense of there being no choice of service, but no choice in timing or personnel. There are choices which can be made about the sort of ceremony which seems appropriate; however, services which are to an extent experimental are often beyond the capabilities of a person or family in the first stages of deep shock and grief.

The law requires that remains should be disposed of with certain criteria which must be observed (such as the fact that under the terms of most local by-laws it is illegal to bury a body in your own back garden). The law does not stipulate a service of any sort, but a religious

service is still the way most people in this country mark the passing of someone they know and love. This may be surprising considering less than one person in five is active in religion, but may be less surprising in the light of a European-wide survey showing that 76% of the population of this country believe in God and 57% in heaven⁽⁴⁾. Many people view a religious service as a sort of insurance policy. For other people, they may feel that a religious ceremony is hypocritical but are uncertain as to how they can find a more suitable service. For most people the traditional ritual is soothing whatever their particular state of faith may be.

The fact that there is little choice in a funeral means that the minister on this occasion has a much more central role. The bereaved may want to contribute to the service and should be encouraged to do so, but the minister performs the service. It is important that the bereaved should be made to feel a part of the service as fully as possible, participating wherever they can, as this will make a considerable difference to their perception of the funeral. It is impossible to be too specific about funerals, each is so personal and different, but there are many ways in which the bereaved can join in with the liturgy. To focus for the moment on the most basic participation, it may be appropriate for the bereaved to be a part of the liturgy by joining in with the Lord's prayer (missiologically speaking this would be better said in the traditional version) or in the reading of Psalm 23.

It is important, for the care not only of the incomer in terms of mission, but any bereaved person, that the psychological aspects of grief are understood and attended to in the liturgy. The process of grieving is so complex that it is helpful for the funeral liturgy to encompass as many elements as possible to ease the process in a healthy non-repressive way. It is important that appropriate and easily understandable ritual and symbol are used, and it is important that the service reflects adequately the response of the church to death and the response of the mourners to the death. These can sometimes be at variance to each other and it is important in missiological terms that the discrepancies are addressed. The church can seem as though it has no real idea of what is real and true for people if the liturgy it uses for funerals is outside the experience of the mourners, and is inaccessible in cognitive and non-cognitive terms.

The British culture has changed radically in its view of death in the last hundred years.

Not only has medical science given the hope for greater longevity but death has become more uncommon in every day life and less open; in simple terms people die when they are old and they die in hospital. It may be that death is still the great taboo, but it may be that it has become such a hidden part of life that it is irrelevant rather than forbidden. The Book of Common Prayer says: 'In the midst of life we are in death'⁽⁵⁾, but there is a real sense in which that may no longer be seen to be the case. Infant mortality is much less common than even fifty years ago, and the mobility of society means that often families are far apart when a death of an older generation occurs. In turn the corpse will be 'tidied up' before the relatives arrive. There are some who believe that the death taboo is concerned more with the public ritualistic elements than personal grief; the upsurge of interest in counselling and books on bereavement would certainly point to individual interest being increased in some sections of society⁽⁶⁾. Many euphemisms for death are still used to avoid the starkness (as some would see it) of more straightforward speech; a person is said to have 'passed on', 'passed over', 'passed away' or 'gone on before'. The secularisation of society has also had its effect on the view of the after-life and heaven and hell; most people do not attend church regularly, and the ancient assumption of knowledge of the framework of a Christian understanding of death is, to a large extent, gone.

The change is not only in terms of belief. Death seldom occurs at home now, and the body is seldom kept in the front room until the burial, therefore there are many people who have never seen or touched a dead body, and one of the most natural and inevitable events of life is kept at a distance. The whole process of dealing with the body has been handed over to professionals. In the north east, for example, until quite recently it was common for there to be two or three women in a street who would keep 'laying out' equipment in a drawer ready to go at a moment's notice to lay out any corpse in the area⁽⁷⁾. It was also part of the ritual to view the body, whether in the home or at a Chapel of Rest.

It is not only the pre-funeral rituals which have changed. At the funeral itself, it used to be customary for the coffin to be carried by friends and family of the deceased as a last act of service. These traditions have been eroded and have disappeared altogether from some areas.

This has had a radical effect on what is left of the rituals surrounding death to try to make sense of the grief experienced. There is a sense in which the funeral service is being asked to overcome the lack of ritual at other points in the rite, and it seems that the funeral service as it stands cannot necessarily meet the demands. If Christians have something distinctive to say about death, if there is any validity in Christian hope, then the church must find ways of communicating this to those of uncertain faith or none. Every year thousands of Christian funerals take place: it is a real opportunity for mission in action and service if only the liturgy could meet the needs of the bereaved.

In his book on funerals, Tony Walter recounts the story of a woman whose brother and father died within a year, her experiences at the funerals were quite different and so her experiences of grief management were different also. The woman suffered awful desperation at the crematorium services as she broke down when the curtains closed round the coffin, only to have to control her emotions to greet the guests. Not long after this, her uncle (who had brought her up) also died and she attended his funeral. He was given a Fife fisherman's funeral, the body was driven up to the graveyard through the village, and at this service she was one of the six people who lowered his body into the grave as the minister proclaimed 'I am the resurrection and the life..'. Walter considers that this funeral had four elements about it which were significant: the dead body was not hidden, those close to the deceased felt the weight of his body as they lowered him into the grave; there was a strong community element in the funeral which gave the family great support; the family and the community actively participated in the ritual, 'they did not pay the undertaker and wonder why everything was so cold and impersonal'; and the religious hope and faith were present in the surroundings not only in the service⁽⁸⁾. These elements can be viewed as being significantly and demonstrably missing from most other funeral services which occur in Britain. Walter's book is an exploration of the funeral service which he says 'are far too often impersonal, hypocritical, and bureaucratic, replacing mystery with mistrust'⁽⁹⁾. He suggests that there is a great need to look more closely at the whole experience of the funeral and the pastoral care which can be given through the liturgy and ritual of the funeral.

This cannot be a full description of how a funeral should address the psyche, but, for example, it is important that grief is acknowledged as the right response to the death of a loved one and that a 'stiff upper lip' is not the necessary response to that grief. Because death so often puts the bereaved into a state of shock and numbness, words can be very difficult to take in, therefore the liturgy should include symbols, actions and movement, not just words, concepts and abstractions.

Liturgical celebration involves the whole person, body, mind and heart. It is what we do as much as what we say that strengthens faith and calls forth a response in faith. Nothing stands out more clearly than an inauthentic symbol or a sign that contradicts accompanying words, especially in this television age of strong visual images... Our funeral rites must proclaim the paschal meaning of Christian death in word and sign.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Roman rite includes the sprinkling of the coffin with water. This has the effect of ritual purification for the journey as it were, and has powerful connections with baptism. Baptism has always been compared with death. 'It is our womb and also our tomb'⁽¹¹⁾. Luther spoke of baptism as a dress rehearsal for death, it is the first experience of letting go. In baptism death is described as being 'in Christ', and the rising seen as rising to new life in Christ. There are, of course, problems with employing baptismal imagery if the person was not baptised, or if the person was known to have held antipathetical views to Christianity. Perhaps an imaginative use of candles might be employed, with the relatives coming forward to place a lighted candle on the coffin as a symbol of the light of Christ, or of the light the deceased had given in life, or both⁽¹²⁾. This is more flexible than specific baptismal imagery. There is a clergyman in the Durham diocese who uses imagery with candles to enhance the symbolism of the funerals he takes. After the commendation he snuffs out the candles on either side of the coffin and speaks at that point of light going from this world but not from those left behind. He then kisses the coffin as an act of leave-taking for all present. This may not be ideal for all funeral officiants, but he is using symbol and picture, touch and smell in a way absent from many funerals.

It is important that grief, loss and guilt are addressed in our liturgy. In the funeral liturgy of the Scottish Episcopal church(1987) there are included two optional prayers which are focussing on the need for forgiveness, both of the living and of the dead⁽¹³⁾. Forgiveness

has always been part of the Greek Orthodox funeral liturgy, and some would say that the Church of England was mistaken in not including prayers of forgiveness in The Alternative Service Book 1980.

Our post-Enlightenment bourgeois culture... has done the very thing that makes some grief impossible to come to terms with. It has eradicated the possibility of mourners at the funeral, communally and before God, sorting out the sin that has marred their relationship with the deceased and with their maker.⁽¹⁴⁾

Underlying many questions relating to the ritual of the funeral is the question of the purpose of a funeral and who the funeral is for. In a British survey⁽¹⁵⁾ the responses in the survey reflected that the clergy thought the funeral was to show the love of God to comfort the bereaved. The bereaved, however, saw the purpose of the funeral as honouring the life of the person who had died. It seems perhaps inevitable that those who were involved in the funeral on the professional side, the clergy, the funeral directors and so on, focussed their attention on the bereaved as they often had no contact with the deceased before they died; whereas the friends and family focussed on the deceased. In the literature there is a difference of opinion as to who the funeral is for. Douglas Davies believes that the funeral is not first and foremost a 'therapeutic ritual for the living'⁽¹⁶⁾ but is a way of marking the end of a person's physical existence; whereas others⁽¹⁷⁾ believe that the funeral is not for the dead at all but only for the bereaved. It seems absurd to mark these areas out as an either/or as Tony Walter suggests:

Ultimately, the funeral is performed not just for the deceased, who is no longer there to care; nor just for the family, who may all be dead too; nor just for the community, for community there may be none; nor just for friends, who may not exist. But the death of a human being must be marked. The funeral belongs to humanity.⁽¹⁸⁾

This expresses the dignity and importance of human life as a life created and given by God, lived within God's view and compass. Technically, the funeral is a rite of passage with three specific areas of focus: the funeral is for the deceased as an acknowledgment of their life and a signification of their new state; for the family, friends, and community, if they exist, as a rite of passage to their new role as bereaved people or widower or whatever; and for the world because God made and sustains the world. Each death is both unique and universal.

Death may be universal but in its uniqueness the community has a pastoral part to play which has recently been realised, this is not only the enabling of the rites of passage in a

general sense, but more specifically in the service of the funeral itself. The Order of Christian Funerals which the Roman Catholics in this country have recently published includes in the introductory rubrics the exhortation that the ministry of consolation exercised in funerals is for everyone 'according to the various gifts and offices in the church'(19). It is suggested that priests educate the congregations in this ministry. Catholics see this ministry as part of their care and mission in the world. For those who have maybe died as lapsed Catholics, the Catholic community is encouraged still to celebrate the funeral rite and care for the mourners with particular compassion. For those whose faith is not strong may find great comfort to discover that 'they and the deceased are received with warmth and not condemnation'(20). Many Anglican churches have begun to train lay ministry teams to support and care for those who have been bereaved, whether they are part of the church or not. This is one way in which the incomer can be cared for by the community of faith. The funeral is certainly not an occasion for overt evangelism, but it has to be recognised that the funeral has a very large part to play in mission in its broadest and gentlest sense.

As a real example of how this can work in the ordinary parish setting, in the parish where I am placed there is a team of trained lay bereavement visitors who visit those of the bereaved whom the clergy feel need support, or who themselves ask for such a support. There is also a quarterly bereavement service to which the relatives of those whose funerals have occurred between three and six months previously are invited. There is also an annual large bereavement service on the Sunday nearest All Souls day. At these services the names of the bereaved are mentioned, special music is sung, appropriate prayers are used and a sermon with the theme of bereavement and the Christian hope is preached. Welcome and refreshment is then offered by the bereavement visitors and other members of the church. This offers individual support, ritual public acknowledgement and a sense of community to those who are bereaved within the area of the parish. The response to this range of care is unfailingly positive.

There is obviously a need for some of the new insights given by psychology to be incorporated into the funeral rites. There seems to be a paucity of imagery which can be easily understood by those who attend the funeral, and often what imagery there is is interpreted in a

way which was never intended. It seems that it is important for the church to examine the pastoral care that it offers to those who come to funerals, not only in terms of care before and after the funeral, but also in what it is doing and saying in its liturgy. For the incomer a funeral is likely to be traumatic, and the liturgy can often be seen to be adding to the trauma rather than helping to find a way through the trauma. The M.P. Ken Livingstone is quoted as saying: 'Church of England funerals are about as moving as the check-out at a supermarket'⁽²¹⁾, it is clear that the church itself thinks that funerals are a matter of life and death; this gulf must be crossed if the mission of the church to the bereaved is to have integrity.

4.2 'Ashes to Ashes..'⁽²²⁾

The ceremony which seems to be under most debate in the funeral liturgies is that of cremation. Part of the problem centres on the crematorium buildings themselves. Far from being a part of community life they are places set apart where, somewhat mysteriously and without it being apparent, bodies are burned. There is no sense of history or continuity inherent in the crematorium building, and this adds to the modern mystique about dead bodies and allows more distance to be put between the mourners and the corpse. Some crematoria all but conceal the coffin, and the whole service can be performed almost without reference to the fact of the corpse in the room (corpseless funerals do occur in some places in California). In many crematoria the focus of the room is away from the body, or the body is placed in such a way as to make it difficult to see because it is too high, or impossible to stand around.

The lack of flexibility in crematoria is not always an asset particularly when it seems that closer contact with the dead body is a healthy part of grieving. The service of the funeral is partly to create a distance between the living and the dead, but sometimes it is important for the living to come near to the dead before the distance is allowed to open up. Most crematoria make contact with the coffin impossible. To be close to the deceased is not a matter of course or force, but is nonetheless to be considered as part of the symbolic farewell that is to be made. The crematorium is often a place with little symbolism because it is based on the idea of a functional, municipal building rather than creating a building with a philosophy or theology of death as its basis.

There is no crematorial equivalent of the honest-to-goodness phrase "dead and buried". ("Dead and Burnt"?!). So crematoria interiors end up with a pseudo-gentility that tries to hide the facts of the matter. This is what Jeremy Barton call "an architecture of hypocrisy".⁽²³⁾

A crematorium is designed to burn bodies, it has been created to deal with the dead and that is its sole purpose and focus. A church on the other hand is the place where people are baptised and married and where a community of people worship God and care for the buildings as their 'home': it is a building not defined by death. Perhaps this is a good reason to encourage people to use the church for funerals. The church provides an image and focus of community and has identity as a place and a place with continuity. In a crematorium the 'workings' are all hidden round the back, the chimney is discreet, and religious symbols have to be brought in to what is in fact a utilitarian way of disposing of remains. In spite of this, cremation has risen sharply in the last fifty years from accounting for 8% of deaths in 1945 to 70% in 1987.

At present some of the re-examination of funeral liturgies is focussed particularly on the question of what happens to a dead body when it is buried and the imagery surrounding that, and what happens when a body is burned and the lack of imagery surrounding that. In the Anglican church the same basic liturgy is used for both burial and cremation services which implies an understanding of them as the same; this is not the case either in theological or ritual terms. Traditionally the burial of the dead meant that just as Christ waited in the tomb before the divine act of God to raise him to resurrection life, so too the body in the grave was in the same state of waiting for the resurrection. The collective burial of early Christians anticipated the communal resurrection on the last day. Part of the imagery used in the burial service is of resurrection⁽²⁴⁾, but in cremation 'the body ends and offers very little scope for resurrection language'⁽²⁵⁾; Christ's resurrection is related to the idea of the empty tomb: in cremation there is no body in a tomb.

The traditional burial service focuses on the body and its resurrection future. While the modern cremation service explicitly follows that pattern its implicit message is that the body has come to an end but the soul has gone on. The only hope that many can read into the cremation service is the hope of a surviving soul.⁽²⁶⁾

A further problem in the imagery of cremation in our culture can be seen in the instinctive linkage in the minds of Christian and non-Christian alike that death and burning are

inextricably linked to hell. The notion of fire as purifier is not always positive, and the cultural history of fire in Britain does not really allow for many positive notions of fire in cremation. For many the mass incineration of the Jews in the holocaust in the Second World War is too searing a memory when it comes to burning the remains of a loved one. In other cultures there is not such a problem. The funeral of Indira Ghandi was seen by millions all over the world as her son set light to the funeral pyre. Such positive images can come from religious belief in the benefit of fire; in Hinduism, reincarnation is made possible through fire; a person is not technically dead until their skull has cracked during the burning process, so fire is that which frees.

In the cremation liturgy there is no place for the celebration of fire with much biblical imagery entirely ignored in the service. God appeared in fire in many places in the bible: to Moses, to lead the people of Israel, more controversially perhaps in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and in the New Testament the Holy Spirit comes as fire to the disciples at Pentecost⁽²⁷⁾. For some protestants the idea of fire is linked closely with purgatory which for them is an unhelpful association. There are other traditions which may be drawn upon: on a personal note, I looked into the ovens in a crematorium whilst they were burning bodies, and what I saw reminded me far more of the transfiguration than hell. Towards the end of the burning of a body, air is pumped through to raise the temperature and burn off the residual wood of the coffin and so on. This makes the skeleton of the person clearly visible and shining white with the heat. There is, however, no way to make these rich images live in the present service of cremation. There is much scope for a creative re-examination of funeral liturgies.

There is debate too about the element of 'double committal' in a cremation service. In a burial the body is put into the ground and the family take their leave of it. In a cremation there is the committal at the funeral service after which the curtains close (or whatever) and then often there is the question of what to do with the ashes. In law the ashes do not have the same standing as a body, and yet for a mourning family when they are given the ashes of their deceased they want to be able to mark the occasion somehow. There is an interment of ashes

service available⁽²⁸⁾, but it means that there are what amounts to two committals, two moments when the family have to take their leave, in the crematorium and later with the ashes. There are problems with this in the messages that are given and the rites of passage as outlined by Van Gennep are confused; the post-liminal stage of the funeral may have more than one phase in a double committal which may have no place in ritual terms. To complete adequately the post-liminal stage there needs to be one definitive act; to have two could be said to weaken the rite and so make it less effective⁽²⁹⁾. Some people ask that their ashes should be taken to somewhere where they have been happy and scattered there. There is a sense in which this action fulfils the life of the deceased, 'where your identity is there will your ashes be also'; it can also be seen as an extreme act of privatisation. Cremation has made it possible for the remains of an individual to be in private hands in a way never before permissible, and the church must think carefully about how it views such a phenomenon.

In terms of Christian theology such privatizing and this-worldly focussing of the identity of the dead is unacceptable...The eschatological framework of the Christian faith is transformed into potentially idiosyncratic decisions of private individuals. At that point it becomes impossible to speak of social rites of passage.⁽³⁰⁾

4.3 Sacred or Secular?

There is a growing movement towards the secular funeral. Somehow people who do not profess Christian beliefs in life are felt not to want to do so in death. Is this simply a sign of the trend towards greater secularism in general? Or have the inadequacies of the Christian way of dealing with death finally forced people to act for themselves? It may be that there is truth in both those questions. In Australia one in eight funerals are now taken by a funeral celebrant who is not part of the church. This situation has only existed since the mid-seventies and came about because of the institution of the office of Marriage Celebrant. The sort of service offered by marriage celebrants quickly became popular. Then the celebrants found themselves being asked to take a funeral, perhaps of someone whom they had married, and very soon they found this sphere of work was as popular as the wedding services, if not more so. The services offered by such celebrants are not specifically anti-religious, but they are characterised by what

has come to be called the life-centred approach. Celebrants are offered by the undertaker in just the same way as the services of the church are offered. If the mourners want to have a celebrant for their service, such a person would come to the house and try to find out precisely what the person who died is like in the view of those left behind. This is so that the celebrant and family will be able to compose together the eulogy which forms the main part of the life-centred funeral.

Some have suggested that the life-centred funeral is the equivalent of the protestant funeral. The suggestion is that protestants believe the purpose of a funeral to be threefold: a warning against damnation, proclaiming the Christian hope, and thanking God for the life of the deceased. It may be seen historically that through the ages there has been a weakening of the notion of a warning against damnation, something Walter refers to as 'the abolition of hell'. There are many factors which he identifies in the process and among the leading trends are included the realisation that a finite offence does not merit an infinite punishment and social science discovering that sins are not caused by a sinful heart but by the environment. In the Romantic Victorian era leading into the time of the first World War there seemed to be a complete withdrawal from the plausibility of hell. At this time so many men died in circumstances which were thought of as heroic, that the idea that such a person could go to hell was unthinkable. Hell no longer had any hold in terms of faith and faithfulness and became attached to the deeds performed in life:

..in the 1920s the Protestant funeral turned into an occasion to comfort the living with the hope of heaven. in North America ministers in liberal churches criticised the "hell-fire and damnation" funeral sermon as psychologically damaging. Enter instead around this time the twenty-third Psalm and flowers; exit all talk of hell and worms. The congregation are not to be frightened, they are to be comforted, and in the process reduced to total passivity. There is nothing for them to do but be thankful for the life of the deceased, and be grateful she is now in heaven.⁽³¹⁾

Whilst hell seems to have become an obsolete notion, it is also true that for many the Christian hope is not something which is part of their experience, other than a nebulous hope that they will go to heaven if their behaviour meets the standard. So what is left for the funeral is the life-centred approach giving thanks for the life of the deceased⁽³²⁾.

The secular funeral in this country is largely managed by members of the British

Humanist Society. This is slightly different from the Australian approach largely because, on ideological grounds, the humanists will not include anything religious in their ceremonies. At present in this country the options for the type of funeral are more often constrained by geography and knowledge of the possibilities than anything else. If there is no Humanist celebrant in the area then it is hard to find anything other than a religious funeral, it is also something which undertakers do not generally offer.

Neither priest nor secular celebrant in Britain seems to know what to do with those by no means few people who combine practical secularism with a small dose of folk religion. Here, surely, is a market waiting to be tapped by celebrants whose respect for the life they are publicly celebrating is not limited by the belief or unbelief of the celebrant.⁽³³⁾

Tony Walter seems to think that the church should not necessarily have a part in the funeral business except for the few who actually espouse Christianity. He suggests that were the life-centred funeral with a non-clerical celebrant to become the norm clergy would worry at first, and then find that it was a great relief to be freed from what is quite a burden on many clerics. He also outlines how many Christian people are already performing life-centred funerals but are not yet ready to admit it.

The question has to be asked as to why the church has such a large part of the funerals in this culture. The reasons are obviously largely historical, but are also theological. Even so is this a situation which the church should seek to perpetuate? If the church really feels that it cannot offer the Christian hope to people and prepare them for their death in the ceremonies (as Walter would suggest), then it is probably right that the church should give way to secularisation. Many people, however, would not perceive this to be the truth about what the church has to offer to the bereaved in the rite and ritual surrounding death. Statistics seem to show that between a quarter and a half of the population in this country would be happy for funeral to be taken by someone other than clergy⁽³⁴⁾, so it is obviously an area which needs to be considered seriously.

Whilst the occasion of a death is not the time to enter into aggressive evangelism many studies show that it is precisely at the time of the death of someone close that people begin to rethink their own attitude to faith in some way. In a Cremation Research Project quoted by

Douglas Davies 13% of those interviewed said their religious faith had been strengthened through the events surrounding death and cremation. Of particular missiological significance was the finding that 2% of people said that faith had been initiated at the time of a funeral, and 5% said they had lost their faith through a death and funeral⁽³⁵⁾. So 20%, nearly a fifth of those in the survey, were assessing their life of faith in a new way as a result of the events surrounding the death of someone they knew. This is certainly a significant proportion and suggests that there is a need for churches and for funeral liturgies which will enable the process of initiation and incorporation into the life of the church; it does not suggest that the church should cease to be intimately involved in funerals. It is clear that there are many ways in which the church could develop to find a more meaningful and honest way to be involved in funerals, indeed, it seems that if the church does not respond to the problems already apparent in its dealing with funerals at present, it will lose the chance to be involved at all in some cases.

4.4 'Sure and Certain Hope..'⁽³⁶⁾

It would seem that there is a real and pressing need to enrich the funeral liturgy. This is not only because of the results of psychology which have enlightened the whole attitude to death and bereavement, though obviously this is important, but it is also to be seen in terms of the distinctive ministry which the church can offer. The new funeral liturgies should, in general terms, be attempting to restore some positive elements of the early church's dealings with death; this may mean that whilst the reading of the bible is prominent there are also opportunities for sacramental, congregational participation as the church affirms what it believes about death and tries to offer the comfort of God to the mourners. The focus of ministry during a funeral should be twofold: to proclaim and show God's love at the time of death and to commend the deceased to God's grace. Both in the proclamation and the commendation there is a real missiological opportunity and challenge.

The Christian funeral gives the best opportunity for showing faith in the power of God and the love of God. The funeral service should at its best still always be a service of worship,

not merely a utilitarian way to dispose of a corpse. This is where Tony Walter fails to grasp the challenge and possibility for a distinctive Christian approach. It is true that the exigencies of life mean that funerals are often part of a very busy schedule for clergy, but the church still offers something utterly unique, not just a life-centred funeral, more than that. Amongst other things, belief in the resurrection of Christ and belief in the resurrection of those to whom eternal life has been given is of paramount importance in the funeral; it is not merely a tradition which has become outmoded. But more than that, the church has the chance to show Christian care and God's love to those who are mostly not yet part of a worshipping community. This can be a prelude to fruitful contact which begins the process of incorporating an individual into the life of the church.

A difficulty not often discussed is the status of the person in the coffin. It may be that many of the people who write about liturgy or who write liturgy believe that it is not up to humanity to judge, but perhaps there is a call for flexibility in the liturgy. It is obviously a nonsense to describe a person's soul in terms of heaven and eternal life in the liturgy when that person has shown an antipathy to Christianity all their life. It is obviously pastorally inept not to find some way of commending such a person to God in terms which are realistic about the known state of their soul. It is, however, not the place of those on earth to judge the eternal destination (or otherwise) of such a person. It is a delicate balance, but could be based on the notion in the alternative intercessions in The Alternative Service Book 1980 commending those whose faith is known to God alone⁽³⁷⁾. A service called 'A Service of Burial of One Who Does Not Profess the Christian Faith' has been included in material in America. The prayers include a commendation into the hands of God, and the committal uses the trisagion, the ikos and the kontakion from Eastern Byzantine liturgy. These do not refer to 'sure and certain hope of the resurrection', but use familiar ideas in such a way as to say more for those who are left than the one in the coffin⁽³⁸⁾.

Robin Green calls for funeral liturgy to be more in the manner of a resource book which can be used appropriately in the funeral service. He suggests that there is weakness in having one liturgy which has to serve in all similar situations, how ever different the details

are⁽³⁹⁾. This would seem to ameliorate the anomalies which are perceived in the present case where only one liturgy is used for any death and any means of disposal. Such a resource book would be helpful, but also to have some framework and some material which is always included to make the service recognisable in all its forms and to express an element of common prayer. Douglas Davies has suggested a whole funeral liturgy for use at a crematorium in his book, and there is much to recommend such a resource. The church has universal truths which are to be proclaimed and there are particular needs on a local and individual level which must be met also.

There is much that is positive in the whole way in which the funeral is approached in the church. It would also seem, however, that there are ways forward which would enhance the existing rituals in a way which would make the mission of the church even more poignant and helpful over the time of death. The theology of cremation is one area which must be more systematically worked, also the inclusion of the newer insights from the psychology of grief, but the picture is still an optimistic one. Many people whose contact with the church is minimal still seek the aid and comfort of the church at the time of a death. It would be a wasted opportunity not to welcome the incomer and to do all that is possible to ease the passage of this particular rite.

CHAPTER FIVE

Initiation

5.1 Rite of Passage?

There is no higher or more urgent task to which the church is called than baptism. In this evangelistic and missional act of naming, claiming, converting, proclaiming, and delivering people as God's people - we see the beginning and end of the church's message, mission, and mandate: "Go into all the world and make disciples...baptizing...teaching..."⁽¹⁾

In protestant churches in general the two dominical sacraments, baptism and eucharist, are the cornerstones of the church's sacramental life. It is both sad and inevitable that there is more controversy over these two sacraments than almost anything else in the life and unity of the Church. There are two theoretically quite distinct understandings of baptism, it can be seen either as an initiation into the church, or as a secular rite of passage, something close to a ritualised naming ceremony which is performed with a child. In practice usually both understandings exist side-by-side either more or less easily. In missiological terms it is important to find a way to use the baptism service without compromising its meaning or meaningfulness. It may also be necessary to examine the service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child⁽²⁾ to see if this could be a helpful way to develop the introduction of children to church.

There is still a lot of superstition surrounding baptism. Many parents bring their children for baptism in just the same way that they take them for their inoculations. If such parents are offered a service of thanksgiving for the safe delivery of their child the response is often to the effect that they would rather have 'the proper thing'. Whatever the popular understanding of 'the proper thing', what should the attitude of the church be in regard to one of its most important sacramental acts? Should the church operate an open baptism policy or a closed baptism policy? Is the current service of thanksgiving not sufficiently understood or expressed to be a reasonable alternative to baptism as a rite of passage? It is certainly the case that current policy on baptism is not uniform, and that there is a lively debate on the subject of

open or closed baptism policy, covenant or contract.

The faith status of the parents and godparents is an issue which has vexed the missiological mind for some time. In the service in The Alternative Service Book 1980 the parents and godparents are required to answer questions about their own faith: 'Therefore I ask you these questions which you must answer for yourselves and for this child'. Gordon Kuhrt has expounded a view looking to a covenantal theology of baptism. He believes that the baptism of infants should be limited to those of 'believing' families.

Baptism is not simply a "rite of passage"; it is a Christian sacrament. It does not simply express God's love for all (like the rain on the just and unjust); it is about being "in Christ", "in the Spirit", "in the church " and "in faith"... This is the sacrament of grace, but not of cheap grace - it needs to be received and believed - if we are really believing in baptism and then living baptised lives.⁽³⁾

It seems that parents and godparents will answer the interrogations at baptism in the affirmative whether or not they understand or believe them because not to do so would prevent the baptism of their child. Some churches have a very rigorous preparation for baptism which operates as a way of incorporating people into the church. This can lead to the detrimental implication (in terms of the church's mission) that there are hurdles which an individual must traverse before the church considers them acceptable. This would seem to be a difficulty with Kuhrt's argument but not the only difficulty. His view of the covenantal theology of baptism seems to hint at a sort of bilateral covenant which relies on the faith of the parents and God's grace, but the parents' faith is seen as vital to the efficacy of baptism. There is a danger of Pelagianism in this way of thinking which has been noted by other writers⁽⁴⁾.

The way forward suggested by Spinks is to follow the pattern from the Church of Scotland in its 1986 Order for Holy Baptism⁽⁵⁾. In this service parents and sponsors declare their desire to present an infant for baptism and acknowledge a belief in the Trinity. Only after the baptism are the parents asked to make promises, therefore, theoretically at least, the parents could decline to make such a promise but the baptism would remain unaffected⁽⁶⁾. In this case, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that the process of decision and the questioning about faith will have occurred before the service, and may have been very detailed.

There are those who believe that the effectiveness of baptism is not conditional on the

belief of the parents and would therefore withhold baptism from no-one. Often in these circumstances, the faith that is considered to be operant in the baptism is that of the church as a corporate support and place of nurture for the child, rather than the individual faith of the parents. Spinks suggests that this is simply to 'replace a specific pelagianism for an anonymous one':

Our baptismal liturgies make it clear that faith is... required in infant baptism. The question at issue is "whose faith"... Clearly... in the Book of Common prayer,... the faith element in infant baptism is not essentially that of the parents but that of the church as a whole, of which the godparents are the mouthpiece.(7)

In the Book of Common Prayer in the service of baptism the questions of faith and doctrine are put to the godparents only; it is only the godparents who speak in the service (apart from the minister). Canon B 22/3 relating to this service, however, states that the responsibilities of the parents are the same 'as are in the service of Holy Baptism required of the godparents'. Of course, the Book of Common Prayer was written in a time when it was much more difficult not to be part of the church community, but in many ways the service of baptism has changed little.

There are many reasons why people who are not regular worshippers bring an infant for baptism. Carr believes that most parents approach the church for baptism with an 'ineradicable belief that contractual behaviour is the norm.. If the parents do something, then God for his part will respond by playing his role'(8). Carr suggests that it is good to give parents some understanding of baptism as a covenant relationship. Marriage may be contractual (though most marriages are not conceived in quite such stark terms), but the relationship between the parent and child is not contractual, the care and love given to a child are 'necessarily free acts of covenantal love'. He suggests that an understanding of God's covenantal love based on the parental covenantal love is the best way to explain what happens in baptism to those who are outside the church community.

A covenant brings its promises, its obligation and indeed its warnings. But the obligations of grace are not conditions of grace, and it is false in Christian theology to articulate moral obligation in contractual terms.(9)

If the baptism service can be seen as a covenant between God and the child, rather than as a contract between the parents and the church, the sacramental aspects of baptism have more

meaning. Without a real understanding of the grace of God operating in baptism and in the world at large, baptism can be seen as an almost magical formula for making everything safe. In The Alternative Service Book 1980⁽¹⁰⁾ tucked away in the service for emergency baptism there is a word of explanation about the nature of baptism: [the parents..] ..'should be assured that questions of ultimate salvation or of the provision of a Christian funeral for an infant who dies do not depend upon whether or not he had been baptized.' This is not found in popular understanding. The privatisation of belief and the privatisation of family life, and, some would say, Thatcherism with its emphasis on getting on by helping yourself, have led to a society much more imbued with contractual understanding than community generosity. This has its own effect on the understanding of the service of baptism.

In a section of a discussion paper for the Church of England daringly titled 'How does baptism work?', Martin Reardon attempts to set out succinctly what he believes to be the case. He says that baptism is the gift and work of God but does not deny that faith is necessary in the person baptised if it is to have real effect.

God has offered and made his gift in baptism. To be effective the gift has also to be received. Where it is not received in faith, it is not efficacious. If it is understood in this more personal way, teaching about ex opere operato should not be taken as a justification of totally indiscriminate baptism where there is no conceivable expectation of faith.⁽¹¹⁾

The 'baptism contract', however, seems to be a part of the cultural norm when a baby is born, in anthropological terms a rite of passage. But for whom is the rite of passage? Is baptism marking the birth of a new human being into the world, and is the ritual for the child? Or is it for the parents, to mark their responsibility and gratitude for the gift of a child? It may be that both are true, but the question of the terminology of a rite of passage as a valid understanding of baptism needs to be raised. One view would say that baptism is not simply a rite of passage, it is a Christian sacrament (as seen in the view of Kuhrt), but another view might be that baptism is not simply a Christian sacrament, it is also a rite of passage. It seems that the church is in a transitional state of understanding, debate and practice concerning baptism. If the church itself is unclear as to what the service is for and what it signifies, it is to be wondered what sort of message it is giving to those outside the church about the welcome of

God.

The Initiation Services have been described as the least satisfactory part of the ASB. In view of the Church of England's continuing confusion on so many aspects of initiation, this is hardly surprising. None the less ASB has now "institutionalized" some of this confusion, and even added to it.⁽¹²⁾

There are some indications from history which may illuminate the situation. In the early church, baptism was the rite of initiation into the church and into the faith. It was a transition involving a fundamental change in the person's way of being related to God. They were considered to be remade, adopted as God's children and part of his household⁽¹³⁾. The loss of the centrality of baptism in the church community as a rite of entry occurred at the same time as a change in society's religious self-understanding; if everyone in society was regarded as a Christian, initiation rites take on rather a different aspect from the life-changing significance which baptism had previously held. This is considered to be part of the way in which baptism came to be seen as a naming ceremony as opposed to a rite of initiation mostly for adults.

Whether rightly or wrongly, the profile of this country is as a Christian country. People still consider themselves to be Christians as a cultural identity, whatever their state of faith, inasmuch as they are not of other faiths. In this light baptism became a rite of passage, a christening or naming ceremony. Reardon quotes the following:

I personally recall two stories. One was being told on a Rugby housing estate that "baptism makes you a British citizen". The other was an English woman married to a Muslim asking that her two children, who had English forenames, might be christened with Arabic names so that her husband could take them back to his Muslim home in the Middle East.⁽¹⁴⁾

There is an understanding, whatever view of baptism is held, that baptism in some way confers identity. This is not only because of the association with naming a child, but also because it is the sacrament of new identity in God. The beginnings of baptism recorded in the Bible are bound up with repentance, cleansing and preparation. When Jesus was baptized a transformation takes place from the familiar Jewish rite to an event of 'God's revelation and presence'⁽¹⁵⁾. The message seems to be that there is no need for further preparation, the kingdom of God is here on earth seen in the incarnation of the Christ. The moment of revelation comes as a dove descends from heaven and the voice is heard (publicly or privately depending on which of the synoptic accounts one reads) 'This is my beloved son'. Jesus'

baptism is the moment when his identity is confirmed. Many believe that baptism is the moment when human beings know and show their true status in the identity which is given them by God.

To the question, Who am I? baptism responds that I am the one who is called, washed, named, promised and commissioned. This is not to deny my free will to act nor to reject the claim that is made upon me. God's action on my behalf through baptism necessitates my response... The act of baptism itself does not ensure my continuance in the baptismal community... the burden of commitment is on the baptizers who are called to show forth God's total commitment to the one who is baptized.⁽¹⁶⁾

The gift of identity is the work of God. There is always an element of mystery in sacramental language; how God acts and exactly what it is that he does in baptism will not reduce to an easy formula. God is always reaching out to humanity. God's heart is a heart of love, and love is only possible in relationship. In the reaching out of God's love there is the truth of baptism and mission: in baptism God makes his love known and makes himself known, and it is this which confers identity as human beings are given the gift of discovering the love God has for them, and are incorporated into his life. Both the gift of identity and baptism are gifts of God's grace: God gives identity and the response is as a person comes to God in baptism to make a covenant, and this movement to God greeted by God with the gift of grace in baptism. The question of identity is important in baptism and is central in thinking further about mission and pastoral care. (This is the essence of material to be discussed in chapter 6.)

Through the waters of baptism the material world becomes the means for the action of God. This sacramental act is a work of God. Baptism establishes identity by incorporating individual human beings into the body of Christ, the community of the church. The efficacy of the sacraments is not dependent on the human condition, upon ability to love God or lead a holy life. God is active in the sacraments and humanity cannot coerce God into action, nor claim special favour which rests on anything other than God's grace. In baptism, God acts in water to adopt an individual into the life and death of Christ and the church, his body. Baptism undoubtedly calls for some sort of response, but it is a response to the salvific love of God which is given freely. The document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry succinctly says,

'Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift'(17).

Even if it can be seen that God is the primary mover in baptism, the question still has to be asked as to whether it is right to baptize all babies regardless of their parents' understanding and faith. Equally important is the matter of the church's role and the pastoral elements of this (this will be further discussed in chapter 6). The covenant is undoubtedly between God and the child, but parents create the environment in which the child will grow up to make their own response to God. Part of the problem is practical in that the church cannot take on care for all those it baptizes if it is operating an open baptism policy as in many parishes this could mean taking on the spiritual welfare of one hundred children per year. If it is the faith and nurture that the local church gives which is at issue, then the church needs to ask serious questions about its role and effectiveness in pastoral care for all the infants it baptizes. In Roman Catholicism the responsibility for the nurture of the baptised is given to the whole congregation, and although this may be implicit in The Welcome in the Church of England service(18), there may also be ways to clarify this responsibility.

Perhaps the question of whose faith is operant in baptism should not be reduced to a stark alternative. One thing, however, does seem clear from all discussions: the church needs to take a major pro-active role in nurture. At present, because of debates about baptism, confirmation and whether communion should be administered first, there is a plethora of documents (sixteen synod documents in the last twenty years on the subject) but the church still sails on with many a different rudder pulling in many a different direction. This has a seriously detrimental affect on the over-all pattern of nurture being given to young people either before or after baptism. There is little coherence in the broad picture of care as Sunday schools seek to re-define themselves from the nineteenth century models on which so many began. Many uniformed organisations which used to be specifically church based and would regularly include input from the church are similarly undergoing re-definition for the demands of the late twentieth century. Many church schools are faced with problems of 'opting in or out' financially, and whilst they may be exploring how to make a church link work in an overworked situation, the constraints of finance, cuts, the national curriculum, new courses

and examinations all lead to a decline in church nurture through its schools. Religious Education in schools used to be an opportunity for Christian teaching, as was a daily compulsory school assembly as an act of Christian worship. Both these opportunities are now, rightly or wrongly, part of a much broader religious picture in Britain.

There have been suggestions that a system of the catechumenate should be re-introduced for children on their way to baptism (the adult catechumenate is discussed towards the end of this chapter). This suggestion has much to commend it in terms of pastoral care, but seems to fall between open baptism policies and closed baptism policies since it suggests that some time between the age of three and six would be a good time to baptise, when the child is neither a baby nor has reached an age of discretion. In missiological terms the introduction of a catechumenate for children would of necessity mean bringing the family of the infant into the process; this could have very positive effects. As suggested in Chapter 1, the individualisation of society needs somehow to find a balancing counter-action: the inclusion of family units in the process of catechesis would bring a family community into the church community. This, however, raises the contentious issue of who is being catechised and with what aim. There are those who say that only those who have not been baptised may be included in the catechetical process. There are others who would suggest that all catechesis is valuable in and of itself and should not, therefore, be given exclusively to any group. In terms of an infant catechumenate, a negative effect could be that it is perceived as probation rather than preparation⁽¹⁹⁾.

The problem can be seen in two ways: is baptism effective by itself without any further necessary contact with the community of faith? Is it right, therefore, to baptize infants who will have no further contact with the church? Or would it be better to let children make their own decision about baptism at a later stage in life, and at that stage enter a catechetical process which will lead to a greater understanding of baptism as the initiation service into Christ, and into the body of Christ, the church? If that does seem to be an option, then there must be some ceremony which the church can offer instead of baptism to those who come to church to confer identity on their child by means of ritual.

The question of open baptism policy, as seen in the discussion so far, does not really address the missiological significance of performing a ceremony which is often seen by those

outside the church in widely speaking magical terms, or as a rite of passage, and yet which the church still considers to be the main initiatory service of the church. The understanding of what the church thinks it is doing when it baptizes an infant, and the understanding of what the people who request baptism think they are doing, needs to be examined more carefully. It is strongly to be suspected that the views will be quite dissimilar. This is unsatisfactory, both for those in the church and those not in the church. Part of the problem is seen not only in the transitional state of understanding about baptism itself as society becomes more pluralistic, but also seen in terms of there being no very viable alternative.

The service of Thanksgiving after the Birth of a Child has a long history in the service for the churching of women. The service changed character in the liturgical changes which occurred from 1928 to The Alternative Service Book 1980; the emphasis moved from a woman centred rite of passage expressing thanks for the safe delivery of the woman from the dangers of childbirth, and the need grew for some form of service which expressed genuine gratitude for the birth of a child. This was included (with a service of thanksgiving after adoption) in The Alternative Service Book 1980. The service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child is not very widely used, and it seems reasonable to suppose that this is partly because of ignorance of its existence, partly because there is so much confusion about what baptism is and is not, and also partly because the service itself can be seen as rather perfunctory with no symbolism and little ceremony. There is very little scope for ministers to deal creatively with the liturgy, although it does include some very good prayers in particular the prayer prayed by the parents for aid in bringing up their child.

Those who favour the introduction of an infant catechumenate would see the Thanksgiving Service as the beginning of the catechumenate period, something akin to an enrolment. They call for a stronger service than is at present available in The Alternative Service Book 1980. A revised service could be a creative way to introduce people to the church without the need for the commitment of baptism, offering a real welcome and opportunity for celebration in the presence of God.

Symbolism is an important element of the baptismal rite.

Renewed emphasis upon the active "facts" of baptism like water, oil, candles,

special clothing, imposition of hands, and repetition of creeds helps to underscore the objective quality of the rite and thereby provides a much needed corrective to the excessive subjectivism and verbalism of Protestant worship practices.⁽²⁰⁾

Symbols can need careful explanation to those unfamiliar with the Christian faith. An example cited by Carr⁽²¹⁾ is that of the baptismal candle. For the Christian this may be a sign of the light of Christ, which is a powerful symbol. For some less sure of Christian symbolism, the light is received during the service without explanation, and then, not knowing what else to do with it, extinguished. For them the light may apply less to Christ than to the life of their child which they have just symbolically snuffed out; an unfortunate impression. Carr observes that this misunderstanding of symbol can occur just as easily with church members as anyone else. It can be seen, however, that the symbolism of the baptism service adds to the ritual element and, when properly explained, brings a depth of understanding and tangible sign which is absent from the service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child.

Just as baptismal theology and practice is in need of clarification, so too another element in the initiatory rites of the church is not altogether clear: what is the status of the confirmation service? Is it an adolescent rite of passage, the time when the Holy Spirit is given, a time for someone to take for themselves the promises made for them at baptism, the time which signifies that an individual may receive Holy Communion, or something else? There is not space to enter fully into the argument here, it seems, however, to be becoming increasingly clear that baptism, not confirmation, should be seen to be the admittance to church membership, and therefore to receiving the grace of the eucharist as part of that initiation. This was clearly seen by liturgists who took part in the Fourth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation in Toronto in 1991 whose statement includes the following:

Baptism is the sacrament of once-for-all admission into membership in the catholic church, a particular expression of which is the local eucharistic community. Baptism, therefore, admits to communion.⁽²²⁾

On a pastoral note Westerhoff and Willimon note the phenomenon, no less apparent in this country than in America, of the rejection of the church at a period roughly corresponding to the time of confirmation. They make the link with the eucharist as follows:

First communion, connected with confirmation, tends, in Protestant churches at least, to be the last communion in many cases. Those who have had to live

sixteen years of their life without the Lord's Supper will not be hard put to do without it for another sixty. They cannot miss what they have never come to love or need.⁽²³⁾

Their suggestion is that confirmation for those who were baptized as infants should be more like a rite of passage as a sign of ordination to service within the church, a sacrament of mature commitment to the church and its mission⁽²⁴⁾. This is precisely what was suggested by members of a synodical body who compiled the Ely Report as long ago as 1971: communion as part of the process to confirmation would be an encouragement to continue in fellowship and learning. Confirmation would then become a rite of Commitment and Commissioning, as well as strengthening by the Holy Spirit⁽²⁵⁾.

5.2 The Catechumenate

In a survey taken at the General Synod of the Church of England in 1967, there was almost 100% support for the idea that preparation of parents for their infant's baptism was essential. The view was that either baptisms should take place with catechesis or they should not take place at all⁽²⁶⁾. Catechesis is becoming part of the development of a baptismal rite for infants and adults. The present potential for drawing people into the liturgical action of the church through catechesis to baptism, is a very important area of research and practice.

The practice of baptism in the New Testament cannot be separated from the process of entry into the gospel, nor from the community's welcome and reception of the candidate... If baptism is properly to effect what it represents, the church as well as the candidate must be fully and meaningfully present for the sacramental act. In most social contexts this will imply something like the sort of extended process to be found in the ancient and modern phased rites of initiation.⁽²⁷⁾

This phased rite is often to be found in a pattern which more or less corresponds to the Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Catechesis and liturgy are both 'pastoral ministries for and by the Christian community'⁽²⁸⁾. Catechesis is essentially a pastoral activity which is intended to enable a growing response to the commandment of Jesus to love God and love our neighbour. It is the process by which people come to understand and apply the word of God to their lives and circumstances, both as individuals and communities. This does not only happen through what one might describe as formal catechesis, and in any catechetical

process as much will be learned by example and unspoken signals as through the overt catechetical teaching. There is a problem with a lot of catechetical teaching in that it is based on a notion of education as cognitive acquisition. Robin Green in his book Only Connect suggests that this is a model of education based on the transference of information from those 'in the know' to those who do not know. He believes this is a false assumption because it 'assumes a model of knowledge which is anti-baptismal because it is education based on power'(29).

A further problem in discussing catechetical teaching is that much of the study centres on the formal movement of the catechumenate in this country which began to be revived in the United States fifteen years ago. This can prove problematic in other circumstances, such as when parents bring their infant for baptism, or when the cultural gap between Britain and America is too wide for suggestions that may be reasonable over there to be reasonable over here. Nonetheless the catechumenate movement has tried to formulate the ideal way of incorporating individuals into the life of the church, in ways of both pastoral sensitivity and gospel truth, and as such has much to say about the whole initiation process of any individual and particularly those who are to be baptized.

Aidan Kavanagh suggests that some of the enthusiasm for the development of the catechumenate is probably ill-conceived; he believes that there is much sentimentality and confusion.

Few have realistically prognosticated its effects on conventional church life, should it succeed. Were they to do so, I suspect many would have nothing to do with it, for it will surely change everything, to the confusion of the conventionally pious - clergy and laity alike.⁽³⁰⁾

Certainly, if the view is held that the church is the focus for the care and nurture of the spiritual life of a person who is to be or who has been baptized, there would need to be a revolution in the life of the church to meet that need.

Kavanagh believes that there is a need for evangelization before catechesis, and refers to catechesis as 'conversion therapy'. Evangelization and conversion are the events which should lead to baptism, whether this be of parents bringing their child to the church or an adult seeking initiation.

Evangelism, as I am using the word, refers to the process by which the

Christian community of faith, through the proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed, leads persons inside and outside the church to a radical reorientation of life - conversion.⁽³¹⁾

Without evangelization and conversion there can be little hope of incorporating an individual into the liturgical action of the church, nor indeed to any aspect of the church.

We need to understand the relationship of evangelization to catechesis so that we might develop inquiry programs led by lay persons in which the Gospel is proclaimed and faith shared with those unbaptized adults who because of life crisis, transitions, or other significant events in their lives are open to Christian faith.⁽³²⁾

The rise in popularity of the catechumenate came from the Roman Catholic church and includes the literature and liturgy of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. A catechumen can expect to receive help in personal formation in four areas of their life and go through four stages of the process. Personal formation is encouraged in social action, understanding of the tradition as represented in the scriptures, development in personal prayer and incorporation in the worship of the church. The four stages are the pre-catechumenate stage which extends from the time of evangelization up to the time of formal entry into the catechumenate which is when the rite of initiation begins. The second stage is the catechumenate itself which begins with a public rite of becoming a catechumen. During this stage particular attention is paid to the four elements of personal formation. The third stage is called the time of election, and this will normally coincide with Lent as a direct lead into baptism at Easter. The final stage is that of post-baptismal catechesis.

The formal process of catechesis outlined is not suitable for those who are already baptized and seeking re-entry into the church after a period of absence, nor is it suitable for those parents bringing their children for baptism. It is, however, obviously a very positive move in the church that such a programme should be developed and used.

Catechesis is part of the life of the church that goes on continually in ways both seen and unseen. The catechumenate is one way to baptism, but catechesis is broader than specific teaching for initiation: it is part of the ritual life and pastoral life of the church. Catechesis is the learning that takes place to understand the requirements of faith in individual and corporate life. The incomers who are seeking baptism will learn about God, the church, and themselves as they are drawn into the life of the church. Baptism offers initiation into the church and into the

Gospel in a unique way and offers care of unique intimacy. It is important not to be so dazzled by formal process and expectation that the opportunity for mission is overlooked. Baptism is where the incomer finds a way forward to incorporation.

5.3 Baptism and Thanksgiving Towards 2000

This synod calls attention both to the concern over apparent indiscriminate baptism, as expressed in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry documents, and increasingly shared by many people of differing theological persuasions in the Church of England; and also to the concern felt by others over the theological implication of rigorous baptism policies, and calls upon the Standing Committee to initiate within the lifetime of this Synod a debate based upon a suitable discussion document concerning current theological, pastoral, evangelistic and ecumenical issues.⁽³³⁾

This motion to Synod signalled a history of debate which still continues, and suggests that the Church of England has allowed a slide into inconsistency in its baptism policy and services in the last years. If the church is seen to refuse baptism as a rite of passage in order to reclaim it as a rite of initiation, many of the wrong sort of missiological messages are heard: unworthiness for baptism, the church looking after its own, being unwelcoming, and so on. If the church continues to baptise on an open basis then it will remain open to the misunderstanding of providing a secular rite of passage, and baptism as the sacrament of incorporation for the church is continually undermined. The solution is not a simple one, nor is it likely to take less than a generation to be fully effective, but it does seem important to distinguish the rite of passage at the birth of an infant from baptism.

The openness of the church would be reflected in the service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child. It seems that the church has two options for the place and use of the service of Thanksgiving: either the service is positioned in the book separately from the initiation services and is seen as a welcome to the church but not into the church, or it remains where it is and becomes part of the initiation rites as, for example, the first part in a catechumenate for children. There can be little doubt that in the uncertainty about the initiation services of the

Church of England a service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child could be given extra symbolism and ceremony, for example maybe including a naming ceremony and perhaps a ritual feeding with milk and honey to point towards the Promised Land. It could be a service which can be offered to all who approach the church with children for some kind of blessing or thanksgiving. The service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child would be a very viable option if it were decided to keep baptism as the initiation service for active church membership. Those who are regular church worshippers could choose whether to baptize their children or to have the thanksgiving service; if the latter option were chosen it would enable the child to make its own decision about baptism and full membership of the church at a later time. But whenever it is administered, it must be quite clear that baptism is a sign of God's grace, and God's grace cannot be earned.

It is possible that the growing need for rituals to effect changes in life will find expression in the liturgical life of the church in the liturgical reform due in the year 2000. There is no provision liturgically for the re-entry into church life of someone who has been outside the church for a period but who has been baptized and confirmed. Obviously this is part of the pastoral care of those who would want to be re-initiated into the life of the church in some way. Re-baptism is obviously a theological nonsense, but the re-affirmation of baptismal vows, with distinct and unique rituals and symbols may be a partial answer. There is no doubt that the church needs to give serious thought to initiation and integration into the life of the church, and this must be reflected in the liturgies which are available for use⁽³⁴⁾.

One of the problems in the present debate is the tendency for polemic to produce polarity which undermines mission. There can be no suggestion of withholding baptism from those who genuinely seek it, either as adults or for infants, but perhaps the church should find a way to move through this time of transitional understanding of baptism towards reclaiming baptism as the rite of initiation into the church by a process of welcome, education and nurture. Maybe Reardon's statement on the fundamentals behind baptism would be a good place for progress to begin:

...virtually all Anglicans can and do agree on the fundamental theology of
Baptism:
i) it is primarily a sacrament of the grace of God;

- ii) it is appropriated through faith which is itself a gift of God...
- iii) it is an outward, visible and effectual sign of an inward and spiritual grace (Article 25 and the catechism); a sign of regeneration; an instrument by which those who receive it rightly are grafted into the Church (Article 27).⁽³⁵⁾

If Kuhrt's ideas of the baptism of believer's infants could be synthesised with the welcome of the church as outlined by Dalby and the non-pelagian help of the Order of Holy Baptism from the Church of Scotland, and all this could be facilitated by a catechumenal/mystagogical process which was a far-reaching pre- and post-baptism norm for all members of the church and seekers for God from cradle to grave, then there may be progress both in an understanding of baptism and its value in missiological terms. This echoes the vision of St Utopia outlined in Chapter 1. Baptism, seen thus, can become part of the strong heart of love and inclusivity in the church community, yet also with the capacity to reach out in love and service to others⁽³⁶⁾.

In such a Utopia maybe the service of baptism could be non-aggressively reclaimed as the rite of initiation for adults or infants, and the welcome of the church to infants of those not part of the worshipping community could then be extended through a revised service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child, which would fulfil part of the role which baptism is now fulfilling in terms of the rites of passage.

The solution lies not in letting one party "win" but in harnessing the energies and insights of both parties, and using them for a concerted attempt to create an initiation policy which puts baptism right at the centre of the church's life, and sees it as an ecumenical opportunity for better pastoral care, education and evangelism.⁽³⁷⁾

Baptism would then be able to become once more the celebration in word and sacrament of the incorporation of an individual into the life and death of Jesus Christ as a gift of grace, with the church providing a way to understand and deepen the significance of the incorporation.

As baptism is the major initiation service of the church so it must take place within the context of the community. The identity conferred by baptism is socially structured as well as spiritually structured, and is not only given by the community, but is shaped and nurtured by the community too. Those who have been baptized are not only responsible to the community, the community is responsible to them. In a re-emphasis on baptism as initiation the church will need to take more seriously the preparation of those who come for baptism, and as Kavanagh

has suggested, this will lead to radical changes in the practices of some churches. Others make similar points:

..many feel that the main problem with Christian initiation today is not so much the state of our liturgies, or our candidates, or our education but rather the state of the average church. Too often we are in the embarrassing situation of baptizing people into a loose confederation of individuals who take no responsibility for the conversion and nurture of others, who do not act as if they really believe that the promises of baptism are true, and who lack confidence in their ability, by God's grace, to "make disciples". Baptism, in this context, appears meaningless since we are, in effect, initiating people into nothing.⁽³⁸⁾

It is clear that liturgical reform of the services of baptisms, weddings and funerals in the year 2000 will be part of the way in which the church finds a new integrity in its rites and rituals. The new services can express what is really taking place, telling the truth about God and finding a way to be truthful about real human situations and the ways of humanity. It is also becoming increasingly obvious that this liturgical reform must be part of a wider reform as the church finds new ways to reflect the life of God into the next century. Not every church will find a way to become St Utopia as defined in chapter one, but in the dynamism of living the creative life of faith as a finite echo of the Trinity, it is not enough only to reform the liturgy; the heart of the church must also face the challenge of change in new liturgy and new life.

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE

In parts one and two the discussion focussed on specific instances when the church comes into contact with those who are not yet regular worshipping members of the church. In the third section, the discussion goes one stage further and tries to see what might happen if the incomer came to the regular worship of the church week by week.

There is a need to understand some of the broader elements of mission and liturgy which may be generally characterised by the care with which the church offers God's love and the communication of God's truth in word and sacrament week by week. Much of the material in this section is just as important for those who are already members of the church as those who are seeking to enter the church. Those who are already in the church would take much of what will follow for granted; it will be familiar and so have become to all intents and purposes, unseen. For the incomer the worship of the church week by week is something which may be either a barrier to finding God or a bridge to faith and life in the community of faith.

In section one the material was an attempt to understand some of the dynamics which operate in communities and the church community in particular. In the second section the material was trying to understand what might be relevant and irrelevant to the incomer in the occasional offices and to examine the spoken messages which the church is giving. In this third section the material discussed will be an attempt to look at the less spoken messages in the liturgy and the missiological implications of the bridge or barrier which weekly worship constitutes to the incomer. Chapter six sets out some of the underlying messages in liturgy particularly focussed in liturgy as part of the pastoral care of the church. The lesser or unspoken messages of care or carelessness can make an enormous difference to the bridge or barrier of a service of worship to the incorporation of the incomer and to the building up of the existing community. In chapter seven some more specific details are analysed and discussed as a part of the wider picture as presented in the thesis. In a broad sense, chapter six is concerned with identity and community and how liturgy relates to that, and in chapter seven elements of the proclamation of the word of God are examined.

CHAPTER SIX

Worship, Mission and Pastoral Care

6.1 'A Significant By-product'(1)

In the introduction to his book The Language of Rite, Grainger defines rite as a form of 'corporate art' which is explicit and honest about humanity and God and their relationship together, and by which communion is made.

In the rite, a man... uses the language of demonstration; and what he demonstrates is a real meeting of persons in which emotions, thoughts, attitudes, the experience of life itself can be shared. The rite, then, "corresponds to a basic human need", the need for a kind of self-expression which does not merely involve the mind but includes the whole person...

As our awareness of inter-existence and interdependence increases, our need for modes of communication and self-expression which preserve the truth of personal identity grows ever more urgent.(2)

The ritual action of the church expressed in the liturgy is one of the elements of the church's life which gives to individuals and to the church identity and which shapes the community of faith. The church's mission to reach out to all with the love of God should be seen in the liturgy just as much as any other part of the life of the people of faith. Therefore, care should be taken over the effects of the liturgy, seen and unseen, both in what is said and in what is implied. In missiological terms, everything the church does must have a missionary dimension, but not everything has a missionary intention. The church is, by nature, missionary, but not all the activities of the church are aimed at the world(3). So, in the liturgy of the church, not all liturgy needs to be specifically evangelistic, but there must be consideration given to differing dimensions of the church's mission, including the care given to individuals and communities within the worship of the church.

Part of the mission of the church can be seen in the proclamation of the word of God, part can be seen in the life of the church as servant, and part of the mission of the church can be seen in the care which it extends to all people. Pastoral care in the church has often been seen in two ways, either in the pastoral offices of baptisms, weddings and funerals, or as a role within

the church for individuals to be counselled on a one-to-one basis. Public acts of worship have largely been dissociated from being part of the pastoral care of the church; this would seem to be overlooking a significant part of what is happening in worship for those regular in church worship and for the incomer. Worship is part of the way in which the body of Christ gives the care of God to each other both individually and corporately.

It is my conviction that the paradigmatic act of pastoral care is the act of presiding at the worship of the gathered community, and that this priority in no way contravenes the importance of the one-on-one, "private", counselling-oriented dimension of pastoral care or the psychological insights that today inform that dimension.⁽⁴⁾

In the church it seems that pastoral care, as part of the church's mission to show and proclaim God's love, has been seen in a rather compartmentalized way, caricatured as follows: the vicar does it, and he does it with people in private, and it happens to other people not to me. The private or public care polarisation is not helpful; both the care of the individual in a more private sense and the care of an individual through the public, liturgical worship of the church are ways in which God's love is experienced and shared. This is something to be acknowledged and celebrated. It is not, however, only individuals that find the worship of the church to have pastoral meaning, it is also true that whole communities which have been damaged in various ways can find a corporate healing and hope in the liturgical life of the church⁽⁵⁾.

Worship, whilst being careful of missiological and pastoral dimensions, must not be ruled by the needs of individuals or communities. The fundamental, theological motivation to worship is relational; worship exists because God is God. 'To use the liturgy is to do it violence... Our liturgies should be understood properly as ends and not as means'⁽⁶⁾. This is before and beyond all other motivation (often it is masked, often it is part of the subconscious) but God's being is love which can only be a reality in relationship, and this is where worship begins. All discussion in this area must be seen in that context. That is not to say that there may not be very many mixed motives in our worship, but the foundation must be that in worship we are responding to the love of God which is forever reaching out to humanity. Whatever other definitions of worship may be found, it is in response to God that worship is best found. 'We

love, because he first loved us' (1 Jn 4v19).

'Where does worship come from? The answer is it comes from God and from human beings as they meet in the activity of the Christian assembly'(7). Therefore there is a real sense in which worship can be seen as God's activity, his initiation and, by his Spirit, his enabling. In just the same way, care for incomers (and those already 'in') is also God's activity, his initiation and his enabling. People are participating in the life of God as they find God meeting needs through worshipping him in relationship with him and his people, and through expressing his life in the creative healing processes he brings about.

My thesis in this chapter is not that we should use the liturgy as a new method of pastoral care but that the liturgy itself and a congregation's experience of divine worship already functions, even in a secondary way, as pastoral care. The pastoral care that occurs as we are meeting and being met by God in worship is a significant by-product that we have too often overlooked.(8)

The question underlying this statement is what the end product of the by-product might be. What is the model of health with which the church is operating? This, clearly, is an important part of any discussion of mission in this context, and although it is impossible to analyse in any depth, there are some helpful ways to approach the answer to the question. Perhaps the clearest summary of the view of health in the Church of England is to be found in 'Ministry to the Sick' implicit in the prayers that are outlined for use in laying on of hands and anointing(9). The prayers are for wholeness in body, mind, and spirit.

The deeper question of what that sort of wholeness is and how it might be recognised is, of course, much more complex and elusive. Society itself is uncertain what health and wholeness is. A prevailing picture of true healthiness might be caricatured thus: having a beautiful, slim, bronzed body, having a very healthy bank account, being fit through jogging and spending time at health clubs, being disease free, wearing fashionable clothes, having a fulfilling sex life, eating well, drinking alcohol in moderate to large quantities, and having foreign holidays. This is, obviously, a caricature, but the picture of health which can be perceived in the media corresponds, in different ways, to that picture quite closely. Obviously it is a picture of health utterly different from what the church might mean by being whole in body, mind and spirit. It is also a picture which is culturally bound and created by the perceived

needs of this age. For many in the world a picture of health might mean no more than a place to call home and enough food.

Wholeness, as the church might mean it, might be best summed up in brief in the word shalom⁽¹⁰⁾, a word which appears frequently in the Old Testament and is mostly translated as 'peace'. However, there is a richness and complexity of meaning which is not adequately expressed in that translation. Shalom denotes a relationship rather than a state, and there is implicit in its meaning the fact that it is a gift of God and that, rather than suggesting an end to hostilities, shalom is wholeness as a social as well as an individual concept. In the New Testament the word for this concept is eirene and it carries the same meaning as shalom. The gospel itself is the good news of shalom and refers to the saving of the whole person, peace having come through an historical event, the death and resurrection of Jesus. So peace is seen not as a condition but as a continuing interaction between human beings and between them and God; true love of God and neighbour. This is a definition not only of shalom but also of worship and pastoral care. 'God calls "her" people to be signs of shalom, the vanguard of God's kingdom, a community of cultural change'⁽¹¹⁾. Liturgy and pastoral care are ways in which divine revelation is made known. In both liturgy and pastoral care shalom is to be found for individuals and communities; the wholeness of being secure in an identity and therefore being able to relate to and with the community; in both mature faith is given space and care to grow and be enlivened and people are prepared and stimulated for their vocation in the world.

One of the problems for the mission of the church is the tendency to try to make everyone in the church the same as 'us', whoever that may be⁽¹²⁾. The prevailing culture in any church is nearly always threatened by any 'deviant', whether the deviation is of class, education, colour, churchmanship, or community. In any discussion of mission, wholeness and pastoral care it is vital that wholeness is not equated with uniformity and that the church does not attempt to give people the sort of wholeness they would not wish for themselves. Partly it is a matter of making the existing group secure enough not to be threatened by any incomer who does not conform to an image which the group has created as its identity. It is all too easy to blame the incomer for the shortcomings of the community when the community

fails to meet the incomer with the sort of love, care and attention which should be part of the community shaped by the gospel. The church needs to learn to express its shalom as a community which can therefore absorb and welcome those who want to be a part of its community life.

The worship of the church is a multi-faceted activity involving many different parts of life being brought together in the presence of God and the worshipping community. The life of the worshipping community creates and shapes worship; worship shows the meaning of life in word and sacrament. So, the starting place for all discussion is that we are part of God's activity in the world in both worship and pastoral care; and worshipping God is a response to God's being of love.

6.2 Making Shalom

Pastoral care and liturgy are similar: both give ways of seeing individual identity and seeing God, and both are aiming to express and create shalom relationships between people and with God. Ultimately, the most important aspect of worship is not how we worship, but whom. As communities begin to try to know God in worship, so for each individual the image and understanding of God will be unique, part of the gift of being human. In that understanding of God can also be found notions of human identity, psychological need, and self-understanding, both as an individual and as part of a worshipping, worldwide community.

People come to church to be with God and to hide from God, to scream at God and to embrace God, to be with others and to be with themselves, to prepare for death and birth, marriage and divorce. Worship at its best is a place where people confront the depth of their own need in the presence of God.⁽¹³⁾

Some of these needs have been outlined schematically as the motivations behind worship quoted by Willimon: the need for imitation, placation or restitution, commemoration and tribute⁽¹⁴⁾.

It is suggested that humanity worships in order to imitate in finite terms what God does and is on a cosmic level. An example of this is that in each celebration of communion with bread and wine, part of the symbolism can be seen in the symbolic reenactment and

remembering of the last meal of Jesus. Another example of this imitation is seen in the baptism service where an individual symbolically dies to sin in the waters of baptism to rise to new life in Christ. The imitation of Jesus' own baptism (and examples throughout the history of baptism) is a human response which requires imitation as part of the element of 'joining' with the continuity of the community. The imagery of dying and rising is seen in even more deliberate imitation in a story recounted by Green. A person wishing to be baptised wanted to find some way of symbolizing death to life and decided that the human heart expressed something of the ambiguity of death and life seen in heartbreak, heart transplants, and so on. So it was decided that there would be a drum playing, as it were, a heartbeat during the moments just before her baptism. Just before she was baptised the drum stopped as the symbolic moment of death came and then as she rose out of the waters so the drum resumed. The imitation of the death and resurrection as she was symbolically incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection was seen very clearly in this instance and the ritual of the church enabled this imitation⁽¹⁵⁾. How far this is universally applicable is questionable.

Another of the determinative motives for worship is the need to confess perceived failure to keep the commands of God, to make restitution by postures of kneeling, gifts of money or by performing a menial task. Many psychiatrists advocate the recovery of confessional ritual as being therapeutically useful; however, this is not only seen in the more formal confession which individuals undertake with a priest but also in the understanding of collective guilt and confession in public liturgical acts.

In one single act of confession and absolution our anxiety about being separate is heightened and the security of being part of one humanity is strengthened. we bring the guilt about who we are, the fractured relationships that words would not heal, our share in the corporate darkness of injustice and evil, our recognition that healing is the vocation of a lifetime. We know that here at least God's reconciling and healing love can be made real.⁽¹⁶⁾

The element of commemoration is strong in both Catholic and Protestant traditions, even if that which is commemorated is emphasised differently. In the eucharist there may be seen to be two poles of understanding as to what is being commemorated: in broad terms, Catholics may re-enact the sacrifice of Jesus in the sacrifice of the Mass, celebrating the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; whereas Protestants may keep the Lord's Supper

as a memorial, remembering and recreating the presence of Christ, celebrating his death and resurrection through fellowship round the Lord's table. It can be seen that in the use of a lectionary the element of commemoration is formalised; there are certain things which the church considers important enough to be part of the Sunday by Sunday commemoration of salvation history. Also the major festivals in the church around which the liturgical year is positioned are commemorative of the parts of the life of the church which have become most sacred and most pivotal.

The element of tribute to God can be seen in the Psalms. Many of the Psalms express tribute to God, the need to express praise in exuberance or trouble. The use of canticles and Psalms in worship is one of the ways in which tribute is formally included in the worship of the church. Many hymns and songs also express praise to God irrespective of circumstances. Praise is an essential part of worship and is often formalised in the worship of the Church of England. This need not be a constraint. The search for the 'right note' in worship is one which has taken years, and this search cannot be swept away without violating the identity which has been created through the liturgy. Praise is part of the life of faith which can be profound and expressed both with and without words.

Praise acknowledges God in his relation with creation, history, ourselves and the future, and through all that it stretches language to appreciate God himself. Language overflows, old expressions are inspired. Traditional language can give cups for meaning which are gradually filled up over the years as experience and knowledge grow and the key words and concepts (such as glory, salvation, holy, grace, cross, resurrection, Lord, wisdom, Spirit, love, confession, peace and many others) grow in content.⁽¹⁷⁾

In a less formal sense it seems that in any act of worship there may be times when the transcendent becomes particularly immanent, and this intersection in worship can lead to a response of tribute and often fervour and joy in the mystery of God's gift of himself.

These functional, phenomenological observations do not exhaust the various meanings and functions of worship, but they do serve as a reminder that worship is an activity undertaken by human beings and is inextricably bound up with a whole complex of need, motivation and relationship, the search for *shalom*. These needs must be met in the liturgy otherwise the liturgy is not able to pass on the sense of identity, dignity, value and community through imitation, placation, commemoration, and tribute. These needs are not peculiar to

Christian worship in the Church of England but are phenomena observable by anthropologists in many and varied cultural settings. In the desire of humanity to make sense of itself it seems that ritual and worship form part of the matrix of humanity and should not be ignored on a spoken or unspoken level.

In community life, worship and pastoral care, there is an element which is essential and both informs and unites all three, the element of ritual. Returning to where we began in this chapter, ritual is 'corporate art'.

In ritual, the community learns about itself; that corporate understanding about life and the world which expresses itself artistically in ritual acts and ceremonies, is itself an understanding of life and the world as corporate, as a shared reality, in which personal experience is inextricably involved in, and dependent upon, community.⁽¹⁸⁾

A major pastoral problem in our pluralistic, secular world is that of finding and maintaining meaning and identity. The life and ritual of the people of God as an 'identity conscious, tradition-bearing community can help us to know and remember who we are'⁽¹⁹⁾. Worship meets needs that are common to humanity cross-culturally. Anthropologists seem to have found no culture where ritual and public and private ways of patterning behaviour do not take place. In ritual a society passes on its norms and creates a sense of identity, both individually and corporately. Without ritual we lack a means for building community and identity, and we are without a means for making the changes in our lives meaningful and integrating.

Rituals serve three functions: they are the means by which community is formed and rejuvenated, the means by which order and meaning are re-established in the lives of people within the community and the means by which a community sustains and transmits its understanding to the next generation.⁽²⁰⁾

Participation in ritual leads to a feeling of belonging, for an individual and a community, and this belonging is very important as the context for a way to wholeness and shalom. If rituals are neglected the connections between symbol and social action begin to be dissolved and this is most damaging to worship and pastoral care as an upbuilding and integrative activity.

Ritual must not be used to reinforce alienating labels or to avoid facing unsettling human needs. Rather, it must address human needs honestly, in order to transform alienation into community.⁽²¹⁾

The community has a need to make sense together of the experiences of life and much

of the pastoral care with which the church has been actively involved has been concerned with a cognitive approach, a way to understand in the mind and make sense with the intellect. It appears that much of the pastoral care in the church has actually been happening at the sub-conscious or intuitive level and this has been taking place through the liturgy⁽²²⁾. The messages a church might give will be found in the semiotics of building, personnel, use of time, use of space and body language. Some of this has been discussed in detail in previous chapters. With regard to the missiological significance of worship and pastoral care it is vital that attention is paid to both the conscious, volitional self and the intuitive, aesthetic self, not seeing them as separate entities but as part of the whole person's encounter with God.

When the community comes to worship in the liturgy, they are, in some sense, coming to meet with God. The evidence of the Old and New Testament and of tradition is that to meet with God is an experience which changes individuals and communities. That process of change, whether the change is for better or worse, is a part of pastoral care and the search for identity. Society is to a large extent individualistic and separate and problems are seen as an individual concern. This has already been pointed out to be not the most holistic view in community terms and will not lead to shalom, but there are other reasons why pastoral care should not only be seen as a private and individual activity:

In much of the pastoral counselling literature, psychology is implicitly allowed to define both the problem and the solution, the nature of the predicament and the goal of human fulfilment. This co-opting of theology's role by psychological theory is a major factor underlying the distortions of pastoral counselling: the privatization, the focus on symptoms, the disregard for the transcendent.⁽²³⁾

Part of the definition of a Christian community is that it is a worshipping community, so the pastoral care in the church is carried out within the context of the worshipping community. Much one-to-one counselling lacks the community element vital in our Christian life. It is undoubtedly true that in pastoral care there has been a neglect of the corporate context of that care, but it is also true that those who have created the liturgy have often become so concerned with the historical and textual questions that there has been a neglect of the pastoral context. If the corporate element of pastoral care is lost, much of the perspective and identity inherent in community is lost.

The community itself is resource and source of pastoral care. From the New Testament to the present day, worship seems to have been viewed primarily as an upbuilding activity. Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth that worship is primarily a corporate (and corporeal) activity (1 Cor ch 14-16 in particular). Worship together is the integrative and normative act of the community; this is more than incidental to pastoral care.⁽²⁴⁾ Much pastoral theology is concerned with relationship and at the heart of the christian life there is the command to be in relationship by loving God and loving your neighbour. This is the essence of shalom and individual and social psychology have contributed much in this area; it seems that the liturgy draws people together to create a unique relationship which can be deep in spiritual terms but not necessarily deep in personal terms. Through worship people are involved in community and in the search for making community; worship expresses and forms community. Perhaps more significantly however, in worship the focus of attention is not each other but the glory of God 'and this has much to teach us about healthy relationships'⁽²⁵⁾.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sunday Worship

7.1 Story and Sacrament

In the last chapter, focussing in various ways on the concerns of identity and community, the general, psychological effects of worship were examined. In this chapter the progression of the argument goes into some elements of worship as it may be experienced by the incomer, not the occasional offices which have already been discussed in Part Two, but the elements of worship in a Sunday service. There will also be a brief discussion of the way in which the catechumenate movement is seeking to find a more coherent way to incorporate the incomer into the liturgical action of the church.

A service of worship and its effects on the incomer is a vast subject. In spite of many equally interesting and valid ways to approach it, we must attend to the subject through a particular focus and, bearing in mind the work of the catechumenate in this area, the discussion will focus on the use of story as an integrative model. It has been suggested that use of story can provide a secure sense of identity individually and corporately whilst proclaiming the word of God faithfully. This is at the very heart of much of the work of the catechumenate because it seems that including a person into the stories of a community can be seen to incorporate an individual into that community much more quickly and irrevocably than any other more intellectual or more random form of inclusion.

On the occasions when the Church most obviously "comes together", the telling of the story, both through scriptural readings in office and liturgy and through certain forms of liturgical enactment, is either prescribed by rubric or hallowed custom as a major element in that which must be done: and the building in which the Church comes together will normally be one which, through its works of art and adornment, also "tells the story" in the language of the eye. It would be arguable that the common activity which the Church of England ordains most clearly and in the largest measure for its people is not "praise" or "fellowship" or even "prayer": it is "attention to the story".⁽¹⁾

The importance of telling the story can perhaps be seen more acutely when what actually takes place in a service is examined in any detail. The following discussion will not, for reasons of space, be exhaustive but should certainly show ways in which the proclamation



in a service of worship can be either a help or a hindrance to the incomer in terms of incorporation in to the story of the people of God.

The church has always taught by word and sacrament. Schmemmann would argue from the Orthodox perspective that there is no difference in the purpose of each, ..'the liturgy of the Word is as sacramental as the sacrament is "evangelical"'(2). He goes on to say that both Word and sacrament are an act of proclamation without rival because of the power for transformation which is contained within both, and that within both there is a unity of purpose. This proclamation is the story of the truths of Christianity as expressed in the liturgy, and Schmemmann believes that this is not purely words or stories but that the whole act of worship using all the senses is involved in this proclamation. In the central act of the church's worship, the eucharist, in the words of institution from 1 Corinthians it is clear that Paul sees the eucharist as a place of proclamation (that is what he 'received from the Lord'): 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'(3). In the eucharist Christ is present in the sacrament of the bread and the wine just as Christ has been present in the liturgy of the word. Both are a revelation of Christ's presence and promise.

In terms of incorporation, the eucharist is the service which proves to be most problematic of all the services in the Christian church. It is the service that is universally most exclusive. It is a service which those who are not yet part of the worshipping community would find to be most confusing in terminology and imagery. Also inherent in the dynamic of the eucharist is the necessity to be part of the community to share in it completely. The service reaches the purpose of its being in the act of taking bread and wine, the whole service leads up to that point, and for those who do not receive bread and wine the point of the service can be a little obscure. In terms of witness to faith the eucharist is perhaps a service which is strong in proclaiming the central truths, both in word and sacrament. As more and more parishes are finding that the main service week by week is a parish communion, it would seem that the missiological significance of the incomer in such a service may need to be given careful thought.

In his book The Open Church Moltmann suggests ways of creating a strong community

which is still open in terms of eucharist. His ideas about the open church are based on the notion that the church should be characterised by events which are of the congregation, not merely for the congregation. His view is that worship services are too clerically and pastorally organised and that this situation could be remedied. Moltmann goes on to present certain remedies and the first of these is that the worship service should have at its centre the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He goes on later to urge a return to adult baptism so that baptism should become the means by which a person belongs to the church and this belonging should come about because of an act of free choice.

Membership in the church without free will can no longer be accepted, but membership on the basis of free will is still valid.⁽⁴⁾

The consequence of these two suggestions is not spelled out in full, but it would seem that Moltmann is saying that the service of the eucharist should be available to everyone with a relatively low threshold of exclusion, but that baptism should be the mark of those who are really committed to God and the church. In missiological terms this is an attractive option. At present in the Church of England, however, it can be seen that the exact opposite of this is in operation. It would take a major revolution for the Church of England to come close to Moltmann's ideas, but there is obviously a problem with the position of the incomer if the main weekly service is that of the eucharist, and this needs to be addressed creatively. It seems inadequate merely to invite visitors forward to the altar rail to receive a blessing, a practice which is very common but which is totally informal, there being no rubrics about such a blessing.

There are churches which operate the service of eucharist more in the style of the early church. After the ministry of the Word (or Word Service) those who want to leave at that point can do so and those who wish to receive the eucharist stay on for the final part of the service. This was the pattern of the early church: those who had not been baptized would leave before the final act of the eucharist. This has some benefits, it allows the church to be welcoming (in some churches coffee would be served between the two sections) whilst still retaining a service of eucharist for those who are regular committed members of the church. The problems with such an approach are largely practical such as the length of time such a system would demand

and facilities which may not be available. Perhaps the church should consider including in its service of eucharist a way for the incomer to be accepted, perhaps by making the blessing a more formal ritual act, or by having available not only bread and wine at the altar rail but also milk and honey to be given to those who are seeking the 'promised land' of faith⁽⁵⁾. Or maybe a drink of water symbolizing the water which will 'become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life'⁽⁶⁾. Or even some unleavened bread to symbolize the manna from the wilderness which was given to the children of Israel as bread on their journey. Unleavened bread could be less easy to confuse with the bread or wafer given in the eucharist and of course has connotations with the passover feast⁽⁷⁾. Maybe a combination of some of these symbols could be employed, but what ever is done it is vital that the church begin to grapple with the missiological significance of eucharistic worship. Realistically speaking it is impossible to imagine a situation whereby the whole church would have a non-eucharistic service as its main weekly worship celebration on a pastoral level quite apart from theological considerations. So it becomes all the more important that this issue is not left un-addressed so that the church can worship in the unity of purpose in word and sacrament of which Schmemmann speaks and which is the pattern of worship throughout the ages.

7.2 Use of the Bible

Part of the unity of purpose in word and sacrament can be seen in the performative effect of narrative. Story is important to the worship of the church in all areas of its mission and community life. Christianity has at its centre the story of the life and death of Jesus Christ and this in itself is a revelation of the nature of God. Christianity is often caricatured as being a list of rules for behaviour, or it is applauded as a very reasonable life philosophy, but the distinctive characteristic of the Christian revelation (as opposed to, say an over-arching theory of world history such as Marxism) is that the main revelation is a person, not a theory. It is the performance of this story in the worship of the church which can attract or repel and that is a matter of missiological significance. What does it mean to speak of the performance of the

story?

[The Gospels] ..are, as I construe them, realistic narratives written in the middle-distance perspective in the light of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and this verdict embodied in the crucified and risen Lord not only is the clue to the distinctive reality rendered by the Gospels but also lies at the heart of Christian "performance" in worship, community, prophecy, and mission.⁽⁸⁾

Ford discusses performance in relation to story and identifies three basic dynamics of performance: active relationship with God most explicit in worship, life together in a community of love, and prophetic speech and action in witness and evangelism. These elements of performance are obviously powerfully present in the liturgy, but not only or even best observed there. In the very nature of the life of faith there are moments which make more explicit that which is inherent at all times. Performance in the liturgy is not seen in this context as a theatrical act to parade something not otherwise present, rather as a crystallisation of a process of lexis and praxis which is a presupposed continuum in the life of faith, both corporate and individual⁽⁹⁾.

The whole idea of performance has been extensively explored by Frances Young who uses the analogy of music to illustrate her thesis. Her book is chiefly about whether textual authenticity or seeking the transcendent meaning of the bible is most important, but in chapter 8 she discusses 'Improvisation and Inspiration'. In this chapter the central analogy is that of the cadenza in a concerto which she parallels with the use of scripture in a service. The cadenza is the section in the movement of a concerto where the orchestra breaks off from their accompanying role and the soloist continues to play alone, often a moment for a display of virtuosic technique and brilliance of style. This cadenza section was traditionally improvised, though now cadenzas written by previous soloists or other composers have become fairly standard. A service without a sermon is likened to a concerto without cadenza. Cadenzas are often re-worked in each new generation, and so the preacher needs inspiration to perform the sermon. The revelation in the performance is understood in dynamic rather than substantialist terms (the emphasis is on the event rather than the score or text). Young would distance herself from a purely narrative approach to scripture, but would endorse the performative nature of biblical material:

Like music, the Word of God is never just "back there", tied to an antiquated score in an unread library, experienced as alien, as discerned across a great gulf or hermeneutical gap: it is "realised" in performance, a performance inevitably inadequate at present, yet an earnest of the great eschatological performance to come in God's good time.⁽¹⁰⁾

The use of the bible is central to all liturgy, not only in the readings and sermon but in the language and resonance which it provides. It operates as the 'primary instrument of Christian formation'⁽¹¹⁾, and is the standard by which all life and liturgy is set. There can be no truthfulness in liturgy which does not reflect the truths of the bible. Those who come to church bring with them their whole lives and an encounter with the disturbing, transforming and redemptive word of God is part of what the church in its liturgy has to offer. It is not, however, a simple process. The bible cannot be applied simplistically to modern life, there is no 'neat fit', but the bible works through the liturgy to deepen formation into Christ, and such a process of formation is not necessarily smooth or easy⁽¹²⁾. It seems likely that with any revision of the liturgy there is possibly only one element which is always going to be present and essential, and that is the reading of scripture, the telling of the story of the faith through the words of the bible.

Christianity inherited from Judaism the practice of regular reading of scripture in its worship and throughout the ages there has been some sort of system in operation to ensure that the bible is read and read in a balanced way. The Lectionary largely illustrates and governs the themes of worship, not only on Sundays but in daily offices. The choice of readings that appears in The Alternative Service Book 1980 has come from a variety of sources and many of the readings have long historical precedent. The Lectionary in the Book of Common Prayer was largely derived from the Sarum usage and many readings in The Alternative Service Book 1980 are still the same as suggested then. In the pattern of readings there are incorporated themes for Sunday worship and all the Sunday readings for the eucharist and morning and evening prayer will follow that theme. Whether the readings illustrate the theme, or the theme emerges from the readings is a matter of contention ⁽¹³⁾. It is obvious, however, that the Lectionary has a large part to play in the performance of the liturgy and in particular in the use of the bible in services.

Through the public reading of Scripture in the assembly there is both an

announcement of Christian belief and an actualization of the mysteries of salvation.... through the recital of the story [people] enter more deeply into the mystery; and their common rehearsal of the sacraments of salvation points to their belief in a common redemption.'⁽¹⁴⁾

If there is both actualization and an entering into mystery through reading Scripture publicly, it follows that the Lectionary itself must be as free as possible from bias or prejudice. It was noted in Making Women Visible that the Lectionary used mainly narratives involving men and that many readings were brought to a close just before the women step onto the scene. This happens, for example, in the Presentation of Christ in the Temple where the reading ceases just before the appearance of Anna⁽¹⁵⁾. The report includes an alternative lectionary which includes more stories of women and suggests its usage 'on special occasions'⁽¹⁶⁾. The suggestions made within the report Making Women Visible have been used in the worship resource The Promise of His Glory. In this publication there are two alternative Lectionaries the second of which leans towards the more female stories in the bible.

There can be little doubt that the Lectionary has enormous power within the structure of Anglican worship and in purely missiological terms it seems reasonable to suggest that the Lectionary should reflect the beliefs of the church without a bias of, say, sexism. Some might consider it unnecessary, and perhaps imprudent, to suggest major reform of the Lectionary, but perhaps a more flexible approach might be employed with greater use of alternative readings.

In the second lectionary in Promise of His Glory the readings are organised in a semi-continuous way which means that, for example, the whole story of Leah and Rachel is followed successively or the whole book of Ephesians is read in successive weeks. This way of organising the readings from scripture is likely to make concentration on the elements of a story more effective and so more accessible. Some of the stories would be well-known and so would invite a congregation to enter into it more immediately. Other stories may be stories which are largely left out of church life at present and so need to be incorporated to allow a greater incorporation of individuals into the stories of faith. To read a book consecutively is an element of scripture reading absent from the current Sunday lectionary and cannot but allow for teaching, preaching and participation in a deeper way into one section of the bible than is at present possible. The alternative lectionaries suggested in worship material such as Lent Holy

Week and Easter and The Promise of His Glory are going some way towards creating flexibility, but perhaps there may be little commitment to flexibility until the material appears in one volume such as the revised rites which will be replacing The Alternative Service Book 1980 in the year 2000.

The Lectionary in use now has been in place in its entirety since 1980, but it is to be wondered whether the same readings will be appropriate into the next century. There is always the danger of becoming familiar with some parts of the bible to the exclusion of others, and whilst this is addressed in the full Lectionary which operates in the daily offices as well as in the Sunday eucharist, as a matter of pragmatism most people only go to church on Sundays and many churches read only two readings, the epistle and the gospel, and use a gradual hymn so there may be no contact with Psalms or any of the Old Testament: some cognisance of this seems to be necessary.

7.3 Words and Music

The incomer will be facing many new messages in a normal Sunday service of worship and one of the most important parts of the service and a place where real integration can take place is in the prayers and music of the community. This issue is largely unaddressed in primary literature and space precludes great detail at this stage. Some prayers may be familiar, for example the Lord's prayer is still taught as part of the infants school education programme, but most prayers will be unfamiliar⁽¹⁷⁾.

Continuing with the theme of story as an integrative model, many of the prayers of the church tell the story of faith. In a service of eucharist the story is told in the Gloria, the Creed and the Eucharistic prayers. It is not in any case narrated as a story as such, but in each case an explanation of the story of faith is discernible, particularly when 'recollected amplification'⁽¹⁸⁾ is considered. As the story becomes familiar, so the resonances of other parts of the story will begin to be felt in each recital of the prayers. The Gloria can hardly be described as a story when considered on its own, but as part of a process of story telling within worship it has

within its aspects of recollected amplification, for example, 'Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world'. This is not a story but is part of a much larger story of salvation and has resonances of that within it. As such the Gloria has its place as part of the informational aspects of doctrine which gives the story of faith its significance and meaning. Powers explains the interaction of elements of narrative and personal memory as follows:

The Christ story is remembered as an event which took place in time and which revealed the anticipation of God's kingdom as the meaning of history. It is a narrative which becomes memorial when conjoined with the act of memory whereby a community finds in it the anticipation of its own yearnings, which take shape through trust in the God of promise revealed in Jesus. In other words, memorial is a dialectic between the recall of the narrative and the purification of the desire inherent to a memory which has its roots in interiority and which by the gift of the Spirit prompts one to self-transcendence.'⁽¹⁹⁾

The 'purification of desire' is one area which is addressed specifically in the prayers of the church and it seems that there is much which can be communicated to the incomer in the way a community prays, particularly in relation to the whole idea of what prayer is and what the community might be doing as it prays. In a normal service of morning prayer, evening prayer or communion it may be seen that prayer is confession, worship, acclamation, petition and thanksgiving. This implies that all these things are elements of a relationship with God, and this is part of the learning which will take place regardless of any formal teaching. Such teaching is not confined to Sunday services but also takes place within the context of the occasional offices and the prayers used there also.

In The Alternative Service Book 1980 many prayers refer to narrative or tell stories within the prayers themselves. Two other notable examples would be the eucharistic prayers and the prayer of blessing over the waters of baptism⁽²⁰⁾. In the prayer of blessing over the waters of baptism an attempt is made to express succinctly the doctrine of baptism and some of the ways in which God used and still uses water are mentioned. There are several stories mentioned or implicated in this prayer: the story of Jesus' own baptism, also the exodus through the waters of the Red Sea, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and cleansing from sin through Jesus. This is rich imagery and there are other allusions within the prayer which have other resonances. Narrative is certainly not the only language used in the prayers in the liturgy, but story is obviously a rich and important element in prayer, especially as it functions with

'recollected amplification'(21).

... a high status should be accorded to reading and singing; for whatever the historical origins of these elements of public worship, there can be no doubt that such means of recital of the Christian story are perceived by very many Anglicans to be themselves a form of prayer fully as important as eucharistic worship in the liturgical life of the Christian community'(22)

The use of music in a church service is often another of the elements which marks it out as something other than a meeting about a philosophy or a private function and which gives clear messages about faith, God and relationship. This is something which has not been addressed cogently or expertly in recent literature. Music in the church is a contentious subject and much of the work in the field is done very much from a 'party line' point of view. In Tune With Heaven, the report of the Archbishop's commission on church music, is an attempt to find a theological and practical view of music, but it is hampered by the need to be descriptive, prescriptive and encouraging to all; understandably this dims the vision and cramps the creativity which such a report might have promised.

The tradition of singing hymns is documented back into the New Testament, and, of course, Psalms are an example of the earliest recorded hymn words. In our own times there has been a flourishing of worship music, of varying qualities and styles. Many modern hymns have been written much in the style of many old hymns. For example in this century 'Tell out my Soul', a version of the Magnificat, was written by T.Dudley-Smith and written as a hymn from the Wesleyan era might have been written. In contrast, many songs which come from a more charismatic community have more the feeling of some pop songs and use much the same language and harmonic structure as music known as 'easy listening' (mainly the province of such as radio 2). Another style which has gained popularity in some churches is the style of music which comes from Taize (a community in France which is open to all for bible study, worship and retreats). This is more like a sung meditation and contains repeated phrases of praise, intercession or whatever, sung for up to ten minutes at a time, sometimes with a cantor singing over the congregation with extra words.

With the wide variety of music now flourishing in the church (much more than can be mentioned here) there can be problems with familiarity in the congregation which has its own

impact on the incomer. Many churches, however, overcome this by using the choir or a music group to lead the singing. There is little doubt that the singing in a church is a unique experience for society which occurs nowhere else in quite the same ways or abundance. Modern songs which have simple tunes and simple words have often been cited as a good missiological tool containing nuggets of truth in a manageable form. It does have to be said, however, that many of the words of such songs are so overlaid with jargon that it is hard for the incomer to see what is being said, or alternatively, some songs are just plain banal. Also many of the new songs are very confessional in character which makes it difficult for the incomer to sing with integrity.

The popularity of programmes on the television which are full of hymn singing points to the ongoing richness that there is in this tradition, and the pleasure which many people derive from singing hymns. It may be that this popularity is mainly within the scope of an older age range, but it is significant nonetheless in terms of the effect of church music on those who are not necessarily regular worshippers. However, just as there are some very bad modern worship songs so too there are some dreadful hymns whose continued usage is difficult to justify. It is to be hoped that the church will not only take the chance to revise its services in the year 2000 but that the musical resources of the church will continue to be scrutinised in a sensitive and creative fashion.

Although there is much new music many churches still keep to the more traditional styles of hymns singing, Psalm chanting, and eucharistic settings. It seems, in missiological terms, that the church is largely successful in its music, what ever type is used, so long as music is truly the vehicle of worship and does not degenerate into being a musical performance. It seems also that the variety of music available has been a help for the mission of the church as it has so much that it can make use of in different situations. What may be appropriate at a Book of Common Prayer evensong may not be the same as that which is appropriate for a Sunday morning all age service. With the proliferation of choice there is a need for the church to give help to those who struggle without an organist or without knowledge of the resources which may be available to them.

7.4 Story and Identity

In his essay on the role of story in Christianity, Stephen Sykes suggests that people achieve self-identity through the internalization of their own stories. Thus, he goes on, 'the maintenance of Christian identity is closely linked to the stories handed on in the fundamental Christian rituals'⁽²³⁾. This giving, receiving, and maintaining of identity in story is at the heart of much which occurs in a service of worship, even though it is far more on a sub-conscious than on a conscious level. The process of telling the story is by no means a one-way event. Barton and Halliburton speak of story and participation in story by re-calling the way human beings get to know each other and communicate. It is most natural for two people who meet to embark on some level of story telling about their own life and experience, and this exchange of stories is the beginning of meaningful communication.

By continually "reciting" the story which the Scriptures tell, the Church at worship actually engages in dialogue with God...it might be said that the Church reads over the Scriptures in order to tell God its "story", to go over its formative years with him anew, to proclaim in his presence the salvation it has experienced.'⁽²⁴⁾

In this dialogue is not only communication with God but participation in the story as part of the individual's own history. In incorporating an individual into the liturgical action of the church part of the process of incorporation is in the fact of participation in the story. The notion of participation leading to actualization indirectly concurs with the thesis of Newbigin and Niebuhr which suggests the need to know the truth of Christianity 'from the inside', a participative and actual involvement in public truth, not only an intellectual understanding and private opinion.

The subject of the sermon has already been covered to some extent earlier in this chapter, but there is also at this point more that can be said in terms of participation and more particularly relating to the notion of participation in story as an important missiological model. The idea of participation has been well documented in terms of the sermon in a book by Jensen. He says that participation in the sermon, particularly the story sermon⁽²⁵⁾, is one of the foremost aims of preaching. He refers to Crossan who outlines two forms of metaphor;

illustration and participation⁽²⁶⁾. In the case of illustration, once the concept being communicated has been grasped the illustration is dispensable. But when a metaphor contains within it something which becomes part of the persons own story, notably a new way of seeing the world or the self, then the metaphor is one of participation and is indispensable. This is seen in Jesus' uses of parable. Jensen states that in studies of parable there is a growing realisation that parables are metaphors of participation and that the metaphorical form of the parable ought not to be separated from its content. That is to say the form of the parable is as important as the information contained within it.⁽²⁷⁾

It would be possible schematically to outline the element of story appearing in the liturgy in the sermon and the eucharist, the reading of scripture, the prayers, and music but there is a sense in which that may be a simplistic scheme imposing a limitation on the possibilities. Story is a more complex part of being human than is easily outlined in schematic form. This can be seen now as the part the catechumenate plays in the understanding of and participation in story is examined. Here it may be seen that story in the liturgy is not only a layered complexity of recollected amplification, but that each individual will bring his or her own resonances and remembrances to the story of the faith in a way which no-one can predict.

The major work of the catechumenate movement is to find ways to help individuals to become part of the corporate life of the church. This is effected in many different ways, but perhaps one of the most important and personal ways is enabling the incorporation of an individual into the story of the church; this is concerned with belonging and the liturgy.

This chapter has already looked at various ways in which participation is important. Perhaps this becomes more acutely focussed in the catechetical work of the Christian friend and guide, and the desire to create the possibility for dialogue to occur between the story of the individual and the story of the gospel. Each individual person arrives in a church with their own agenda and needs, gifts and interests. The desire in the catechumenate is that the whole individual should be able to participate in the life of the church. To this end, much work is done on the identity of the incomer and how that identity can be mingled with the identity of the corporate body.

The gospel is the story which gives the Church its meaning. So there is a parallel reason for story telling. It is that people who want to join the Church need to be part of that story and the identity it brings.⁽²⁸⁾

When considering identity and participation in story, the issue of conversion cannot be ignored. Kavanagh, Ball, and others would say that the idea of the catechumenate is to convert people, and that does seem to be a universal and reasonable presupposition. However, it is important to realise that this conversion is not seen necessarily as a moment of decision (though it may be) but as a journey of development in which the catechumenate provides the arena in which such a conversion can occur. Journeying language is very important in the catechetical process because it implies that there are real choices to be made about the direction and speed of a journey, and this gives control to the incomer rather than the catechetical process being something which is 'done' to someone. Journey language also implies that the process does not end at baptism and that it is not always going to be easy.

Conversion is both active and passive. There is the element of choice and response which may mean the decision to change part of the life style; the individual has to decide to turn away from one thing and embrace a new thing. There are also elements which call people deeper into relationship with God and within the relationship with God the individual is reshaped and redirected.

...The person undergoing conversion is seen to be transformed through a combination of deep intellectual activity, emotional maturation, increasing ethical vigour and sensitivity, and an intensifying of the religious love of God and humanity.⁽²⁹⁾

The need for conversion, often the event prompting an individual to seek to be incorporated into the life of the church, is expressed as a need to find an answer to some of life's questions. This is not solely an intellectual question, but involves the shape and direction of people's lives, their personality and how they see themselves. It is all this which needs the process of conversion and all this which is attended to in the idea in the catechumenate of mingling the individual's story with the story of the church and the story of Christianity. This is not a formulaic event or series of happenings, but it is undoubtedly the aim of the catechetical process that conversion should take place and that this conversion involves a sharing of the stories of life and faith between those who have found faith and those who seek it.

The catechumenate has as its basis the idea that someone from within the church will

accompany the incomer on their journey into faith and into incorporation into the church. This process has been outlined in other chapters, but perhaps the most important part of the journey to be considered in this chapter is that of how the story of Christianity is transmitted and what opportunity there is for the incomer to express the story with which they arrive. The idea of accompanied journey goes back to Jesus and the way he lived and worked with his disciples. They were led from not knowing Jesus and who he was, to being sure enough about Jesus and who he was to begin to be the early church. This process did not take place in a short time, rather it was a process of gradually being led towards new understanding, and it seems likely not only that they were led by Jesus but that they also discussed between themselves the various confusions and difficulties they encountered on the way. In America the catechumenate tends to work on a 'buddy' system of one-to-one involvement of a trained 'accompanier' and the enquirer. In this country there has been a move towards a catechumenate group, ideally of eight to ten people, who are accompanied by one or two people in their journey to baptism.

The idea of a shared journey is one which has been explored a great deal in Liberation Theology of all sorts. In this country Laurie Green has worked in his parish with people trying to find together the relevance of scripture for them in their own journeys⁽³⁰⁾. In South America similarly the emphasis is on mobilising the laity to be the leaders and enablers of the community. This is a non-hierarchical way of learning; there is not so much one teacher and a class of people to be taught, as a group of people together sharing faith and learning.

Our being Christian and our accompanying others along a journey of discovery are intimately and essentially tied in with the practical, physical things and events of human living.⁽³¹⁾

The element of mingling stories is at the heart of the Christian faith. At the heart of every community is a story which explains that community's understanding of the world, the place of people in that world, and the ways of life they are to pursue. One essential role of the catechumenate is to communicate the story of the community, both that particular community and the community of faith worldwide, and make the community's story belong to the incomer also. There is a sense in which the role of the liturgy is to make the story known, and the role of the catechumenate is to make sure the story is understood and applied.

There is no doubt from the literature discussed that the role of story in the faith is vital. It is also clear that story has an enormous part to play in the incorporation of an individual into the liturgical action of the church, not only in the liturgy as such, but also in the process of the catechumenate, mingling the stories together. The whole notion of participation and incorporation cannot be understood apart from some understanding of the contribution of story.

By attention to its story, the Church aspires to become and remain "inheritor" as well as "steward" of that which is performed in the events reported in the story. It aspires to be a body of people who, by responding appropriately to the performance which the Christian story reports, actually enter the inheritance which is offered by that performance to all mankind.⁽³²⁾

CONCLUSION

...I'm not religious myself. I used to be. I thought one should, as if God was the next one up after the Queen and rather the same sort of thing. But really the church has become so impossible these days what with dropping the Prayer Book and being so unpleasant about women.⁽¹⁾

This view of the church and of 'religion', although it appears in fiction, is probably not uncommon. Or, conversely, there is the view that all that takes place in church is archaic and irrelevant. Living with both positions and finding a way through to the twenty-first century has caused the Church of England to reassess many things about its life and work. The Decade of Evangelism (an ecumenical, worldwide idea which was launched in 1988) has given a new impetus to the mission of the churches in England and there has been much work on many fronts to help develop faith on many different levels. At the Lambeth conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion in 1988, a great many resolutions were produced, some about the Decade of Evangelism. It became clear from these that what was being suggested was not a series of special mission activities but a change in attitude and outlook in the whole church.

The issue the Churches must face up to in this decade is not so much that people do not believe in God, but that they do not find the Churches credible. Current surveys consistently indicate a high rate of belief in God, but the difficulty is in converting that often confused belief into committed faith.⁽²⁾

It has sometimes been said that if you want to find out what the church thinks, look at its liturgy; liturgy can be seen as a reflection of the ethos and values of the church. But if there are elements in liturgy which are uncomfortable or reflect a view difficult to share, which comes first, changing the liturgy, or changing the church? Should the church inform the liturgy or the liturgy inform the church?

The church must not be afraid to change its liturgies; this is not always easy. Resistance to change is to some extent inevitable. Psychological insights show that some of the effects of resistance can be used positively and need not be regarded as an insuperable obstacle. It can be shown that areas of resistance often occur because there is an area of deep need, concern or feeling and if these areas are attended to there can be exciting new growth:

It can be an exit to vision. If resistance is recognised as a gift to be treasured rather than an obstacle to change, it can begin to open up some areas of intimate relevance for the life of an individual or a group. If worship is in fact about opening up exits for vision, resistance may be one of its surest allies.⁽³⁾

In Jesus's re-statement of the prophecy of Isaiah in Luke 4v18, Jesus sees his mission as being to bring good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free. Many would say that this statement amounted to Jesus's manifesto. In this manifesto there is undoubtedly a statement about the work of the kingdom and this can be seen in literal terms and in metaphorical terms. The statement has a literal outworking in the care which the church should give in terms of social action. The metaphorical outworking can perhaps be seen in those who feel that they are oppressed by their loneliness or fear, or who might feel that they have been blind to what is important in life, whatever it is that is hard in psychological terms, and that for these people the gospel is seen in the church giving the care of God to all reflected in the liturgy. It may be that the liturgy needs to change so that the reflection of God's care can be seen more clearly.

It is important that the mission of the church in worship should be consistent with the mission of the church in proclamation, social action, and the pastoral offices. The mission of the church is an element of the liturgical action of the church which does not seem to have received as much attention as, for example, historical matters in liturgy. But perhaps a time is coming when no-one can deny the relevance of finding personal and community identity, of finding shalom, of finding liturgy which expresses love of God and of neighbour.

Changing the Liturgy

If worship is not shaped and informed by the insights and perceptions of modern thinking it will become irrelevant to the modern world. Christians cannot live in isolation from the world and from each other, the creation of identity for the Christian cannot be apart from all humanity as the love of God is directed not only to individuals but to all people. There is, however, a real danger of allowing the liturgy to become 'trendy' and to some extent trivialise that which should be most profound.

Worship develops, and liturgies change. This is largely inevitable. There is no reason why the process should be left to chance, or left to the uncritically applied urges of the moment, however important current insights might be. When ritual practice alters, the nature of worship as an action of the whole person in the Spirit requires that the alteration be a conscious and considered movement.⁽⁴⁾

It is good that the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England is in the process of constantly monitoring the liturgies which already exist and creating new liturgies. Books such as Lent, Holy Week and Easter, Patterns for Worship, The Promise of His Glory and Enriching the Christian Year show a way forward in liturgical terms and give a new, exciting dimension of resources for change to the church's life of worship. Not all that is in them is good, and there is a sense in which the use of these books and liturgies before they become authorised gives the church a chance to sift and savour the contents. This can only be a good thing. It is not enough merely to ask - does this liturgy work? But neither is it feasible not to ask such a question.

I believe that from the discussion of this thesis there are four main elements which must be considered for the future of liturgy in the Church of England. These are all elements which need to be considered for change in the next years.

1) It is time to enrich the liturgy. There is a glorious heritage of sign and symbol much of which is still potently present in the liturgies which are used, but there is also room for more in many areas, some of which have been outlined⁽⁵⁾. Jesus taught in parables and there is a real sense in which the signs and symbols which are part of church life are parables in gesture, colour, picture and resonance. this is part of the shaping of the community of faith and should not be neglected but given new depths, new nuance and poetry to enable more people to share in the richness of God, not only with words but with all the gifts we are given.

2) There is a need for greater participation in the liturgy, a greater sense of inclusion. Too often the functions of liturgy can take over from the telling and re-telling in different ways of the story of faith. In Jewish tradition story-telling is a vital part of the nurture of those growing in faith. As the story of Passover is told, so the family together grows up with the story and into the story. In particular, the material of the lectionary could be revised. This could include some more elements of the stories of faith and so the gospel can be made clear in many different ways, and inclusion in the story of faith encouraged.

3) It is time to allow for greater honesty in liturgy. It is not that the Church of England is dishonest(!), merely that some of the history which has shaped the liturgy can no longer be considered relevant. Much of the theology at present projected in the liturgy is part of the

history of this country when everyone was expected to be a christian and attend church. Although the Church of England is still the established church and has a wide circle of people who feel a sense of belonging, much can no longer be assumed. This is particularly important in the occasional offices which is where the incomer will find the greatest mismatch between what is the case and what is assumed in the liturgy⁽⁶⁾. If what is said and done in liturgy seems irrelevant, the gospel may be seen as irrelevant. Since the gospel is relevant, how can the liturgy be made to seem more appropriate except by being more honest: honest about society, self, ritual, relationship and function, as well as honest about God.

4) The church needs to take mission seriously in its liturgy. There is much in the services of the Church of England that has never been considered from a missiological point of view, from things which may be considered relatively trivial (such as the amount of books and pages a person may have to negotiate in any single service) to things which are vitally important (such as the exclusivity of parish communion and how to offer the welcome of Christ). It is to be hoped that the church will begin to take more seriously the problems faced by a stranger to worship. There are many problems for the incomer; it is not just the language, the ritual, the strangeness of worship in societal terms, but also has to do with the church community and what it will be and become with that incomer as a part of itself. If the church is to find a way forward to help the incomer find identity and shalom both in individual and corporate terms, it is also vital that the proclamation of the church is not hindered by the spoken and unspoken messages that are given.

The christian faith calls for a radical transformation of life; the great commandments to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself are radical, and lives need to change to enabling life based on that call. With the decade of Evangelism in progress and a revision of The Alternative Service Book 1980 due in six years there is a chance to love God in worship and love our neighbours in mission in new and exciting ways. The church needs to transform as a body to be more like St Utopia, taking seriously the need for a strong community of faith, rich with symbol and story, which is open to receive and share the joy, pain and personality of others.

The hope is that more people will be drawn to worship God, so it is important

that our public worship should take account of the needs and contexts of those who do not normally attend. Worship should be a pathway to God for those who are strangers to the Church as well as for regular members.⁽⁷⁾

The eternal dance of the Trinity, the dance of love, need not be confined to the heavens. By God's grace it is possible in the church as the church allows itself to be made new and re-created in loving God and loving neighbour. At the centre of worship and mission is the mystery of God's infinite love, given as gift for all to share:

'That we, too, may come to the picnic
With nothing to hide, join the dance
As it moves in perichoresis
Turns about the abiding tree.'⁽⁸⁾

End notes to Introduction

- 1) Mk 12v29-31
- 2) Rom 12v1
- 3) 1 Jn 4v19
- 4) A.Schmemmann, The World as a Sacrament p28
- 5) G.K.Neville & J.H.Westerhoff, Learning Through Liturgy p3
- 6) J.Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit p164
- 7) W.Carr, Brief Encounters p1
- 8) Bosch, Transforming Mission, p1
- 9) Ibid p390
- 10) Hardy & Ford, Praising and Knowing God p149
- 11) Gen 2v18
- 12) Colin Gunton, 'The One, the Three and the Many' (Inaugural Lecture at Kings College, London 1985), p13
Quoted by R.Green, Only Connect p138
- 13) E.Ramshaw, Ritual and Pastoral Care, p30
- 14) W.Carr, op cit p30
- 15) Bosch, op cit p392

End notes to Chapter One

- 1) Robert C. Solomon, Continental Philosophy since 1750
(Oxford; OUP 1988) p6
- 2) Doctrine Commission, Believing in the Church p79
- 3) 'The constant temptation has been to believe too much or too little about the church and thus to lose sight of what it essentially is' Hodgson and Williams, 'The Church' Ed. Hodgson and King, Christian Theology p223
- 4) Schillebeeckx, The Mission of the Church p52
- 5) Hodgson and King, op cit p 224
- 6) Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church 2nd Ed p287
- 7) Boff, Church: Charism and Power p135
- 8) Barth, Church Dogmatics 4/2 p695
- 9) J.G.Davies, Worship and Mission p16 and 17
- 10) Philippians 2v7
- 11) Dulles, Models of the Church p96
quoting J.A.T.Robinson in The New Reformation?
(Philadelphia; Westminster Press 1965) p92
- 12) John 13v1-20
- 13) Dulles, The Catholicity of the Church p86
- 14) Ibid p74
- 15) Zizioulas, Being As Communion p130
- 16) O'Grady, The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth p338
- 17) Barth, op cit 4/2 p614
- 18) Treatment of biblical material can be found in Newbigin,
The Household of God p68-72
- 19) Moltmann, The Open Church p35
- 20) Ibid p189
- 21) Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit p121
- 22) Ed. Ecclestone, The Parish Church? p5
- 23) Colin Gunton, 'The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community'
Gunton and Hardy, On Being the Church p54
- 24) Ibid p48
- 25) Ibid p79
- 26) Hardy & Ford, Praising and Knowing God p55

- 27) 'peri': around and 'chora': place
 'The dance of love of the Trinity in which they give place to each other. This is the glory revealed in Jesus, as the Father and Son give authority to each other in mutual interdependence, and as the creator and the creation interpenetrate each other'
 S.Verney, The Dance of Love (London; Fount 1989)
 cf also the final stanza of the poem Compline by W.H.Auden
 and 'Perichoresis - Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity'
Theology July 1977 Vol LXXX No 676

End notes to Chapter Two

- 1) E.Ramshaw, Ritual and Pastoral Care p29
- 2) Bonhoeffer, Ethics p267
- 3) Ibid p63
- 4) Newbigin, Truth to Tell p33
- 5) Ibid p48
- 6) Douglas, Natural Symbols p42
- 7) Ibid p59-76
- 8) Ibid p60
- 9) Ibid p64
- 10) Ibid p26
- 11) Hopewell, Congregation - Stories and Structures Chapter 1
- 12) J.G.Davies, Worship and Mission p14
 quoting E.S.Brown, 'The Worship of the Church and Modern Man',
Studia Liturgica II, 1963, p54.
- 13) H.R.Niebuhr, Why Narrative? p22
- 14) Doctrine Commission, Believing in the Church p79
- 15) Hopewell op cit p48
- 16) Sykes, Literature and Theology p25
- 17) H.R.Niebuhr op cit p44
- 18) Crossan, The Dark Interval p9
- 19) MacIntyre, Why Narrative? particularly p156-157
- 20) H.R.Niebuhr op cit p44
- 21) cf Hopewell op cit p103
- 22) Hauerwas, A Community of Character p37
- 23) Sykes op cit p22
- 24) Ibid
- 25) Jensen, Telling the Story p139ff
- 26) Ford, Why Narrative? p136

End Notes to Introduction to Part Two

- 1) Van Gennep, A., The Rites of Passage
 (Chicago; University of Chicago Press 1960)
- 2) Quoted by Douglas Davies, Cremation Today and Tomorrow p39
- 3) Walter, Funerals and How to Improve Them p90-91
- 4) E.Ramshaw, Ritual as Pastoral Care p25
- 5) Chambers, Made in Heaven? p22
 cf also Ainsworth-Smith & Speck Letting Go p88
- 6) Carr, Brief Encounters p78
- 7) This matter was debated in the General Synod of the Church of
 England, York, November 1991
- 8) 'Anglicanism needs a common liturgical core again for personal and
 public use' Article by Alan Wilkinson Church Times 1/5/92

End Notes to Chapter Three

- 1) The Alternative Service Book 1980, the marriage vows p290-291
- 2) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p289f
The Book of Common Prayer (C.U.P. Church pew edition) p217
- 3) Perham, Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial p97
cf also Carr Brief Encounters p97f and Chambers Made in Heaven? p28
- 4) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p288
Book of Common Prayer p216
- 5) Chambers op cit p23
- 6) cf note 11)
- 7) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p289
- 8) A New Zealand Prayer Book p282ff
- 9) Westerhoff & Willimon, Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle p109
- 10) Ibid p23
- 11) Carr op cit p89
- 12) Ibid p98
- 13) cf Grove Books:
Jenkins, Cohabitation: A Biblical Perspective p3
Forster, Marriage Before Marriage? p5
and Pratt, E., Living in Sin? distributed by Grove, pub. privately.
- 14) Pratt, op cit
- 15) Forster, op cit, chapter 3 p11ff
- 16) Jenkins op cit p3
- 17) Forster op cit p5
- 18) Some suggestions for prayers to be used in this context appear in
Forster op cit in the Appendix p24
- 19) cf note 1)
- 20) General Synod Marriage Commission, Marriage and the Church's Task
(London; CIO Publishing 1978)
- 21) Atkinson, To Have and To Hold p75-76
- 22) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p293
- 23) Ed. Perham, Liturgy For a New Century p57
- 24) Book of Common Prayer introduction to marriage service p216
- 25) Ed. Perham op cit p59
- 26) Forster op cit p24
- 27) Tripp, 'Worship and the Pastoral Office'
Ed Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold, The Study of Liturgy p524

End Notes to Chapter Four

- 1) Ps 116v3
- 2) From 1 Cor 15v54-55, a suggested reading at a funeral service in
The Alternative Service Book 1980 (p312)
- 3) Westerhoff & Willimon, Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle p170
- 4) European Values survey quoted in Walter,
Funerals and How to Improve Them p231
- 5) Book of Common Prayer (C.U.P.) p229
- 6) Walter, op cit p2
- 7) Anecdotal evidence from a friend whose mother was one of the women
who would go to lay out the bodies.
- 8) Walter op cit p14
- 9) Walter op cit p9
- 10) A. Tomalak, 'Holy Signs',
Dean (Ed.), The Parish Funeral p23
- 11) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p169
- 12) 'The Funeral Liturgy', Perham, from Perham (Ed.),

- Towards Liturgy 2000 p57-58
- 13) Quoted by Walter op cit p250
 - 14) Ibid p252
 - 15) Ibid p118
 - 16) Douglas Davies, Cremation Today and Tomorrow p40
 - 17) Carr op cit pgs108, 121 and Willimon, Worship as Pastoral Care p114
 - 18) Walter op cit p123
 - 19) Para 9, p4
 - 20) A.Tomalak, op cit p24
 - 21) Walter op cit p9
 - 22) Words from the committal, The Alternative Service Book 1980 p316
 - 23) Walter op cit p179
 - 24) The Alternative Service Book 1980 opening sentences p307, prayers p315 and committal p316
 - 25) J.D.Davies op cit p34
 - 26) Ibid p33
 - 27) Ex 3v2; Ex 13v21; Dan 3v25; Acts 2v3
 - 28) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p324
 - 29) J.D.Davies op cit p38-41
 - 30) Ibid p41
 - 31) Walter p95-96
 - 32) Ibid p219
 - 33) Ibid p223
 - 34) J.D.Davies op cit Chapter 2 p17ff
 - 35) Ibid p19
 - 36) See note 24)
 - 37) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p169
 - 38) Occasional Services of the Episcopal Church in U.S.A. p171-174 (New York; Church Hymnal Corporation 1988)
 - 39) Green, Only Connect p84

End Notes to Chapter Five

- 1) Westerhoff & Willimon, Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle p16
- 2) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p213
- 3) M.Reardon, Christian Initiation - A Policy for the Church of England p61
- 4) Ibid Reardon p21-22, Spinks p62-63
- 5) Ibid p64
- 6) Dalby, Open Baptism (London; SPCK 1989)
- 7) Reardon op cit p52
- 8) Carr, Brief Encounters p75
- 9) J.B.Torrance, 'Contract or Covenant' Scottish Journal of Theology Vol 23 1970 p66
- 10) The Alternative Service Book 1980 Section 160 p280
- 11) Reardon op cit p24
- 12) Dalby, Towards Liturgy 2000 p19
- 13) Clement, Paidagogos, expounded by R.Norris in Chapter 1 of Baptismal Mysteries and the Catechumenate
- 14) Reardon op cit p30
- 15) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p9
- 16) Willimon, Worship and Pastoral Care p154
- 17) Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry World Council of Churches Faith and Order paper No 113 Baptism Paragraph 8
- 18) The Alternative Service Book 1980 p248
- 19) Revival of the Catechumenate: Proposal to General Synod

- Revd. David Hawtin Feb 1990 Report of Proceedings
- 20) Willimon op cit p159
 - 21) Carr op cit p82
 - 22) Holeton, Christian Initiation in the Anglican Communion p6
 - 23) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p79
 - 24) cf also Stephenson and Stancliffe
'Christian Initiation and its relation to some Pastoral Offices'
Theology 1991 July/August p284ff
 - 25) Christian Initiation: Birth and Growth in the Christian Society
The Ely Report. GS30 1971 p46
 - 26) Quoted by Carr op cit p64-65
 - 27) Holeton op cit p13
 - 28) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p16
 - 29) Green, Only Connect p61
 - 30) Kavanagh, Baptismal Mysteries and the Catechumenate p47
 - 31) Neville & Westerhoff, Learning Through Liturgy p145
 - 32) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p21
 - 33) Proposal to General Synod
Mr Roger Gordon Feb 1989 Report of Proceedings
 - 34) Stephenson and Stancliffe, op cit
 - 35) Reardon op cit p21
 - 36) Chapter 1 p20
 - 37) Reardon op cit p33
 - 38) Westerhoff & Willimon op cit p14

End Notes to Chapter Six

- 1) Willimon, Worship as Pastoral Care p48
- 2) Grainger, The Language of the Rite p ix and xi
- 3) Bosch, Witness to the World p199
- 4) E.Ramshaw, Ritual and Pastoral Care p13
- 5) Green, Only Connect p80
- 6) Neville and Westerhoff, Learning through Liturgy p91
- 7) Brooks & Vasey, Inculturation p23
- 8) Willimon, op cit p 48
- 9) Ministry to the Sick, particularly p32-33
- 10) J.G.Davies, Dictionary of Pastoral Care p254
- 11) Neville & Westerhoff, op cit p199
- 12) This can be seen clearly and tragically in the destruction of many important cultural identities, in places such as Africa, when missionaries went out from this and other countries to 'save the savages'. An extreme example, but the tendency remains in church and culture still.
- 13) Green op cit p15
- 14) Willimon op cit p59 quoting Pruyser
- 15) Green op cit p76
- 16) Ibid p41
- 17) Hardy & Ford, Knowing and Praising God p14
- 18) Grainger op cit p45
- 19) Neville & Westerhoff op cit p103
- 20) Ramshaw op cit p25
- 21) Ibid p87
- 22) A psychological explanation of this occurs in Westerhoff and Willimon, Learning through the Life Cycle p 82-83
- 23) Ramshaw op cit p63
- 24) Willimon op cit Chapter 1
- 25) Tripp, The Study of Liturgy p527

End Notes to Chapter Seven

- 1) Doctrine Commission, Believing in the Church p237
- 2) Schmemmann, The World as a Sacrament p38
- 3) 1 Cor 11v23-26
- 4) Moltmann, The Open Church p125
- 5) Ex 3v8. This would also link with the suggestion made for enriching the Service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child outlined in Chapter 3
- 6) Jn 4v14
- 7) Ex 16v14ff; Ex 12v8ff
- 8) Ford, Why Narrative?p136
- 9) Ibid
- 10) Young, The Art of Performance p182
- 11) 'The Bible and the Liturgy' by Neville Clark from: Ed. R.C.D.Jasper, Getting the Liturgy Right p24
- 12) Ibid Chapter 4
- 13) cf Letter to the Editor, Theology Vol XCV No 765 p205
- 14) Doctrine Commission op cit p106
- 15) Liturgical Commission, Making Women Visible Para 90 p23
- 16) Ibid p63
- 17) Chapter 4 this thesis
- 18) Chapter 2 this thesis
- 19) David Power, Unsearchable Riches p122
- 20) Eucharistic Prayers p130-141
Blessing of the Waters of Baptism p231 (also p246)
- 21) cf note 18)
- 22) Doctrine Commission op cit p103
- 23) Sykes, Literature and Theology p23
- 24) Doctrine Commission op cit p199
- 25) Jensen's book, Telling the Story, outlines three main types of preaching: didactic, proclamatory, and story preaching. Nearly half his book concerns story preaching, cf particularly Chapter 5.
- 26) Crossan, J.D., In Parables
(Philadelphia; Fortress Press 1967)
- 27) cf 2 Sam 12v1-13. An example of the pathos and participation possible. King David condemns himself after Nathan tells him a story.
- 28) Ball, Adult Believing p40
- 29) Ed. Richardson and Bowden, New Dictionary of Theology
(London; SCM Press 1983)
Entry by L.R.Rambo
- 30) Green, L., Power to the Powerless
(Basingstoke; Marshall Pickering 1987)
Let's Do Theology
(London; Mowbray 1990)
- 31) Ball, Journey Into Faith p5
- 32) Doctrine Commission op cit p254

End Notes to the Conclusion

- 1) Isabel Coleman, Deceits of Time, (London, Penguin, 1988) p89
- 2) Nigel McCulloch, A Gospel to Proclaim, p46
- 3) Green, Only Connect, p22
- 4) Tripp, The Study of Liturgy p527
- 5) eg Thanksgiving for the Birth of Child in Chapter 5, ideas about the

eucharist contained in Chapter 7, and some suggestions taken from the New Zealand Prayer Book about marriage and the process of being given away by both parents as outlined in Chapter 3

- 6) eg Marriage of cohabitants
- 7) Nigel McCulloch, op cit p51
- 8) W.H.Auden from his poem 'Compline',
quoted in Theology July 1977 Vol LXXX No 676

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