

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

New Denominationalism:  
Tendencies Towards a New Reformation of English Christianity

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NEW DENOMINATIONALISM:  
TENDENCIES TOWARDS A NEW REFORMATION OF ENGLISH CHRISTIANITY

*...if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ...If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.*

(from 1 Corinthians 15, vv. 13-19)

*Many people reach their conclusions about life like lazy schoolboys; they copy the answers from the back of the book without troubling to work it out for themselves.*

(S. Kierkegaard, in Hewett, 1970, The Uncarven Image, XV.)

*The Church has no short-cut private road to historical certainty.*

(House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England, 1986, The Nature of Christian Belief, para. 28, p. 16)

*In proportion as a man dilutes his thought and supresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion, ...in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character.*

(W.E. Channing in Hewett, 1970, The Uncarven Image, XVII.)

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## ABSTRACT

The tensions which had over hundreds of years built up in the Roman Catholic Church produced the first Reformation. In England the new Anglican Church could not hold together all its elements, and the Great Ejection of 1662 saw the real beginning of separate denominations.

Today another realignment is taking place. In an environment of indifference to churchgoing the Churches must respond. But they are divided within. Some elements desire to convert the world, others wish to defend the Church from it, a number want to absorb the world and others wish to combine these approaches. The differences relate to viewpoints about belief and authority.

Historical techniques, scientific knowledge and philosophical models have affected the understanding of the Church, the Bible and models of belief. The result is that liberalism, once outside subscribing denominations, has returned to them. This has created further strains with those of biblical and Church beliefs and authority views.

A new holiness movement is sweeping the Churches. A revivalist spirit calling on interpreted individual experience is spreading across Catholic and Protestant structures. This has created both new unity and divisions.

Behind the desires for ecumenism, the result within denominations is renewed tension between 'independency' and the 'broad Church'. New denominationalism, the realignment of belief and authority patterns, threatens to become a New Reformation, a structural change resulting from alliances and schism.



2. Ideal Types. . . . .	41
3. Church/Denomination/Sect Ideal Types Continuum. . . . .	42
3 (a). Introduction -42	
3 (b). The Development of the Church/Denomination/ Sect Continuum -42	
3 (b) i. Church and Sect -42	
3 (b) ii. Church, Sect, and Mysticism -43	
3 (b) iii. Church, Denomination and Sect -44	
3 (b) iv. Summary of Characteristics -44	
3 (c). The Decline in the Explanatory Power of the Continuum -45	
3 (c) i. Ecclesia, Denomination, Sect and Cult -45	
3 (c) ii. Universal Church, Ecclesia, Denomination, Established Sect, Sect, and Cult -46	
3 (c) iii. Sects and the Mainstream -47	
3 (d). Assessment -47	
4. An Historical Approach to the Decline of the Continuum. . . . .	48
4 (a). Introduction -48	
4 (b). The Churches -48	
4 (b) i. The Anglican Church -48	
4 (b) ii. The Methodist Church -49	
4 (b) iii. The United Reformed Church -50	
4 (b) iv. The Baptist Church -51	
4 (b) v. The Roman Catholic Church -51	
4 (b) vi. Distinctive Liberal Groups -52	
4 (c). The Mainstream Denominations -53	
5. Conclusion and Approach. . . . .	54

PART II THE FAITH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

CHAPTER 3 Belief Typologies Page 55

1. Introduction. . . . .	55
2. Towards Towler's Typologies. . . . .	55
2 (a). Introduction -55	
2 (b). Glock and Stark, <u>Religion and Society in Tension</u> (1965) -55	
2 (c). Robert Towler, <u>The Need for Certainty</u> (1984) -56	
2 (d). Hobsbawm and Ranger, <u>The Invention of Tradition</u> -56	
3. Belief Typologies of Institutional Christianity. . . . .	57
3 (a). Introduction -57	
3 (b). Traditionalism -57	
3 (b) i. Towler (1984) -57	
3 (b) ii. Maurice Wood (1985) -57	
3 (b) iii. Graham Leonard (1985) -59	
3 (b) iv. Conclusion -62	
3 (c). Conversionism -62	
3 (c) i. Towler (1984) -62	
3 (c) ii. Michael Harper (1976) -62	
3 (c) iii. David Watson (1976) -64	
3 (c) iv. James Packer (in King, 1973) -65	
3 (c) v. David Sheppard (1983) -66	
3 (c) vi. Assessment and Conclusion -66	
3 (d). Christocentric-Theism -67	

3 (d) i.	<i>Towler (1984)</i>	-67
3 (d) ii.	<i>John Robinson (1980)</i>	-67
3 (d) iii.	<i>Keith Ward (1986)</i>	-70
3 (d) iv.	<i>Modern Theologians and Varieties of Christocentric-Theism</i>	-72
3 (d) v.	<i>The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England (1981)</i>	-73
3 (d) vi.	<i>The Essentials of Orthodox Liberalism</i>	-76
3 (d) vii.	<i>The Complaint of Conversionists, Traditionalists and Radicals</i>	-78
3 (e).	<i>Heterodox Liberalism</i>	-78
3 (e) i.	<i>Towler (1984)</i>	-78
3 (e) ii.	<i>Maurice Wiles (1973)</i>	-78
3 (e) iii.	<i>John Hick (1983)</i>	-80
3 (e) iv.	<i>Michael Goulder (with Hick 1983)</i>	-81
3 (e) v.	<i>Conclusion to Theism</i>	-82
3 (e) vi.	<i>Towler (1984) and Exemplarism</i>	-82
3 (e) vii.	<i>Alistair Kee (1971, 1985)</i>	-82
3 (e) viii.	<i>Graham Shaw (1987)</i>	-84
3 (e) ix.	<i>Further Comments on Exemplarism</i>	-85
3 (e) x.	<i>Critical Spirituality: Don Cupitt (from 1979) and John Kent (1987)</i>	-85
3 (e) xi.	<i>Towler (1984) and Gnosticism</i>	-87
3 (e) xii.	<i>Burton and Dolley (1984)</i>	-88
3 (e) xiii.	<i>Conclusion to Gnosticism</i>	-89
3 (f).	<i>Towler (1984), Popular Belief and Summary</i>	-89
4.	<i>The Ministers.</i>	. . . . . 90
4 (a).	<i>Introduction and Methodology</i>	-90
4 (b).	<i>Analysis and Categorisation of Individually Held Beliefs</i>	-92
4 (b) i.	<i>The Liberal Methodist</i>	-92
4 (b) ii.	<i>The Anglo-Catholic</i>	-95
4 (b) iii.	<i>The Conversionist Anglican</i>	-98
4 (c).	<i>Assessment</i>	-100
5.	<i>Overall Summary.</i>	. . . . . 102
<u>CHAPTER 4 The Religious Cultural Environment</u> Page 103		
1.	<i>Introduction.</i>	. . . . . 103
2.	<i>The Importance of the Secularisation Debate.</i>	. . . . . 103
2 (a).	<i>Introduction</i>	-103
2 (b).	<i>Berger, <u>A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology</u> (1967)</i>	-103
2 (c).	<i>Berger, <u>A Call for Action in the Christian Community</u> (1971)</i>	-105
3.	<i>Secularisation or Otherwise.</i>	. . . . . 106
3 (a).	<i>Basis of the Discussion</i>	-106
3 (b).	<i>A Basic Model of Change: From Tradition to Modernity</i>	-107
3 (b) i.	<i>The Model</i>	-107
3 (b) ii.	<i>Criticism of the Model</i>	-108
3 (c).	<i>Secularism and Secularisation</i>	-109
3 (c) i.	<i>Secularism</i>	-109
3 (c) ii.	<i>Approaches to Secularisation</i>	-110

3 (d).	Complexity, Secularisation, Pluralism and Confusion	-112
3 (d) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-112
3 (d) ii.	<i>Richard Fenn (1978)</i>	-113
3 (d) iii.	<i>Larry Shiner (1967)</i>	-114
3 (e).	Pluralism	-115
3 (f).	Conclusion	-117
4.	Practical Approaches to the Problem of Secularisation. . . . .	117
4 (a).	Evidence of Belief and Churchgoing	-117
4 (b).	The Rise and Fall of Organised Christianity	-121
4 (b) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-121
4 (b) ii.	<i>The Weaknesses in the Rise of Christianity</i>	-121
4 (b) iii.	<i>The Decline in Churchgoing</i>	-123
4 (c).	Implicit Religion	-125
4 (c) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-125
4 (c) ii.	<i>The Popular Belief Structure Containing Christian Labels</i>	-125
4 (c) iii.	<i>Implicit Religion and Communal Identity</i>	-127
4 (b) iv.	<i>Intellectual Pluralism</i>	-129
5.	Conclusion: Popular and Intellectual Religion and the Churches. . . . .	130

CHAPTER 5 Authority, Belief, Religious Culture and New Denominationalism Page 132

1.	Introduction. . . . .	132
2.	Rudge (1968), Harrison (1959) and Typologies of Authority. . .	132
2 (a).	Introduction	-132
2 (b).	Explanation and Commentary on the Categories	-133
2 (b) i.	<i>Charismatic Authority</i>	-133
2 (b) ii.	<i>Traditional Authority</i>	-134
2 (b) iii.	<i>Bureaucratic (Classical) Authority</i>	-134
2 (b) iv.	<i>Systemic Authority</i>	-136
2 (b) v.	<i>Human Relations Authority</i>	-137
2 (c).	Rudge's and Harrison's Typologies and this Chapter	-138
3.	Authority Typologies and their Application to Belief Typologies. . . . .	138
3 (a).	Introduction	-138
3 (b).	Explanation and Commentary on the Categories	-139
3 (b) i.	<i>Charismatic Authority and Conversionism</i>	-139
3 (b) ii.	<i>Traditional Authority and Traditionalism</i>	-141
3 (b) iii.	<i>Bureaucratic Authority and Orthodox Liberalism</i>	-142
3 (b) iv.	<i>Systemic Authority and Heterodox Liberalism</i>	-144
3 (b) v.	<i>Human Relations Authority and Heterodox Liberalism</i>	-146
3 (c).	Summary	-147
4.	The Interrelationship Between Belief, Authority and the Culture. . . . .	148
4 (a).	Introduction	-148
4 (b).	Explanation and Commentary	-148
4 (b) i.	<i>Charismatic Authority, Conversionism and the Culture</i>	-148

4 (b) ii.	<i>Traditional Authority, Traditionalism and the Culture</i>	-149
4 (b) iii.	<i>Bureaucratic Authority, Orthodox Liberalism and the Culture</i>	-149
4 (b) iv.	<i>Systemic Authority, Heterodox Liberalism and the Culture</i>	-150
4 (b) v.	<i>Human Relations Authority, Heterodox Liberalism and the Culture</i>	-150
4 (c).	<i>Interrelationships between Authority, Belief and the Culture</i>	-151
4 (c) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-151
4 (c) ii.	<i>Interaction between Attitudes</i>	-151
4 (c) iii.	<i>The Intensification of Attitudes</i>	-151
4 (d).	<i>Summary</i>	-152
5.	<i>Loyalty and the New Groups</i>	. . . . .152
5 (a).	<i>Introduction</i>	-152
5 (b).	<i>Demerath and Hammond - A Model</i>	-153
5 (c).	<i>Functional Collectivities</i>	-154
5 (c) i.	<i>Charismatic Authority and Conversionists</i>	-154
5 (c) ii.	<i>Traditional Authority and Traditionalists</i>	-154
5 (c) iii.	<i>Bureaucratic Authority and Orthodox Liberals</i>	-155
5 (c) iv.	<i>Systemic Authority and Heterodox Liberals</i>	-155
5 (c) v.	<i>Human Relations Authority and Heterodox Liberals</i>	-155
5 (c) vi.	<i>New Groups and Old Denominations</i>	-156
5 (d).	<i>Friction in Denominationalism</i>	-156
5 (e).	<i>Stress within the Old Denominations</i>	-157
6.	<i>Overall Summary and Conclusion</i>	. . . . .157

PART III CHURCH STRATIFICATION

CHAPTER 6 Two Case Studies of Dominant Trends of New Denominationalism within Churches Page 158

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	. . . . .158
1 (a).	<i>Inside the Churches</i>	-158
1 (b).	<i>Hypothesis</i>	-158
1 (c).	<i>Why Teenagers?</i>	-159
2.	<i>A Study of a Religious Group</i>	. . . . .159
2 (a).	<i>Introduction</i>	-159
2 (b).	<i>Martin, <u>Adolescent Interaction in an Anglican Church in Social Compass</u> (1967)</i>	-160
3.	<i>The Groups and their Environment in Risemere and Lowcarr</i>	. . .162
3 (a).	<i>The Local Scene</i>	-162
3 (b).	<i>The Specific Localities of the Churches Studied</i>	-163
3 (b) i.	<i>St. Heimdall's and St. Odin Anglican Churches</i>	-163
3 (b) ii.	<i>Risemere Methodist Church</i>	-164
3 (c).	<i>Basic Information about the Groups</i>	-165
3 (c) i.	<i>St. Heimdall's at Lowcarr Group</i>	-165
3 (c) ii.	<i>Risemere Methodist Fellowship Group</i>	-167



4. Methodology. . . . .	168
4 (a). Introduction -168	
4 (b). Comparisons with Other Participant Observation -168	
4 (c). Further History in Terms of Methodology -171	
5. Individuals, Events and Religious Belief at St. Heimdall's Church. . . . .	172
5 (a). Introduction -172	
5 (b). The Course -172	
5 (c). A Brief Outline of Events -175	
5 (c) i. <i>Early Complaints and Dissatisfaction</i> -175	
5 (c) ii. <i>Resistance and Decline</i> -176	
5 (d). <i>St. Heimdalls Leaders</i> -177	
5 (d) i. <i>Brian</i> -177	
5 (d) ii. <i>Jack</i> -180	
5 (d) iii. <i>Teenage Leader Gerald</i> -181	
5 (d) iv. <i>The Team Minister</i> -182	
5 (d) v. <i>George</i> -184	
5 (e). The Teenagers' Belief Response at St. Heimdall's -184	
5 (e) i. <i>Introduction</i> -184	
5 (e) ii. <i>Leila</i> -184	
5 (e) iii. <i>Heidi</i> -186	
5 (e) iv. <i>Other People in the Group</i> -187	
5 (f). <i>St. Heimdalls and Conversionist Religion</i> -192	
6. Risemere Methodist Church. . . . .	193
6 (a). Introduction -193	
6 (b). Brief outline of Events -193	
6 (c) The Leaders -194	
6 (c) i. <i>Boris, Leader of the Fellowship Group</i> -194	
6 (c) ii. <i>Cary, Assistant Leader</i> -196	
6 (c) iii. <i>Clive, Youth Club Leader</i> -197	
6 (c) iv. <i>Gertrude</i> -199	
6 (c) v. <i>The Risemere Minister</i> -201	
6 (d). The Teenagers' Response to the Leadership -204	
6 (d) i. <i>Introduction</i> -204	
6 (d) ii. <i>June 5th 1983, Fellowship Group Meeting</i> -205	
6 (d) iii. <i>October 9th 1983, Membership Service</i> -207	
6 (d) iv. <i>Sunday October 23rd, Fellowship Group</i> -208	
6 (d) v. <i>The Return of the Doubts</i> -210	
6 (d) vi. <i>Postscript</i> -212	
6 (e). Summary of the Risemere Methodist Group -213	
7. Overall Conclusions of the Studies. . . . .	214
7 (a). Introduction -214	
7 (b). Specific Issues involving Teenagers -214	
7 (c). Conclusion: Churches in General -217	

CHAPTER 7 The Tensions between the Distributed Belief  
and Authority Types Page 219

1. Introduction. . . . .	219
2. The Locality of Christian Belief Types. . . . .	219
2 (a). The Educational Arena -219	

2 (b).	Beyond the Educational Arena	-221
2 (c).	Further Sociological Explanation	-223
3.	Views Promoting Great and Little Traditions. . . . .	224
3 (a).	Introduction	-224
3 (b).	Great and Little Traditions with Reference to Eastern Religions	-224
3 (b) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-224
3 (b) ii.	<i>Early Ideas</i>	-224
3 (b) iii.	<i>Robert Redfield</i>	-225
3 (b) iv.	<i>Max Weber</i>	-226
3 (c).	From Eastern Religions to Christianity	-227
3 (c) i.	<i>Religious Progress and Educated Liberal Christianity</i>	-227
3 (c) ii.	<i>The Difference between Eastern Religions and Christianity</i>	-228
3 (d).	Division Between Belief Types in Institutional Christianity	-229
3 (d) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-229
3 (d) ii.	<i>The Unintelligible Theologian</i>	-229
3 (d) iii.	<i>Further Perceptions of Division in Christianity</i>	-230
3 (e).	Conclusion	-231
4.	Against Great and Little Traditions. . . . .	232
4 (a).	Introduction	-232
4 (b).	Problems with the Evolutionary Perspective	-232
4 (c).	The Eastern Religionists' Viewpoint	-232
4 (c) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-232
4 (c) ii.	<i>Hinduism</i>	-232
4 (c) iii.	<i>Chinese Religions</i>	-233
4 (c) iv.	<i>Conclusion: Eastern Diversity</i>	-234
4 (d).	Democratic Christianity	-235
4 (d) i.	<i>Introduction</i>	-235
4 (d) ii.	<i>Supernaturalism and Eudaemonism</i>	-235
4 (d) iii.	<i>Origins of Christianity</i>	-235
4 (d) iv.	<i>Minimalism and St. Paul</i>	-236
5.	The Arguments So Far: Divided or Equalitarian and Democratic?.	237
6.	Conflicts of Authority in the Anglican and Baptist Churches. .	237
6 (a).	Introduction	-237
6 (b).	The Content of the Controversies	-237
6 (b) i.	<i>The Bennett and Durham Controversies and Media Reaction</i>	-237
6 (b) ii.	<i>The Baptist Controversy</i>	-239
6 (b) iii.	<i>Reaction in the Churches on the Ground</i>	-240
6 (c).	Liberals not in Authority	-241
6 (d).	Tackling the Problem of Authority	-242
6 (e).	Conclusion	-244
7.	Great and Little Traditions in the Context of English Christianity. . . . .	244
7 (a).	Introduction	-244
7 (b).	The Broking Function of Orthodox Liberalism between Belief Sectors	-244
7 (c).	Recreating an Image of New Testament Christianity	-245

- 7 (c) i. Introduction -245
- 7 (c) ii. The World Picture -245
- 7 (c) iii. English Christianity -246

PART IV THE FUTURE

CHAPTER 8 Summary and Church Futures Page 248

- 1. Introduction. . . . .248
- 2. Summary of Chapters. . . . . 248
  - 2 (a). Part I: Introducing the Mainstream Church -248
  - 2 (b). Part II: The Faith Inside and Outside the Church -249
  - 2 (c). Part III: Church Stratification -250
  - 2 (d). Part IV: The Future -250
- 3. Creating Ideal Types from New Denominational Christianity. . . 251
  - 3 (a). Introduction -251
  - 3 (b). From Categories to Ideal Types -251
  - 3 (c). The Continuum of New Denominational Christianity -252
    - 3 (c) i. Summary of Characteristics -252
    - 3 (c) ii. Changes from the Church/Denomination/  
Sect Ideal Types -253
  - 3 (d). Conclusion -253
- 4. Further Research. . . . .253
  - 4 (a). Introduction -253
  - 4 (b). Alternative Research Techniques -253
  - 4 (c). New Research Projects -254
- 5. The Churches of the Future. . . . .255
  - 5 (a). Introduction -255
  - 5 (b). Russell's Three Futures of the Church -255
    - 5 (b) i. The Dysfunctions -255
    - 5 (b) ii. The Church of the Traditionalist Future -256
    - 5 (b) iii. The Church of the Adaptationist Future -256
    - 5 (b) iv. The Church of the Reformist Future -256
    - 5 (b) v. Assessment -257
  - 5 (c). Four Potential New Denominational Futures -257
    - 5 (c) i. Introduction -257
    - 5 (c) ii. The Church of the Fixed Future -257
    - 5 (c) iii. The Church of the Functionalist Future -258
    - 5 (c) iv. The Church of the Dynamic Future -259
    - 5 (c) v. The Church of the Radical Future -260
  - 5 (d). Which Future? -264
- 6. Conclusion. . . . .266

CONTENTS TO APPENDICES, NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY & JOURNALS: Page 267.

APPENDIX 1: Page 269, APPENDIX 2: Page 328, APPENDIX 3: Page 330;

NOTES: Page 331; BIBLIOGRAPHY: Page 339; JOURNALS: Page 352.

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PART I

INTRODUCING THE MAINSTREAM CHURCH

CHAPTER 1

Issues and Literature Survey

1. Introduction

1 (a). Preamble

The Reformation had thrown down before the English people the tremendous question, How to combine the new-won freedom of Protestantism with a faithful adherence to what was best in the ancient Christian faith and practice. If the authority was vested in the King and the bishops there was a danger - nay, a certainty - of tyranny. If in the Bible, there would arise a multitude of interpreters and conflicting sects. If in the individual mind and conscience, there broke out all kinds of vagaries, the notion of an Inner Light, and so forth. (Whitaker, 1910, pp. 11-12)

Christianity is the religion of a desire for unity, the package that Christ was the one God Incarnate, who lived, died, was buried and resurrected so that the world may be saved and come to the full resurrection. However, the messianic prophet Jesus of Nazareth left a few loose ends. He did not write down what he said, he did not set up the Church himself and did not make the Incarnation and Resurrection central to his own teachings.

The Reformation was the result of the loose ends when Roman Catholic power failed. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Arminianism, Socinianism and Anabaptism complimented and competed with each other and in the Church of England they struggled with Catholicism.

Christianity is not a flexible religion of a broad culture (Hinduism), a lifestyle for a chosen people (Judaism) or a path of orthopraxy (Buddhism),

but is a doctrinal religion of salvation for all, and stands by its limited definitions to give it identity. 'Dissenters from' need to relate to that they disagree with; and the concept of the broad Church has been as much a solution for them as has independency.

Independency was an 'heroic' and drastic method of dealing with a whole crop of problems which had been left to the English people by the incomplete Reformation of the national Church. It was a method of cutting rather than untying knots. The Reformation had been incomplete and illogical... (Whitaker, 1910, p. 11)

John Habgood illustrates the alternative of holding parts together:

The need for correctives and counter-influences for traditionalists and dissenters, for conservatives and radicals, is obvious wherever one looks in the life of the churches. Dissent needs something to dissent from, and itself gradually becomes absorbed back into the tradition. Small committed groups and new movements can be sources of new life; they can also become over-intensive, oppressive and even demonic. Tradition can become a dead weight if it is absorbed unreflectingly; if deliberately chosen, its resources can add an essential element of depth to the spiritual life. Radicalism can give spiritual strength by forcing churches to face facts in the secular world; it can also become so conformed to the world as to be indistinguishable from it. (Habgood, 1983, p. 76)

Having one Church was once as natural as having one government. But the Great Ejection of August 24th 1662 saw the beginning of denominationalism which later became socially divisive (although conversely its experience also paved the way for pluralistic politics).

Generally speaking, there were two shops of each trade; one which was patronised by the Church and the Tories, and another by the Dissenters and Whigs. The inhabitants were divided into two distinct camps - of the Church and Tory camp the other camp knew nothing. On the other hand, the knowledge of which each member of the Dissenting camp had of every other member was most intimate. The

Dissenters were further split up into two or three different sects...  
(Rutherford, 1969, pp. 26-27)

Although effects remain (e.g., Williams, 1956; Stacey, 1960), no longer are Church divisions so clear and divisive. Now the Churches are weak and they have to respond from this base. They are divided as to whether they should attack, defend, accomodate or incorporate this situation; they are divided between liberal views and dogmatism, and between different authority patterns and leadership. This thesis analyses the current tensions.

1 (b). The Purpose of this Chapter

This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis. It claims the relevance of the thesis, gives an overview of the main literature, and shows why it is structured as it is. It also gives a history of the participant observation, interviewing and secondary research undertaken and personal involvement. It further explains some terminological issues within the subject area.

2. The Basis of the Thesis

2 (a). The Contemporary Relevance of the Subject Area

The story of the loose ends comes upto date. Controversy within Church circles intensified in the late 1970's and the 1980's. In 1976 the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England created Christian Believing which was diverse in its viewpoints. The Doctrine Commission was then reformed and in 1981 it produced Believing in the Church which affirmed collective responsibility. Later, We Believe in God (1987) went further with trying to combine academic respectibility whilst isolating radicalism. The publishing of The Myth of God Incarnate (Hick ed., 1977), questioning the Incarnation,

itself raised a conservative reaction throughout the denominations. Despite all this liberalism has continued.

In 1984 and 1985 the Anglican Church was in ferment over the appointment of a bishop who expressed even mild liberal-Christian views. He created a response in both Catholic and Evangelical quarters which led to the bishops writing the restrictive booklet The Nature of Christian Belief (1986). The Bishop of Durham meanwhile received both criticism and support from those in other denominations (1).

These controversies are also in the Free Churches, like the liberal Principal of a Baptist theological college in 1973 apparently humanising the deity of Christ. (see Landreth, G., Evangelical Co-operation, pp. 141-75, in King, 1973, pp. 147-8) (2).

In 1984 'Mission England', where Billy Graham recruited by large rallies, involved parts of all the mainstream denominations and some sects but was ignored or rejected by others. It was used to criticise the liberals:

The Evangelical Alliance has said that the recent crusades in Britain have shown that the certainties of the Christian Gospel are not to be despised...

The E. A. General Secretary, the Rev. Clive Calver [a Methodist] states: 'With so many people publically denying the fundamentals of the faith, there is the need to be clear more than ever about what we believe, and to present the Christian Gospel clearly to others. (Report in Methodist Recorder September 27th, 1984, p. 1)

By 1986 it was thought that the staunch Anglo-Catholic Bishop of London could be a future leader of a continuing Anglican Church. However, he denied

this, and his subsequent ordination of female deacons disqualified him from the role. (3) Meanwhile, Anglican Catholics and Evangelicals were divided over discussions concerning long term unity with the Roman Catholic Church.

Methodists have been in controversy about social gospel/liberal and evangelical ministers following each other into a church after it has been developed in a specific tradition. Some dislike evangelising:

I have experienced the dreadful treatment meted out to those who dare to differ with them on such matters as worship, Billy Graham, Cliff College etc.. Methodism is not being renewed, strengthened or revitalised by this evangelical campaign, it is being torn apart... (M. Trickett, Letter in Methodist Recorder, August 30th 1984)

Methodist traditionalists have their differences with evangelicals:

You will probably find your way to a local Methodist church. That church can have a vital part to play in your college life. ...if you are lucky you will find one of those Methodist churches where the old classic beauty of the old non-conformist service survives without tinkering, modernising or juvenile domination... (J.R. Watson, Methodist Recorder, August 23rd 1984, p. 13)

These divisions prevented ecumenism between the Churches. At Nottingham (an ecumenical conference) in 1964 it was hoped that there would be by Easter 1980 one non-Roman Catholic Church in Britain. Whilst this created the United Reformed Church, Anglican Catholics and Evangelicals later disagreed about whether Methodist ministers had to be re-ordained. Thus only successively compromised attempts were made at structural ecumenism until 1982. Today only flexible local agreements operate, although a new ecumenical instrument (including Roman Catholicism) will replace the British Council of Churches.



Perhaps a different kind of structural renewal is possible. Andrew Walker, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, calls for realignment to dump for good the liberals.

...in order to prevent the third schism becoming Christianity's final divide, orthodox Christians will have to come together and put aside the differences (except when conscience absolutely forbids it).

A radical realignment of forces, however, is useless as a pious hope. It needs concrete action. Evangelicals must open themselves to Catholics and Orthodox. The Roman Catholic Church must enter the British Council of Churches (despite the very real risk that this could exacerbate the real schism and even worsen the third schism). Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals within the Church of England will have to come out from their separate corners and join hands. The Church Society must decide whether it is still defending the sixteenth century Reformation or fighting today's war. West Indian Pentecostals and Greek and Russian Orthodox will have to come out of their ghettos and remember they are in Britain as missionaries. The Catholic and Protestant Truths will need to form a Christian Truth Society.

...Paradoxically, love has to be fought for. Christianity is being subverted by the forces of darkness (however reasonable and rational they seem). This calls for warfare. Nothing less. (Walker The Third Schism, pp. 202-217, in Moss ed., 1986, pp. 216-7)

That a demand for new division can come about is a legitimate subject for study. In their split world the noticeboards of Church X and denomination Y are no longer a guide to content, unity and division today.

## 2 (b). The Place and Problems of Sociology in this Topic

### 2 (b) 1 Disciplines and Religion

Theology is not equipped to take a broader analytical view and is perhaps too partial; history would not produce a full interactive analysis; but sociology can describe and analyse by categorising processes of the Church as a human institution with its belief and authority obligations.

At the same time sociology (like the others) can be lost in its own world, where its own compartmentalised discipline loses contact with what is taking place. After reviewing Bryan Wilson's Religion in Secular Society (1966), Peter Berger's The Social Reality of Religion (1967) and Robert Towler's Homo Religiosus (1974), the Church historian John Kent commented that:

All this seems remote from the actual history of the Churches.  
(Kent, 1987, p. 214)

Connected with this, sociology has a bias that religion can be 'explained away' as a social phenomenon which belongs to the past. A corrective is to use theological insights (which happens within this thesis). This helps produce a sociology about the Church as an institution affecting belief.

A sociology intended to be close to the Churches begs the question whether it is part of the sociology of religion or religious sociology.

## 2 (b) ii. Using the Sociology of Religion

The sociology of religion intends to be a disinterested academic subject. In contrast religious sociology (particularly as carried out from a Roman Catholic perspective in France) is Church orientated, using the techniques of sociology for its own missionary purposes. As such its choice of subject, its exposition and results are compromised in terms of a social science (4).

But the sociology of religion has its limitations too. Primary concern with its own concepts like organisation theory, bureaucracy and deviance affects respectively work on Churches, ecumenism and sects. This has in particular

created assumptions about ecumenism and led to research on sects and cults at the expense of studying the mainstream.

For example, Wilson (1966) argued that ecumenism was a reaction to secularising society by mainstream Churches. Ministers being bureaucratic were more committed to rationalising than the laity attached to their local church. Berger (1969) argued that secularisation and pluralism affected the Church's market (p. 153). Its bureaucracy, common to all modern institutions, produced a leadership which, stimulated by the market, favoured ecumenism.

This was all fine Weberian based theory, but English Churches were not as a whole submitting to the so-called secular society. Also, those who promoted ecumenism *really* did so in order to promote Christian Unity, hoping that one Church could re-evangelise the nation better than the confusion of many.

Some sociologists, like Towler (1974), have recognised that the ecumenists' own arguments have not been taken seriously. But he fell back into the trap of sociological reductionism by claiming that ecumenism was caused by the modernisation of society, the decline of exclusive religious beliefs and symbols and therefore this affected the organisations themselves.

## 2 (b) 111. Discipline Superiority

This involves the problem of discipline superiority. Sociology has been seen as imperialistic and a competitor with theology.

Only if the sociology of knowledge is so all-embracing as to deprive us of the notions of truth, validity and knowledge, can it claim to

have ruled out the theologian's talk of the God to whose reality religious symbols point. (Hebblethwaite, 1980, p. 60)

Perhaps Hebblethwaite and others would be happier with Sheler rather than Mannheim (1960). Scheler the philosopher (Martindale, 1961, pp. 273-276) attempted to find a reality behind everything (he failed to do this). He suggested that 'real' factors conditioned by society distort the 'ideal' factors which lie behind our image of reality. In contrast, Mannheim left unstated whether everything is socially conditioned, hoping that the intellectual, devoid of interests, could find the truth. But this still leaves sociology carrying the threat of relativism, even to itself.

The route to theological imperialism could begin with a statement like this:

What has been suggested is that social science cannot challenge any ontological theological reality. It cannot offer the content of a theology but can only survey the context. (Barker, The Limits of Displacement: Two Disciplines Face Each Other, pp. 15-23, in Martin et al, 1980, p. 22)

The problem might be solved by using two analogies. First is with physics as where the electron beam is either viewed as a wave or a stream of particles and yet cannot be both; in some cases sociological analysis conflicts with theological perspectives, and vice versa (or they can compliment each other).

The second analogy is inter-faith contact. Just like the Christian should first fully appreciate another religion on its terms, the sociologist of religion must take absolutely seriously what those in the Church manifestly believe. Poor inter-faith dialogue results when one faith approaches another

with its own misconceptions; equally, to misunderstand the Churches because of prior sociological assumptions is to create bad analysis. Avoiding this removes the need for religious sociology and its limitations, and what is contradictory or complimentary can be properly assessed on good grounds. So it is that for the sociologist this statement goes too far:

Should he [the sociologist of Christianity, as well as being competent] also be a believer, an opponent or neutral? The simple answer is that he should be a believer, he can't be neutral; if he is an opponent his work will show it. (Jackson, 1974, p. 50)

### 3. History of the Research

#### 3 (a). Introduction

Peter Berger recommends this relationship between the sociologist's work and his personal views:

To be a sociologist need not mean that one become [sic] either a heartless observer or propagandist. Rather it should mean that each act of understanding stands in an existential tension with one's values, even those, indeed especially those, that one holds passionately. For me, these have mainly been political and religious values. (Berger, 1977, pp. 7-8)

Guides often stress the objectivity of types of research. But individual research histories have shown that personal insight and intuition can be at the centre of research decision making (see Bell and Newby, eds., 1977). My own experience of churches indicated where the sociology of religion was out of touch with the mainstream and what to focus upon. Complementing this, reading liberal theology for the thesis caused me to be more involved with various churches than I would have been otherwise. So, personal religious history exists as a background to the research history.

3 (b). Research History

In 1982 after an aborted M.A. course at the University of Essex I decided to research groups of teenagers I knew. One was a fellowship group in 'Risemere' Methodist church and another went to its youth club but were treated as an underclass and eventually evicted.

I began by looking at the effect of religion on producing 'respectable' teenagers. This changed to a focus on religion itself, and I dropped the the non-religious group. I had known the previous Methodist fellowship group, 1980-81/2, and I might have included it in my research. However, the store of my material, my extensive diaries, had been a point of conflict for some people so I concentrated on the 1982-1984 group (5). I told them about the research about which the leaders and teenagers were quite happy. I then began researching an Anglican group (6) for comparative reasons and this led to an interest in leadership styles and types of religion.

I also read Honest to God and was baffled as to why the content of this book had no place in the churches. I discovered that ministers and some other leaders knew about it: the minister of the Methodist church called it "old hat" but he said, "God must be laughing at the theologians." So the research broadened further.

Cohen and Taylor (in Bell and Newby, 1977, pp. 67-86) illustrate how their research notes resisted structuring. They continue:

We were accordingly drawn into adopting certain methodological devices in order to bring some order into our material. In a way,

these methods were nothing much more than techniques for encouraging talk on certain topics...(Bell and Newby, 1977, pp. 71-72)

I had a more accidental 'methodological device'. On January 1st 1984 I took Honest to God with me to the church to show the leader 'Cary'. In the leadership crisis of the time he did not turn up, so I gave the book to 'Janet' to discover her reaction. After confirmation she became dispirited by disputes among her friends. I wanted to know how she would react to its liberalism. The minister did not approve of me having given her the book (7).

Another minister in the circuit liked Bonhoeffer but said that radical views if expressed might upset congregations. I was discovering two worlds: one was the trained minister who was aware of such material and reacted to it in various ways, and the other was the ignorance of the churches. Clearly some ministers had not allowed their liberalism out of the closet in front of their congregations. Through reading Honest to God I had penetrated this religious world. Later the Bishop of Durham broke the silence, adding further relevance to the research on these lines.

Then I looked for ways to analyse the different approaches to belief and authority in the Churches, and the fact that present divisions are not between Churches but within them. I interviewed three ministers for this purpose. I recorded a very useful interview of Don Cupitt on Radio 2 and gained permission to use it (8), but I did not because I had my own material.

In time I realised that some liberals drew the line at their liberality and others did not. Certainly, Honest to God was involved in the same boundary-

drawing exercise. The breakthrough came when I discovered that the bottom line is the Incarnation and Resurrection. A liberal at it or above it was only partly liberal but certainly Christian whereas one below this was *indeed* liberal but perhaps not quite Christian. It seems that today many broad Churchmen have reached a floor of belief.

Sociological literature was used to sharpen categorisation. Robert Towler (1984) helped the process of producing typologies of belief, and Rudge (1968) helped towards finding typologies of authority.

For some time I considered including Bahá'ism as a comparative case where tradition, scripture and (a somewhat simple) modernism were held together in greater unity than in Christianity. This idea was completely dropped because of the complications of Bahá'i schisms and its self-management in telling its own history. Essentially the focus is on one religion, and where comparison exists with other religions or ideological organisations (for example 'broad Church' versus independency) further research is for those who gain enough knowledge about them. This thesis is about new denominationalism in English Christianity, expressing realignment and potential change.

In using a word processor, Chapters 5 and 8 and the discussion with the conversionist Anglican did not see paper until printing. Anonymity has been given to those in Appendix 1, and in the churches (Chapter 6) names of people and and some localities have been changed (9).

### 3 (c). Personal Religious History

As an agnostic from 1980 until 1982 I had no idea that Christianity varied



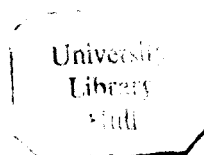
beyond the expressions of the Methodist groups. The first idea that it might come through associating with the University of Essex Anglican Chaplaincy. Then in 1984 for the research I read John Robinson's Honest to God.

I initially agreed with this expression of Christianity but the Methodist minister was not sympathetic to liberalism and it had no place within that church. The teenage group itself was in a crisis of leadership and there, after he isolated me, I left and became confirmed at the University of Hull chaplaincy which did contain a liberal tendency. I began seeking ordained ministry, influenced by the similar ethos of the Essex chaplaincy.

However, it soon became clear that my approach to Christianity was in difficulty. Modernist theology attempted to translate Christian belief into existentialist terms but I was doing it the other way around and it did not work. Biblical criticism and the methodology and relativism of knowledge refuses to support one doctrinal scheme. The only way was to give primary loyalty to the Church as the carrier of revelation, and then to criticise, but I did not do that because I did not believe in the basis for such loyalty.

My immanentist view of God became atheistic and the desire to be historical in a claimed historical faith undercut the 'definitiveness' (as the liberal view has it) of Jesus of Nazareth.

This historical criteria was used in my contact with Bahá'ism (they were eventually unable to take real independent criticism), but one day they held a meeting in Unitarian premises and so I investigated that Church for seven weeks from November 1984.



I had been reading for the research that whereas once people could believe in God but not in Jesus, today people wanted to believe in Jesus but could not in God (Kee, 1971). But these free (and historical) Unitarians did not centre around a Jesucentric faith. This is because there is no gravity of doctrine and it is sufficient to think directly about 'God', morals and ideals. This demonstrated to me that institutions create their own specific debates. The remaining 6,500 Unitarians do not share in radical mainstream thought but debate between two of their own generalised positions known as "liberal-Christianity" (that is theism and a human Jesus) and "religious Humanism".

Thus I continued in February 1985 within the more familiar debates in the mainstream. I began an interfaith group in my Anglican church with Bahá'is and Unitarians but because I was closer to Unitarianism I defected.

It does not necessarily have the order of Anglican services, and can have a hollow 'lowest common denominator' and sectarian content, like focussing on the wrongs of creeds. By Easter 1986 I found a Mahayana Buddhist group but they did not provide a non-dogmatic path of religion. I was too radical to easily be Anglican, so my interest became transferring mainstream radical debates into Unitarianism (10). I resumed seeking a place in their ministry.

So the research techniques, reading and writing took place during a period of changing views which helped with a number of research perspectives (11).

#### 4. Religious Language

##### 4 (a). Introduction

This section looks at the linguistic issues of precision in theological

terminology and the related question of style. The thesis could therefore be seen as a commentary on the elasticity of theological terms.

#### 4 (b). Technical Precision and Language Style

Some words in the Christian community contain more than one meaning. For example, 'Church' can mean the building, the worshippers in the building, the denomination or all Churches. Another example is 'evangelical', which can mean Protestant, fundamentalist, biblical, socially and biblically concerned, or an evangelist. Radical can mean something more than liberal and distinctions between different kinds of liberals need to be precisely made.

In Chapters 1 and 2 such terminology is used loosely, but from Chapter 3 precise definitions (like for 'evangelical', and different kinds of liberals) will be maintained as given there. Church (capital 'C') will mean either a denomination or the whole Church, and church (small 'c') will mean the local worshippers, and this will continue throughout the thesis.

This is common practice (although not universal) within Christianity, as with God and Spirit, and capital letters will also be used for the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. Here capital letters differentiate Christian doctrine from other beliefs (like the Jewish expectation of resurrection). They also serve as a reminder that many liberals use these doctrines as myths and not direct facts.

#### 4 (c). Language and Belief

There are varied meanings attached to God, Christ, Spirit, Church, Incarnation and Resurrection. A preacher might use orthodox words to mean liberal things

to him but orthodox things to the congregation. The many different meanings attached to the same trinitarian words (discussed in the context of theology in Chapter 3) lie behind the realignment tensions.

5.           Chapters and the Literature

5 (a).       Introduction

This section combines introductions of the topics of each chapter with key literature. These are not book reviews but about how the literature relates to the topics of the chapters arranged in Parts I-IV covering subject areas.

5 (b).       Part I: Introducing the Mainstream Church

5 (b) 1.     Chapter 1. Issues and Literature Survey

This chapter is opening the general issues of the thesis as a whole. It concerns realignment in English Christianity and the tension between broad Church and independency, terms which might be used for some non-religious organisations as well.

Whitaker (a Hull Unitarian minister), One Line of the Puritan Tradition in Hull: Bowl Alley Lane Chapel (1910) and Habgood (an Archbishop of York), Church and Nation in a Secular Age (1983) both give the overall theme of the thesis in the preamble. Bell and Newby Doing Sociological Research (1977) looks at how personal *biographies* affected decisions made in different projects, reflected in the research for this thesis.

5 (b) 11.    Chapter 2. The Decline of the Church/Denomination/Sect Continuum,

Ideal types are introduced. The decline in the Church/denomination/sect continuum is examined and evolution in existing denominations is looked at.

Key literature demonstrates a progression of additions and refinements to the Church/denomination/sect continuum. Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1930) and H. R. Niebuhr's The Social Sources of Denominationalism (1929) contain the three element continuum; and Troeltsch's The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (1931) includes mysticism.

Three basic positions give two opposites and a middle position. Yet Yinger in The Scientific Study of Religion (1957) demonstrates that one opposite (the Church) incorporates some characteristics of the other opposite (the sect) and that there is an absence of clarity about the middle position (the denomination). This shows the need to change the continuum.

Fallding's The Sociological Task (1968) argues that ideal types should be replaced by more empirical typologies through social research, giving a start to brief a discussion about different typologies and their use throughout the whole thesis.

5 (c). Part II: The Faith Inside and Outside the Church

5 (c) 1. Chapter 3. Belief Typologies

Typologies of religion are developed using academic and non-academic literature. These are then compared with the views of three ministers of religion.

Demerath and Hammond's discussion on legitimation (pp. 59-69) and the chapter on Dilemmas of Contemporary Religious Organisation (pp. 154-196) in Religion in Social Context (1969) gives some initial ideas for seeing new denominationalism in categories. Glock and Stark's Religion and Society in

Tension (1965) is also useful preliminary literature because scoring high on some religiosity categories and low on others tells what is believed as well as how much.

Robert Towler in The Need for Certainty (1984) took letters sent to John Robinson after Honest to God (1963) and sorted them into categories. This began a fresh look at non-sectarian believing.

Intellectual belief itself, the influence of churchmanship and individual religious growth were not fully considered. Although anybody could have written to Robinson, there was an under-representation of working class opinion, correspondents being generally middle class, elderly and female. Additional methodologies are needed. In this thesis churchgoers are analysed separately from outsiders, and individual belief, Churchmanship and changes of views by believers are incorporated (also in Chapter 6). The object of this is to analyse the effect of the Church as an institution on believing.

Hobsbawm and Ranger's The Invention of Tradition (1983) is briefly referred to in this chapter and throughout the thesis because it shows how custom is reused to justify present day action, like in beliefs and authority.

Theological material in Chapter 3 illustrates the institutional pattern of belief. One problem is that most theological material comes from the Church with the greatest resources: the Anglican Church. Its ancient association with universities (but also its ability to pay those with only small pastoral concerns) means that it dominates in theological endeavour. Much theology is ecumenical, but for some balance writers in other denominations are included.

H. B. Wilson and others in Essays and Reviews (1861) demanded a pluralist National Church and challenged the prevailing literal biblicalism. Attacked in The Westminster Review and The Guardian, the Church took notice and in 1864 the Convocation condemned the book as heretical, but hearing an indictment for heresy the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council declared freedom of thought in all things except those specifically laid down by rule. Although other contributors faced professional difficulties, one became Archbishop of Canterbury. Changing knowledge had forced liberal religion into the open.

Little changes. Honest to God (1963) had the right author (a bishop), an iconoclastic style and was received with newspaper publicity. But the real interest of Robinson to this thesis, as shown in his 1980 book The Roots of a Radical, is his *limited* liberalism. He believed that anything partial and reductionist was to be criticised (p. 66). He never was 'honest to the story-line wherever it may lead' (1980, p. 72) because his method did not allow it. Rather he was honest to reformulate but keep the faith of the Church.

The influence of the Church is still more explicit in collectivist material like the Doctrine Commission's Believing in the Church (1981), a reaction to the threat of radicalism, but itself using liberal and even humanistic forms of thinking prevalent in the academic world. This was followed by the more conservative We Believe in God (1987), also trying to maintain unity.

The radical literature causing the trouble was the previous Commission's Christian Believing (1977) and The Myth of God Incarnate (1976) produced by an ecumenical symposium. These books threatened the Church's institutional bottom line.

Some authors of The Myth of God Incarnate have remained within the boundary of mainstream belief (like the Methodist Frances Young), others have moved out like Michael Goulder to Humanism. John Hick, a Presbyterian, has a multi-faith approach to Christianity and religion, but the most interesting and well known writer is Don Cupitt, still an Anglican priest, who embarked on 'critical spirituality'.

Before 1980, in Who Was Jesus? (1977), accompanying the B.B.C. programme of the same name, The Leap of Reason (1976), The Nature of Man (1979) and Jesus and the Gospel of God (1979), Don Cupitt believed in transcendence (with 'the negative way' that all roads to God are man-made and provisional) and said that the Jesus of History should replace the dogmatic Christ of faith. Then came the change. Taking Leave of God (1980) combined a non-realist Christianity with Buddhism. His views were developed in further books including a guide to religious philosophy on television and in the book also called The Sea of Faith (1984). A clue to how he relates his views to Christianity is given in The Long Legged Fly (1987) where he argues that language and biological elements create and give our world its meaning:

What about a theological text? Clearly it will not be of the older cosmic-dogmatic type. Instead it will be christological. That is, it will be made of fleshwords. By the way it is made it will seek to awaken the creative-desire flow of the religious life that it describes. (Cupitt, 1987, p. 166)

There is a great diversity in radical literature. Some radicals end up reproducing Christocentric-theism by the back door, like Alistair Kee's The Way of Transcendence (1971, 1985) whilst others, like Graham Shaw's God in Our Hands (1987), are knocking on Cupitt's door. Other positions are non-



Christocentric theism (Wiles, 1971) and gnosticism (Burton and Dolley, 1984). They all relate to the Church institution with difficulty.

Other writings, like The Truth of God Incarnate (Green, 1976), are very different. Traditionalist views like This is Our Faith (Wood, 1985) explicitly reacted to the Durham Affair whilst Firmly I Believe and Truly (1985) had it in the background.

David Watson's I Believe in Evangelism (1976) is one example of evangelical and charismatic writing, whereas David Sheppard's Bias to the Poor (1983) is milder, non-fundamentalist and incorporates social concern.

Mainly fundamentalist literature is the mainstay of Good News Bookshops and is an industry in itself. Generally these books on dogmatic, devotional and church growth themes are not of academic quality. They exist for popular consumption by a committed number of churchgoers and serves the function of advancing the evangelical and charismatic cause. In other words they are an ideological arm of one part of the Church.

Obviously theological literature also relates to other issues, like authority, and therefore some of it is used in later chapters.

#### 5 (c) ii. Chapter 4. the Religious Cultural Environment,

The production of extreme liberalism, mid-way liberalism and orthodoxy can be related to secularisation in society. But secularisation hypotheses contradict and confuse. Survey evidence and other perspectives attempt to understand the *religious cultural environment* in different ways.

The sociology of knowledge is used to tackle secularisation by Berger (1969; with Luckmann, 1971; with Kellner, 1973; and 1980). But two chapters in the compilation Facing upto Modernity (Berger, 1977, pp. 203-239) are key texts because they show the fashion in promoting (in 1967) linear secularisation and then the doubts about it all (in 1971).

Perhaps the sociology of knowledge emphasises fashion and underlines the confusion between secularisation as a continuous (Weberian) process and the (Durkheimian) merging of sacred and secular, as in 'civil religion' (Bellah, 1967). Larry Shiner, 'The Concept of Secularisation in Empirical Research', in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (Vol. 6, 1967, pp. 207-20 shows in particular the confusion surrounding the concept. Jeffrey Cox in The English Churches in a Secular Society (1982) believes that the mistake is to see secularisation confirmed by the decline in the churches because this is a British experience, caused (as argued in M<sup>c</sup>Leod, 1984) by specific factors.

John Kent's The Unacceptable Face (1987) appears in this chapter and others because it charts the decline of the Churches and also suggests that modern religion will end up being more Buddhist based theologically.

So popular religion is outside the churches. Edward Bailey and The Network for the Study of Implicit Religion studies it. The Religion of the People (in Moss, 1986, pp. 178-188) gives his stance (see also 1977 Ph.D and ed., 1986).

5 (c) 111. Chapter 5. Authority, Belief, Religious Culture and New Denominationalism

Authority typologies are tested against the belief typologies of Chapter 3

and the religious cultural environment as analysed within Chapter 4. It allows an assessment of loyalty to the belief and authority typologies which stretch across denominations compared with loyalty to existing denominations themselves, and an analysis of inertia towards structural change in the denominations.

Churchmanship and authority are combined in Ministry and Management (1968), by Peter Rudge. The typologies used come from Weber (1946), Burns and Stalker (1961) and Mayo (1933) and have been repeatedly used in a stream of sociological material. Theologically Ministry and Management stands amongst the literature which asks about the purpose, function and structure of the Church (as with Minear, 1961, and H. R. Niebuhr, 1952). Thus it stands as a work of religious sociology.

The idea that there is a correct model of the Church is outside the scope of this sociology. Indeed it is not clear that believers and theologians in all their diversity would accept Rudge's viewpoint anyway. Here the issue is to see what authority types fit which belief types and how they define the Church against the outside environment. (12)

Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition (1957) has a complementary but limited contribution to the chapter. Paul Harrison is interested in how a bureaucracy grows in the Free Church tradition, in this case the American Baptist Convention. He adapts Weberian categories for analysis. This leaves little difference between bureaucracy in the Free Churches and variations of authority in episcopacy. Welsby, discussing the diversity in theology and

authority in the Anglican Church, effectively shows new denominationalism in this matter as others. He states that modern day Anglican bishops:

...have replaced the more autocratic and individualist bishops of the first half of the century. The new style of episcopal leadership has been emphasised by the theological concept behind synodical government, which sees the Church as a partnership in which bishops, together with the clergy and laity, seek the greater good of the Church. (Welsby, 1984, p. 289)

5 (d). Part III: Church Stratification

5 (d) 1. Chapter 6. Two Case Studies of Dominant Trends of New Denominationalism within Churches

Chapter 6 addresses the imbalance in the thesis towards articulate (whether academic or otherwise) expressions of religion by looking into two churches. One is a predominantly fundamentalist Anglican church and the other is a Methodist church without an explicit party line. The main question faced by the chapter is what kinds of belief churches encourage and discourage. Particular people and their religious questionings are followed to see how they relate to the institutions in which they play a part.

Key literature here is Bernice Martin's article in Social Compass (1967) about an adolescent religious group. She attended her group as a member in the 1950's which gives it some parallel to my experience with the Methodist group I attended.

Social Compass is a publication which mainly draws on the French tradition of religious sociology, but with her emphasis on latent functions concerning social upward mobility rather than manifest religion her article is closer to

the sociology of religion. Because it looks at mainstream religion rather than sects or cults it is also useful to his thesis.

In a sense she portrays a church in the era where the Anglican Church was associated with social climbing and respectability through its connections with the upper end of the selective school system. The choir, part of that culture (as in Oxbridge), linked school and Church.

However, she anticipated the interest in fellowship groups based on different religious styles in churches.

...most of our national religious bodies are known to have different wings or schools of thought and tradition. Methodism ranges from conversionist-evangelical to Wesleyan high-church in spite of the formal end of schism. In Anglicanism one would too want to find out whether the moderate church tradition (the background in this study) provides a significantly different context from the Anglo-catholic and the evangelical traditions. One strongly suspects that the Anglo-Catholic context (churchly? but often socialist) would be dramatically different from the Evangelical context (denominational? but often conservative)...(Martin, in Social Compass, 1967, pp. 49-50)

The studies in Chapter 6 take much further the points she anticipated. It is of new denominational significance that the Methodist church, supposedly in a denomination, is more moderate than the Anglican church in a Church.

The institutional connections of Bernice Martin's church gave grounds for some liberal expression. The boys in the choir were artistically expressive, and frowned upon religious extremism. But today's associational churches face different pressures. This is in the background of the research into the Methodist and Anglican churches.

5 (d) ii. Chapter 7. The Tensions between Distributed Belief and Authority Types

Chapter 6 shows the kinds of belief encouraged in today's churches. That leaves open the other sectors of the Church to contain the remaining belief and authority types. Chapter 7 looks at the total picture including the nature of leadership and the nature of stratification. This opens up the question of great and little traditions in mainstream Christianity today. Reference is made to the Durham and Bennett affairs to discover tension between sectors of the Church.

Robert Redfield's Peasant Society and Culture (1956) is important for considering stratification of belief and authority types. From here comes the terminology of great and little traditions in religion, questioned by religionists. Weber appears yet again in this subject area, although his overall interest was rationality in East and West and its effect on economic activity, as argued in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1930). His The Religion of China (1958) and The Religion of India (1958) contains descriptive material which adds to Redfield's terminology.

They give guidance to assessing if there are great and little traditions in English Christianity, whether academic rationalistic views have a dominant interaction with ordinary belief (given the difference that Christianity is an activist minority religion unlike Eastern religions). The problem of authority in Anglican Christianity is reflected in The Nature of Christian Belief (1986) by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England.

5 (e). Part IV: The Future: Chapter 8. Summary and Church Futures

This summarises the findings of the thesis on belief and authority types, their connection with the outside environment and their stratification. New ideal types are presented. Finally there is a look at how independency might produce various kinds of Churches based on today's strains and stresses.

Anthony Russell's The Clerical Profession (1984) is referred to because his models of the Churches of the future concern more than just clergymen. The models give initial guidance for understanding the priorities of tendencies within the Church. New denominational models are then created.

The imaginative futures involve the use of religious fiction. Hugh Walpole's The Cathedral (1922) involves conflict between traditionalism and modernism in the Anglican Church; Rose Macaulay's characters in Told by an Idiot (1965, originally 1923) includes Papa who finds honesty in independent radicalism yet likes the warmth of ordered religion; and Mark Rutherford's Autobiography and Deliverance (1969, originally 1888), is a 'faction' of the author, Hale-White, but whilst the real man was ejected from theological college for radicalism (and later only helped in a lay position in some Suffolk Unitarian chapels), his character became a congregationalist minister and then a Unitarian minister until giving that up too. Social facts are a texture of biographical facts, and these insights illustrate the tensions between radical independency and the broad Church.

5 (f). Content and Omissions

Chapters are divided into parts concerned with particular subject areas. They chart the weakness of the Church/denomination/sect ideal types and set up a

dialectic between typologies and evidence from the mainstream Church leading to new ideal types, producing a means to understand new denominationalism with its potential to lead to a New Reformation. The whole exercise is broad and wide ranging - but not everything is covered.

The thesis is not an analysis of ecumenism with its complications. There is reference to it, but an historical survey of attempts and failures is needed for a special study on its lack of progress and traditionalist resistance.

Secondly, there is no significant history of the denominations. Other than a brief overview in Chapter 2, the perspective concentrates on tendencies rather than structures.

There is little consideration of groups beyond the mainstream. The nature of House Churches, Pentecostals and independent Evangelical Churches is left to other studies. The aim is to get away from the sects and focus on the mainstream. However, due to the influence of liberalism in the mainstream, and its context of what is called human relations authority (in Chapter 5), there is attention paid to independent radicalism.

## 6. Summary

Chapters 1 to 8 attempt to revise the sociology of religion and analyse the contemporary realignment in the mainstream Churches from that which came from the first Reformation to that which may create the New Reformation.



CHAPTER 2

The Decline of the Church/Denomination/Sect Continuum

1. Introduction

After outlining the nature of ideal types, this chapter summarises David Martin's approach to the Church/Denomination/Sect continuum. The decline of the explanatory value of the continuum is then explained so that new typologies and a new way of understanding the institutional structure of Christianity can be built up in later chapters.

2. Ideal Types

Max Weber developed the concept of the ideal type for research (Weber, 1949). The basis of ideal types is not that they represent the average or the typical, but that they are as analytical tools showing the essentials in a phenomenon. Weber himself showed private investment as an extraction from and essential element in capitalism.

Fallding (1968) argues that the ideal type was meant only to last until one or more hypothetical types are found in order then to become empirical generalisations. So, analytical theory must be transformed into explanatory theory. The Church/sect continuum can be understood like this (Johnson, 1963) where it is ideal but where realities are different.

However, the opposing argument is that ideal types do begin by looking at reality, and as such should represent essential features of empirical reality.

Ideal types therefore should be replaced if reality is found to be radically different and new ones should be found if they are to remain useful for analysis of reality. It is like the Ptolemaic planetary system which had parts forever added to its basic conceptual scheme; the Copernican revolution had to come and streamline matters (1). This chapter charts the decline of the Church/denomination/sect ideal types, ready for pursuing the evidence to eventually create new ideal types.

This thesis therefore begins with the ideal types of Church/denomination/sect and then enters into a dialectic between typologies (of various kinds) and the research evidence before, in the final chapter, creating ideal types of new denominationalism (perhaps also usable in other organisations undergoing realignment and threatened by "broad Church/independency" tensions).

### 3. Church/Denomination/Sect Ideal Types Continuum

#### 3 (a). Introduction

After outlining the essential features of the Church/denomination/sect continuum this chapter shows the decline in its explanatory power.

#### 3 (b). The Development of the Church/Denomination/Sect Continuum

##### 3 (b) 1. Church and Sect

Max Weber in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1930, first published 1904-5) made a distinction between church and sect. A sect is a believers Church with a disciplined membership. It is associated with a high level of religiosity. A Church is much more vague in terms of membership, including in its ranks 'the just and the unjust'. Given his view of the

routinization of charisma, Weber implied that sects would become churches. He later applied his general view of Church and sect to non-Christian religions.

### 3 (b) 11. Church, Sect, and Mysticism

Troeltsch in The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (1931, first published 1912) also allowed theology a strong part to play in the make up of his categories. This accounts for the inclusion of 'mysticism'. Like Weber this created a problem of organisation and therefore his three ideal types are essentially theological strands of Christianity within the organisational make-up of the religion.

The 'Gospel', when sacramentalised, created both a radical organisational ideal type with negative relations to the outside world and a conservative organisational ideal type with more positive relations to the world outside. The Church as universalist (a dominant role to play in the life of the mass of the people) and conservative (accepting the social order) leaves a vacuum of needed renewal which the sect fills and so the two types live in creative tension.

The third type called mysticism is a category which has a something of a misleading name. This is not the radicalism of the sect or the dominance of the Church but a coming together of like minded people in an individualist way. It is like the Friends or Unitarianism today, and as such "mysticism" was a recognition of liberalism. Troeltsch himself allies it with new ideas and natural development where Christianity ceases to be collectivist. The Gospel has these individualistic overtones too. This latter category is most interesting because it is embryonic to the liberal input into orthodoxy (2).

3 (b) iii. Church, Denomination and Sect

Richard Niebuhr (1957, first published 1929) introduced the 'denomination', and with mysticism left out it produced the working three part continuum.

The scheme moved from a theological relationship and static sociological typologies to a sociological dynamic. Sects become denominations through children of the founders being less fervent in belief and the strict ascetic way of life leading to wealth and moderation. Professional ministry would then replace lay leadership. The 'denomination' maintains certain hangover features of the sect, but instead of salvation in the future life the denomination promotes a middle class legitimisation of the present day.

The Church/denomination/sect continuum becomes an agent of social change. In this country we might ideally say that the sect has been associated with oppressed elements of the working class, the denomination has been middle class and the Church (of England) has been associated with aristocracy and the Establishment.

3 (b) iv. Summary of Characteristics

At this point some features of the Church/denomination/sect continuum can be outlined, adapted from David Martin's analysis (1969, pp. 79-80). As he is too biased towards Catholicism, some changes have been made (shown by \*) (3).

CHURCH

Territorial social inclusiveness, either to ethnic group or universally.

DENOMINATION

Original adult self-selection or family tradition.

SECT

Small exclusive dispossessed. Self selection and family tradition.

Acceptance of the State, identification with it.	No rejection of the State, but separate from it.	Rejection of the State and society.
Sacred hierarchy.	Pragmatism; democracy.	Rejection of functionaries.
Sacramental system described as valid.	Tendencies to personal preferences in worship.*	Charismatic and immediate.*
Dogmatic scheme, rigidly constituted but flexibly applied.	Emphasis on membership and commitment.*	Thorough indoctrination and conversion.
Looks backwards.	Present relevance.*	Looks to the future.
Established and missionary churches.	Saved or reason type churches.	Absolute community and variations.*

3 (c). The Decline in the Explanatory Power of the Continuum

3 (c) 1. Ecclesia, Denomination, Sect and Cult

Complexity develops. Becker (1932) had four typologies in his continuum. The 'ecclesia' is the Church: it is universalist, conservative and people are members by birth. The 'denomination' is a compromised sect, developed into moderation by joining others against the common enemy of Roman Catholicism. The 'sect' is a small tight membership of faith group. The new element is the 'cult', not unlike Troeltsch's mysticism in its basis of existence, but whereas it has similarities to the organised sect it is perhaps more like today's new religious movements (or, indeed, cults!).

The weakest element of Becker's system is the denomination which in the 1930's had been developing Church tendencies, for example in Wesleyan Methodism, in early ecumenism or in the Unitarian (4) Gothic movement, and it calls for further refinement.

3 (c) ii. Universal Church, Ecclesia, Denomination, Established Sect, Sect, and Cult

Yinger's work in Religion, Society and the Individual (1957, pp. 147-55) represents an advance on Becker but shows the scheme weakening. It is perhaps best to look at his categories in four sections.

The 'universal Church' is the broadest possible religious institution. It is an effective and wide ranging Church which, as it sweeps across society, takes in both Church and sect tendencies. This last point is most important and shall be returned to below. The 'ecclesia' is a burnt out universal Church, a rump of ineffectiveness. It has been protested against by those who did not accept its claims over them, and the weakness of the Ecclesia leads to much indifference about it.

The 'denomination' contains some sectarian tendencies but it promotes respectable religion.

The 'established sect' never quite becomes a denomination because the world about it is evil. If, however, that is turned into individualist sin the path is open for it to become a denomination. 'Sects' subdivide into three kinds: the 'acceptance sects' look at the personal anxieties of the middle class members and the 'aggressive sects' see society as evil, challenging it, but they are likely to become 'avoidance sects' which look to life after death rather than life before it.

The 'cult', although like a sect, is usually too dependent on one man and too local to be of a sect type organisation.

### 3 (c) iii. Sects and Mainstream

The latter two above lead to work on sects like that by Bryan Wilson. The conversionist sect is outward and evangelistic, and most likely to become a denomination, whilst in approximate order the esoteric gnostic, expectant adventist, and rejectionist introversionist sects (5) are less likely to become denominations (Wilson, ed. 1967, pp. 22-45). The first two in Yinger's scheme above lead to work about the mainstream as by Robert Towler and this is indeed the focus in this thesis.

### 3 (d). Assessment

In Yinger's scheme the universal Church has denominational and sectarian characteristics within it. The denomination also has sectarian characteristics within it and it is not considered a Church only because it has not been universal. Surely, these types now overlap too much for adequate use.

The original Church and sect continuum was made ever more complex as the gaps of detail needed to be filled in. The process of development as in Yinger's categories brought about the breakdown of the continuum. It became more empirical and had less to say generally.

Therefore a Copernican revolution is needed. Like Troeltsch and Weber such a revolution must be reconsidered at a theological level to find new alliances and divisions, beginning with the evidence available.

Otherwise the old will still be referred to in one sense, but ignored in another, producing strange typologies like sect, secular and Christendom types (Kane, 1986, pp. 57-61) and a searching for a better model (6).

#### 4. An Historical Approach to the Decline of the Continuum

##### 4 (a). Introduction

The Church/denomination/sect continuum is an institutional continuum. As well as the approach above there should also be structural evidence for change. The old denominations should show evidence of division within and similarity across them.

##### 4 (b). The Churches

##### 4 (b) 1. The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church today still combines the compromise of the Elizabethan Church Settlement (1563), including (if not acceptable to) the Puritans, and the exclusivist attitudes of the Stuart Restoration. The alliance of Church and state, only one civil war and the Enlightenment created the Broad Churchman. The Oxford movement fought this alliance with the State and revived the Catholic tradition making the Church more associational. It created much controversy between them and Evangelicals. Yet the political value of its relationship with the Church was already in decline.

Broad theologians attempted to combine reason and belief, Essays and Reviews (1861) being a starting gun. But more recently modern linguistic philosophies have led to even further questioning of the realist basis of theology. In the opposite direction the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967 was a marker for the rise of evangelicals in the Anglican Church whose influence has since grown (7). Then an upsurge in charismatic spirituality came, with the Anglican Church being a leader in the mainstream. Catholic traditionalism has been in decline and the ordination of women should prove a predicament which leaves no option for many of them but schism.



The present state of Anglican training colleges and synodical government has maintained the party atmosphere, as also shown in the Durham, London and Bennett controversies of the 1980's. The alliance has become very thin.

4 (b) ii. The Methodist Church

There is too great a tendency to understand the history of the Methodist Church from the history of the Wesleys (Kent, 1987, p. 116), for example:

...that Wesley's teaching was 'the necessary synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic doctrine of holiness (Kent, 1987, pp. 116-7, quoting G. C. Bell's formula)

Kent claims that Wesleyanism was "an unsuccessful internal attempt to reform the Church of England". It was a holiness sect which was not national but reflected the divisions of Hanoverian society, the Evangelical Revival being connected with alienated social groups (p. 117), rearranging the sub-culture rather than extending it to the culture as a whole (p. 110).

Sociologists have found the Halévy thesis attractive (Hill, 1973, pp. 183-203): it suggests that Methodism was a conservative force against revolution, but the opposite view (Palmer, 1959) is that its *liberating* success was in fact the counter force to revolution (8).

But Wesley is important because although early Methodism was a sect, Wesley himself combined high Church tendencies with scriptural backing, reason and experience (the Anglican mix). He also showed conflict between the type of discovering faith begun in 1725 and the conversion faith of 1738 (9). The Church reflects this mixed up Arminianism, and even Whitfield's Calvinism.

Methodism broke up into competing denominations and sects but its final ecumenical restitching in 1932 did not take away those divisions.

Traditionalists are still dogged by Primitive, Wesleyan, etc., traditions, and this often surfaces when one church has to close in the neighbourhood rather than another. Some Methodists hark after the expansionist origins of the their movement. The diversity of traditions weakens their position.

As a searcher Wesley illustrates one justification for the development of liberalism, although this also comes from developing into the present moderated denomination. Anyhow, mainstream theology today is ecumenical.

The 1738 conversion naturally backs those who have a comparative set of beliefs today, but many Methodists like this are forward looking and relate to the Evangelical Alliance, a pan-denominational group.

#### 4 (b) iii. The United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church combined Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Their merger in 1972 was one success of the age of bureaucratic ecumenism (see Slack, 1978). Like in Methodism, merging former denominations has splintered traditionalism within the Church.

Presbyterianism as inherited from Scotland (most of the original English Presbyterians moved to Unitarianism) was somewhat dry and intellectual and this created room for liberalism in the new Church (10), backed by the effect of compromise through ecumenism and the theology shared in the mainstream.

Congregationalism has liberal potential in that the individual church is principally the body of Christ, although church discipline has restricted this tendency.

However, congregationalism and Scottish Presbyterianism has a disciplined evangelical past and out of this today the denomination has its growing conversionist element.

#### 4 (b) iv. The Baptist Church

The Baptist Church with its rejection of infant baptism and anti-Catholicism has maintained a strong sense of traditionalism. This has been one large reason for shunning ecumenical involvement and the absence of compromise ecumenism would have caused has in turn helped traditionalism.

Increasingly, however, Baptists have been happy to work with conversionists from other denominations (who tend to reject infant baptism). This is not just a traditional view but seeks a forward looking outlook.

Although the Baptist Church as a whole has a reputation for conservative evangelical theology, and left behind liberal elements (as in the eighteenth century division between General and Particular Baptists) today it has a liberal element within its ranks partly due to its congregational structure but mainly because of ecumenical intellectual theology.

#### 4 (b) v. The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church was once the Italian and the Irish Mission, only fully restored to this country since the Reformation in the nineteenth

century. Now it is more indiginous in character and with its international authority structure draws many conservative dissidents from less unified British Churches.

But it has a liberal element too (like the lay theologian James Mackie), as there is in Germany and The Netherlands. They also tend to be more biblical, perhaps reflecting the fact that in the original Reformation liberality and scripture went together. Fundamentalism seems unimportant.

There is a growing both sacramental and biblical charismatic movement throughout worldwide Roman Catholicism and this exists in this country too. It is helping to heal wounds with Protestant originated groups to an extent unforeseen in the past.

#### 4 (b) vi. Distinctive Liberal Groups

The Society of Friends has an independent history, distinctive and originally sectarian, both militant and respectable, and even producing evangelical offshoots, but is now liberal. Formed to express the simplicity of the Gospel by George Fox this group has kept its distinctive style and peace militancy but some have moved towards Universalism from the liberal Christian base.

The Unitarian Church, formed from mainly non-subscribing Presbyterians and General Baptists, became the National Conference, a loose association of Free Christians, and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, a somewhat tighter missionary biblical body. Both merged in 1928. In modern times the autonomous non-doctrinal churches have moved from liberal Christianity to include religious Humanism.

In 1864 M. D. Conway took charge of South Place Chapel, London. He later dropped formal prayers and it left Unitarianism. South Place still operates although once there were many similar bodies. (see Smith, 1967, pp. 84-168)

#### 4 (c). The Mainstream Denominations

The Reformation divided Protestant from Catholic, and in the eighteenth century non-subscribers were divided from subscribing Protestants, for a time dividing Protestant Scripture from liberalism.

Today liberalism is found in all the mainstream denominations. It emerges when a sect broadens due to moderation from wealth, through links with State and society and with the pursual and participation in ecumenical academic theology. So it is strong in the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and exists in the Roman Catholic Church. Liberalism presents a problem today because it can move in a different direction as regards doctrine and previous interpretations of scripture and tradition.

Traditionalism is the strongest in those Churches which have remained isolated: in the Anglican Church, the Baptist Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Traditionalism has been made the weakest with ecumenism, and this has affected the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

There is a third collective tendency of fundamentalism and evangelicalism, along with Protestant and Catholic charismatic renewal. It is strong in the Anglican Church, the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church and (in the charismatic movement) the Roman Catholic Church.

So these pressures are common, although varying, in all denominations. One further development is the growth of bureaucracy. This has centralised congregational type Churches and added complexity to others (11). Because bureaucracy seeks common managerial solutions, it attempts to hold the ring between pressures and seeks ecumenism between denominations, incorporating some liberalism, and inherited views of scripture and tradition. In fact mainstream Churches incorporate tendencies from, in their viewpoint, the narrower groups beyond themselves in all directions.

All these tendencies give a basis for categorisation of the mainstream using belief, authority, and leadership. The task is to extract those elements in a dialogue between boundary drawing and evidence.

#### 5. Conclusion and Approach

The Church/denomination/sect continuum has become weaker due to additions and qualifications made. As indeed with Weber, Troeltsch and others, Christian belief and authority can be categorised and therefore new ideal types can be created which sufficiently describe the institutional Christianity of today.

In Part II, Chapter 3 classifies and puts conceptual boundaries between types of belief. After an analysis of the religious cultural environment in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 links those belief types to authority types and the environment, which again involves classification and boundary drawing. In Part III, Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the distribution of the belief and authority types. All this involves the methodology of creating holistic ideal types.

CHAPTER 3

Belief Typologies

1. Introduction

This chapter begins with the belief categories of Robert Towler's The Need for Certainty (1984) but sets out to take more account of the institution of the Church using academic and non-academic Christian literature. The creation of new theological typologies is checked against an in-depth assessment of three ministers (see Appendix 1). The belief types can then be related to the religious cultural environment and authority types in the rest of Part II.

2. Towards Towler's Typologies

2 (a). Introduction

This section looks at the background to new ideal types. It begins with Glock and Stark (1965) but it is Robert Towler (1984) who will be referred to throughout the chapter.

2 (b). Glock and Stark, Religion and Society in Tension (1965)

This book is concerned with the difficult measurement of religiosity. Whereas Glock and Stark were interested in *how much* people believe and how to classify this, Towler was interested in *what* people believe and producing the appropriate classifications. Given that how much is believed also illustrates what is believed, so The Need for Certainty (1984) naturally follows on.

This strongly made point by Glock and Stark connects their work to Towler's:

...when we speak of 'Protestants,' as we do so often in the social sciences, we spin statistical fiction. Thus it seems unjustified to consider Protestantism as a unified religious point of view in the same sense as Catholicism. Not that Roman Catholicism is monolithic either; clearly there are several theological strands interwoven in the Catholic Church too, but there is at least some justification in treating them collectively since they constitute an actual organised body. Protestantism, on the other hand, includes many separately constituted groups and the only possible grounds for treating them collectively would be if they shared a common religious vision. Since this is clearly not the case, we shall have to change our ways.

This change in the way we should conceive of Protestantism seems to offer considerably more interesting prospects for future research. (Glock and Stark, 1965, pp. 121-2)

However, these authors are still locked into the idea of separate groups being the basis for belief views. But belief views cut through and across such groups, and in the U.S.A., for example, Baptists, Anglicans and Methodists each contain traditionalist, fundamentalist and liberal viewpoints.

2 (c). Robert Towler, The Need for Certainty (1984)

Towler avoided this error because he produced new belief typologies without recourse to denomination from letters reacting to the Robinson controversy, only a tiny proportion of which appeared in The Honest to God Debate (1963). The letters were as such not comments on Honest to God but described the way people understood their own faith (also see Gill, 1975, 1977). However, the letters came from people both inside and outside of the whole Church. Here literature is used to see how the Church influences belief.

2 (d). Hobsbawm and Ranger, The Invention of Tradition (1983)

This book illustrates how deliberately seeking continuity with the past, so that a custom becomes a 'tradition', supports present day activity. This is an important background point when analysing new belief types.



3. Belief Typologies of Institutional Christianity

3 (a) Introduction

Towler's descriptions and categories are now developed with reference to both popular and academic theological literature (which is later added to and refined by the results of discussions with three ministers of religion).

3 (b). Traditionalism

3 (b) 1. Towler (1984)

He states that traditionalism is the discipline of certainty, the style of religion revering the tradition it has received. By preserving the details it is conservationist. Traditionalism also encourages narrow inheritances:

Even within England the content varies since there are Roman Catholic and Methodist traditionalisms as well as the traditionalism which holds dear the orthodox formulations of the Church of England (p. 86).

On page 87, Towler rightly points out that the traditionalist has many skeletons in the cupboard where the nagging doubts are kept locked away. Such is the traditionalist's need for certainty.

3 (b) 11. Maurice Wood. This is Our Faith (1985)

This book is not academic and contains howlers like calling Rural Anglicanism (Francis, 1985, a book about the decline of the Church of England in rural areas) "Dead Rural Anglicanism" (p. 151) and saying its author was a research sociologist when in fact he was a research social psychologist. The basis of the book is an attack on David Jenkins expressing his theology as the Bishop of Durham (1). The author himself was the Bishop of Norwich, being well

known for support given to Billy Graham's 'Mission England' in 1984. Yet in the book he takes a soft line about Bishop John Robinson's own brand of liberalism:

...his painful and honest sharing of areas of doubt, and his attempt to express the faith in contemporary terms however modestly caused a greater stir than expected, he once told me (p. 19).

So, Maurice Wood saw Honest to God as modest. But the reason for such mild criticism comes very rapidly:

In fact Bishop John Robinson was a comparatively traditional theologian on biblical matters. ...In his later book Can We Trust the New Testament? (Mowbray), Bishop John Robinson (no self-confessed conservative) returned from his Honest to God days to a positive approach to the Bible which is very refreshing. (p. 19)

Wood's reaction here does no justice to David Jenkins because John Robinson did not believe in the Virgin Birth or the Empty Tomb either. Jenkins is attacked for openly questioning the Bible despite his trinitarian orthodoxy. It seems that you can show 'honest doubt' as long as you are alright on the Bible.

Maurice Wood himself uses Bible quotes which he lets stand for themselves along with a level of argument that would not stand up to critical thought. We see this when he discusses the Virgin Birth (pp. 50-1). This argument shows what his method is and the attitude it involves:

Isaiah7: 10-15 is the best known "proof text" and Biblical critics tend not to accept its validity, by not accepting it as prophecy, by saying that "Virgin" can just mean "young girl", and by relating it so firmly to Ahaz's day, and that they do not accept its wider

messianic significance. Against that Christ himself recognises and validates the principle of prophecy in Isaiah; Matthew boldly asserts that this prophecy is directly fulfilled, following the angel of the Lord's clear statement of the Virginal Conception to Joseph, when he discovered to to his dismay that the Virgin Mary was "found to be with child" (v.18) - see Matthew 1: 22, 23. Thirdly, the critics are left with the necessity of explaining the prophecy of "Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), [and] the translation of Emmanuel as "God with us" in Matthew 1: 23... (Wood, 1985, pp. 50-1)

The technique of the fundamentalist argument is that against their critics they put "Christ himself" (you lose!) and yet quite clearly theology and scriptures are interpretations by interested parties. What is missing from all of this is an appreciation of translation. The Hebrew word 'Almah' was used in Isaiah to mean young woman. Had Isaiah wished to mean virgin he would have used the specific word 'Bethulah'. Almah in the Greek translation of the Old Testament became Parthenon which has a range of meanings from young woman to virgin (sexually and birth before first menstruation).

Fundamentalism is seen in both conversionism (see section 3 (c) below) and Protestant traditionalisms. The traditionalism itself comes in a passage like this, which would not particularly concern him if he was a conversionist:

...I am following in the steps of St. Felix (AD 630) and St. Furzey (from Ireland in AD 673) and a long line of East Anglian shepherd-bishops... (p.10)

3 (b) iii. Graham Leonard, Firmly I Believe and Truly (1985)

The Bishop of London's book kept aside of but implied reaction to the Durham controversy. Here we have an Anglo-Catholic statement of faith based on The Dream of Gerontius written by Newman known in association with Elgar's music and the hymn Firmly I Believe and Truly.

Newman is clearly a hero of the author. He defended the 'truth of the Church' against the drift of the times in Victorian England. Eventually he left, and Leonard himself has opposed the drift of the times in the twentieth century. Leonard says of Newman:

To what at times sees an almost uncanny degree, he anticipates many of the issues which face us today (Leonard, 1985 p. ix).

Only by pages 73 and 74 is there a full recognition of critical theological study. Leonard states that some early scholars found the miraculous element in scripture unacceptable and hoped to reveal a simple gospel without the supernatural. He claims they could not do it because the supernatural was an integral part of revelation. Today the liberals have shifted ground and have tried another line that because the disciples were affected by their culture so now the man of today can interpret according to our times. He argues against this too:

The effect of this is to make contemporary thought the judge of scripture, rather than the reverse.

No one should doubt that the writers of scripture wrote as men of their time and it is right for us to try to discern the background against which they wrote. But to suppose that this was dominant in their thoughts and was their controlling motive is seriously to misunderstand their intentions and also offers only a counsel of despair as to the possibility of the Church being guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth. (p. 74)

But this can be seen another way. Evans-Pritchard (1937) living among the Azandé found himself believing (in a way) in the witchcraft of the culture. Modern man transported back in time also might catch the spirit of the early Church in its expectation about the messiah, or later on take sides in the

dispute over the status of Christ in the Church. Today the problem is to transplant the inherited religion into this unfriendly culture. Therefore to see the past by the present is neutral; the Bishop of London is judging the present society by one in the past. That is what a traditionalist does.

This Anglo-Catholic traditionalist states that the faith of the Church does not come from one element alone. (p. 5)

The Church is not ...confined to teaching the bare word of scripture but what it does teach must be agreeable to scripture, and what is not specifically to be found in scripture must not be enforced as a belief necessary for salvation (p. 73)

The Church has primacy of status which, for an Anglican, the scriptures guard. Thus there is a difference of emphasis from Maurice Wood:

When Newman speaks of venerating Holy Church as Christ's creation, he is not simply speaking of the Church militant here on earth. He is referring to the Church throughout the ages and beyond space and time. He does not tell us to adore the Church and give it our unquestioning obedience. As we shall see when we come to the last verse [of the hymn], adoration is reserved for God alone. He tells us to venerate Holy Church. To venerate something is to respect and reverence it. And it is the Church as holy which we are to venerate, that is, the Church in so far as it is faithful to witnessing Christ as its head. (p. 72)

Despite the clear difference of emphasis much ends up the same such as "what happened at Bethlehem". He quotes a hymn by H. R. Bramley:

The Great God of heaven is come down to earth,  
His mother a Virgin, sinless his birth; (p. 30)

...He is that he was, and forever shall be,  
But becomes that he was not, for you and for me. (p. 31)

The traditionalist conserves such details because they are the proofs of the whole divine plan. Without such details the whole basis of Scripture, the Church (in whatever order) and the faith would collapse - and on that both Protestant and Catholic would agree.

3 (b) iv. Conclusion

Traditionalism is more than a preservation of traditions in their detail. The Catholic and Reformed Church of England has two defences, and indeed there is at least one per denomination. This is a selective approach to history and so involves the 'invention of traditions' (see Hobsbawm and Ranger eds., 1983, pp. 1-2) of complex denominational inheritances for belief needs today.

The present day *logical need* is to conserve the details because they protect the overall scheme (this Towler fails to express). For example if there was no Virgin Birth then Jesus as the unique pre-planned Incarnate Lord goes and if the tomb was not empty then the Resurrection was not unique.

3 (c). Conversionism

3 (c) 1. Towler (1984)

This is, according to Towler, a belief in Jesus which makes the believer aware of sin. An immediate conversion lifts the burden of sin. This is supernatural (contrasted with the exemplarist's heroic human Jesus: see 3 (e) vi.) with no human route out of evil. Towler claims that conversionists, thought of as individualistic, actually have a high doctrine of the Church.

3 (c) 11. Michael Harper, You Are My Sons (1979)

The author of this book is a leading charismatic in the Church of England. He

has been at the forefront of large scale meetings such as ACTS '86 held in Birmingham which attracted charismatics of many denominations and countries, both Catholic and Protestant, eager to forward renewal within their Churches.

This is the world of the active and the supernatural:

Today we are rediscovering our authority in the name of Jesus over evil spirits. We are able to bind them and so frustrate their workings in the lives of people and the gathering of God's people. In a Canadian city in 1977 the meeting was particularly difficult. After it was over I lost my voice. The following evening was to be held in a Roman Catholic Church. We also discovered that several Mormons had attended the previous evening. The priest and other leaders met with us and we prayed authoritatively against the enemy. The meeting was totally different. I was able to speak without difficulty in spite of a very sore throat. The same Mormons were present, but this time they had no effect on the meeting. Jesus is Lord. (Harper, 1979, p. 47)

The power of the Holy Spirit brings about success through the role of the Church. The key to this is seen in Pentecost (p. 125). The forward moving supernatural power is supreme. But unbelief is regarded as a sin:

There is only one way to escape from the paralysing effect of unbelief: *recognise it for what it is - sin*, and confess it as such to God. As we have seen, God forgives sin, and when he does so he vaporises it. It might just as well have not existed. If we bring our unbelief to God and say, "I have sinned, please forgive me," the unbelief will disappear. (p. 77)

Satan can also get in the way of the conversionist's great gift.

...many people today receive the gift of speaking in tongues when they are filled with the Spirit or some times afterwards. Nearly always Satan challenges us when we first begin to exercise this gift. He will try to convince us that we made it up, or that we are "speaking in the flesh". ...The "if" of unbelief has deprived some, at all events temporarily, of the use of this gift. But this should be

our cue to resist Satan. If we do fall into sin then the key to dealing with it is through confession and faith in the promise of forgiveness (e.g. 1 John 1: 9). (pp. 142-3)

You Are My Sons does have a stress on the Church as the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. But the understanding of scripture deviates only a little from the fundamentalist.

3 (c) 111. David Watson, I Believe in Evangelism (1976)

This Anglican conversionist has this to say about Scripture (with a capital S), and notice how he criticises the nineteenth century position he quotes:

Since the nineteenth century days of C. Hodge and B. B. Warfield there has, in some circles, been a very precise correspondence between the 'word of God' and the Scriptures: a one-to-one identification, in fact. Undoubtedly the Scriptures play a most important part in God's revelation of himself to man. They form the supreme objective authority for what God has said. We see this very clearly in the teachings of Jesus. Basically there are three claims of authority for what we believe and how we behave: Scripture, reason and tradition. However, Jesus not only knew the Scriptures, revered the Scriptures, fulfilled the Scriptures, lived by the Scriptures and taught the Scriptures; he also rebuked the rationalists of his day for letting reason dominate their beliefs: "You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" [(Matthew, 22: 23-33)]; and he corrected the traditionalists when their traditions clashed with the word of God: "You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men...thus making void the word of God through your tradition." [(Mark, 7: 5-13)]. Both reason and tradition therefore must bow to the supreme authority of Scripture, which is the word of God. (p. 42)

However, the word of God is more than the words:

For example, it is by the word of God that the heavens and earth were created, in Jesus Christ "the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14), and it is through Jesus that God has spoken to us. Moreover, God has spoken in many and various ways...(p. 42-3)



From this it is clear that the word of God is not to be taken as identical with the Scriptures alone; it is God's communication of himself to man. (p. 43)

David Watson had charismatic tendencies like Michael Harper, but his stress is on Scripture from which charismatic activity can flow. Christ is the Word, and the Bible (the words) is supremely authoritative. Both also fit the Church into their schemes (2). So here there are differences of sub-groups. However done, Watson clearly had his need for certainty:

Another example, in the context of religious beliefs, is today's mood of toleration which encourages a syncretistic religion, in which all sharp edges are blurred and the unique and exclusive claims of Christianity are out. Largely because the Church has so often failed to speak with the clear authority of Scripture, most people are swayed by 'what the experts say', gathered from the superficial religious debates on television and from the Sunday newspapers which, like the Athenians of old, try to spend their time in nothing but telling something 'new'. The trouble is that there is a very short step from believing in everything to believing in nothing. If every religious approach is true, nothing is true. If every religious approach is equally valid, there is no objective validity or reality to be found. Everything is subjective, and subjectivism is but a short step from atheism. (p. 22)

3 (c) iv. James Packer, Taking Stock in Theology (in King, 1973)

The then Principal of the Evangelical Anglican Trinity College in Bristol, James Packer, summarised evangelical theology.

There are four main features. The canonical Scriptures are God's instruction; the Trinity brings a relationship which displays the gift of salvation; true goodness is a gift of God, salvation being "only through Christ only"; and the true Church is invisible, it not being a human institution or "a divinely accredited institution for dispensing saving sacraments" (p. 23) but "a

believing people in fellowship with Christ, and in Christ with each other" (p. 23). So there is an anti-traditionalist stance to this kind of theology.

3 (c) v. David Sheppard, Bias to the Poor (1983)

This is evangelicalism drawn from the tradition of those like Wilberforce who combined a biblically based faith with a social gospel.

If we want to find the Word of God for today, we must learn to hold side by side our experience of life with the revelation of God in the Scriptures (p. 223).

Much of evangelicalism became internal to the churches. It lost its social gospel first to the inner-city Anglo-Catholics and then to the liberals. This book is a call to return to the old mission in the present day (3). This was seen in part of the report Faith in the City (1985) where a biblical base for some implied a social concern.

3 (c) vi. Assessment and Conclusion

Conversionism is clearly not a unified position. Some begin with a charismatic position which stretches across Protestantism and Catholicism. There is some emphasis on the dynamic Church. Fundamentalism fits into a conversionist attitude as it can fit into various Protestant traditionalisms. Then there is the more inclusivist evangelical position, biblically based but not uncritical. So within conversionism there are charismatic, fundamentalist and evangelical sub-groups which, in so far as they claim justification from the New Testament and, in particular, Pentecost, are 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger eds., 1983) for the present day.

3 (d). Christocentric-Theism

3 (d) 1. Towler (1984)

Theism, according to Towler's assessment, is monotheistic (p. 60), turns evil into a kind of good and is conservative. So to use two statements:

...theism rejects the divine Jesus for the same reason exemplarism rejects God. Each sees the additional doctrine as a gratuitous extra. (Towler, 1984, p. 18)

To accept pain as an education is to have solved the problem of evil by transforming evil into a kind of good (p. 64).

Yet Christianity claims that that by dying and rising Jesus turned evil into good. Theism could be Christocentric after all. It too could be conservative not because evil is seen as a form of good but rather because it is not a radical form of belief. This is worthy of investigation through Christian writings looking first at christocentric-theism and later plain theism.

3 (d) ii. John Robinson. The Roots of a Radical (1980)

Robin Gill made a study of Honest to God (1963) and commented on its style:

...the first forty-four pages are almost wholly negative and iconoclastic. (Gill, 1977, p. 90)

Gill shows how Robinson was a radical in terms of a general public who heard about theology only through the newspapers and television.

However, such theology already was legitimate in theological circles. Honest to God (1963) combined Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich into his own package which joined orthodoxy and liberal expression. He changed the metaphor of the

supernatural three decker universe to depth psychology and existentialism. The 'up there' and 'out there' was replaced by the 'down there' (and also, 'still there') of God. Jesus, following Tillich, became the 'New Being' and, following Bonhoeffer, 'the man for others', still centrally defining God. These changes were meant to challenge both traditional popular and intellectual approaches to Christianity without affecting its core substance:

Traditional Christology has worked with a frankly supernaturalist scheme. Popular religion has expressed this mythologically, professional theology metaphysically (Robinson, 1962, p. 64).

The liberals were entirely justified in the courage with which they were prepared to abandon the supernatural scaffolding by which hitherto the whole structure had been supported. That house had to collapse, and they had the faith to see that Christianity need not collapse without it (p. 69).

In fact, later experience was rather different. The Myth of God Incarnate controversy in fact showed no guarantee that the scaffolding could come down and leave Christianity up. Robinson really knew this when he said of the opening chapter 'Christianity Without Incarnation' in The Myth of God Incarnate:

It is like commending 'Christianity without the Bible' when you mean 'Christianity without biblicism'. You can explain that what you are questioning is a particular way of stating God's relation to Christ, but the explanation will not be heard. It will be assumed you are denying the reality that the statement is about. Perhaps that indeed is the case but this can only be decided by a careful disentanglement of the issues, and by listening hard and long at what is being said on each side.

When the rushed riposte came out, The Truth of God Incarnate by Michael Green, I found it difficult to decide which was the worst book. On reflection I think this dubious honour must surely be accorded to the reply. (Robinson, 1980, p. 58)

Robinson in fact was always carefully conservative and whilst some of these not dissimilar 'liberal' expressions to his caused confusion (did not he?), perhaps he just did not like some writers in The Myth of God Incarnate denying the bottom line of the Incarnation:

...I want to hold to the irreducibility of incarnation as a distinctive, perhaps the distinctive, Christian category, while at the same time sitting loose to many ways of stating it which have come to be associated with traditional orthodoxy (p. 60).

In the same spirit he has this to say about who he calls the liberals:

Indeed it is they more than others who these days are charged with reductionism. And I confess that at the heart of much they say there is for me not much gospel either. ...I cannot really believe that 'the gospel of Christian atheism', or 'Christianity without incarnation?' or the giving up of any claim for the uniqueness of Christ, or the uncritical identification with secular humanism or political liberation (thus giving Eric Mascall or Edward Norman their toe-holds) are anything but impoverishments of the gospel. They are in danger of leaving nothing at the centre distinctive or strong enough to live by, let alone die for. (p. 83)

Despite this Robinson was no traditionalist. He received criticism from the 'other side' that he holds to a too human Jesus. To this he replied that Christ comes from both ends, as in Blake's 'the human form divine', because we live in a "Son-shaped Christic cosmos" (p. 67). In other words Robinson appeals to a Christian universe to allow his human man to be "from the other end" too. The fact that other people may also qualify (e.g. Gandhi or those feminists who want a female who is more relevant) is still a criticism. But that is not the point: rather, Robinson wanted his cake and ate it, and his liberalism was always orthodox. This makes the point even more:

...I think she [Julian of Norwich] is sounder than Karl Barth, and closer to the Anglican F. D. Maurice, in arguing for a truly and deeply natural theology. As she put it, the Second Person of the Trinity willed to become the foundation and the head of this lovely human nature. ...Julian is certainly no nature mystic, by-passing sin and redemption. It is not, she says, that "we are saved because God is the foundation of our nature, but only if, from the same source, we receive his mercy and grace". (Robinson, 1980, pp. 146-7)

In conclusion, this theistic position, with overtones of Charles Raven, includes a great stress on the Incarnation and on the reality of sin and redemption. The "Son-shaped Christic cosmos" is a cradle to protect the Trinity and illustrates Robinson's need for protective certainty.

3 (d) iii. Keith Ward. The Turn of the Tide (1986)

Keith Ward wrote Holding Fast to God (1982) against Don Cupitt's Taking Leave of God and The Turn of the Tide (1986) against Cupitt's The Sea of Faith (1984) (about Cupitt see 3 (e) x. below).

Holding Fast to God attempted to discredit subjectivist religion:

All Cupitt will be able to say is 'Well some choose one thing and some another; none of these choices is true or false. The trouble is, of course, that such beliefs, which are about the whole orientation of ones life, can hardly be held provisionally. You either commit your life to them or not. (p. 83)

So commitment needs truth, truth needs doctrine, doctrine facilitates belief. In his 'need for certainty', Ward wants a structure to hang on with.

In The Turn of the Tide (1986) there is a continuous feast of name dropping of intelligent people who are still Christians. But this is an either/or book,

that there is this way of explaining the world and that way of explaining the world, and one of them is Christian:

...even a short examination of the work of leading philosophers shows the falsity of the opinion that belief in God has lost intellectual credibility. On the contrary, it is now seen to be no less credible, in general, than any other general view of the world; though of course it is no less problematic either. When so many of the chairs of philosophy are now being held by Christians, we may well think that the tide has turned, that Christians need have no feeling that they are fighting against the stream. (Ward, 1986, p. 76)

The Bible (through which we learn about Jesus) is justified by the same kind of argument:

...there can never be complete agreement between Christian and non-Christian scholars about the historical basis of the Gospels. But we do not expect historians to agree, usually. What can be said is that there is enough data to make the Christian response of faith a reasonable and appropriate one. The Gospel claims about Jesus are strong enough to pose an enormous problem to anyone seeking to understand Jesus in purely human terms, and reliable enough to evoke a rational response of faith and commitment. The critical wave has passed... (p. 112)

It has not, as is clear by the many who do not agree with him. It also has not because of the way Ward approaches his arguments which is not that of revelation first but of a human approach to received packages. He seems to be saying that Christianity is a package deal, and we live by package deals - and this one is reasonable. There are many on the market:

Inadequacy and error, however, are not all the same; and you simply cannot have it all ways and say that all is suffering (Buddhism) and that the world is good (Judaism); that there is an eternal self (Hinduism) and that there is no self at all (Buddhism); that your personality will exist forever (Christianity) and that it will wholly be absorbed into the Absolute (Sankara). If you seriously thought

all of these views were wrong, you would believe none of them; and then, of course, you would not belong to a religion at all. (p. 141)

So traditions are packages and they have certain functions:

So, rather than follow Tertullian, we might rather say, "I believe, because it increases understanding and sets it on its proper task." Is that, after all, saying so much more than the person can tell us about the world because the world is open to reason? (Ward, 'The Step of Faith', in Moss, 1986, p. 79)

But surely another rational approach is to pick out what one thinks is true. The rational man is not constrained to the packages. For example, it is possible to combine some Christian content with a "vehicle" (like Buddhism) for spirituality, which is what Cupitt does.

The basic issue is one of motives, and Ward attempts to conserve the package not unlike the traditionalist. But here it is more liberal because he finds traditionalist arguments unsatisfactory. Despite his different approach to John Robinson, his reasonableness turns out to be just as conservative. It is impressive and yet underneath are thin foundations.

### 3 (d) iv. Modern Theologians and Varieties of Christocentric-Theism

Christocentric-theists, whatever their methods, all attempt to be both reasonable and to keep Christianity together as a system. The theologian Karl Barth saw *religion* as human but put his stress on grace from God. This is a one way street: Christ is the Word which is discovered through the words of the Bible brought alive by the Holy Spirit. He spent much time in severe disagreement with Brunner who gave man at least the ability to comprehend



God and salvation, although that was left to God. Barth's position was in contrast to Schleiermacher's who proposed a theory of dependence in a natural theology of God. Paul Tillich moved this on to existential theology where Christ is the New Being. This, seen in Heidegger and Macquarrie, is essentially a substitution from traditional to existential terminology. Bonhoeffer opposed this with the view that modern secular man would no longer ask existential questions. He stressed the God who suffers by disappearing from the world and so the Church should move out into this world. Yet he still maintained the continuity of Christianity. Barth and Bonhoeffer were combined in Harvey Cox's The Secular City (1966) and in the views of David Jenkins (1965), later the Bishop of Durham. Bultmann saw Christianity as a mythical system which proclaims the Christ of Faith rather than the mysterious Jesus of History. Hans Küng attempts to maintain the overall tradition against the rigours of inquiry and humanism. (4)

3 (d) v. The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, Believing in the Church (1981)

Leading elements of the Churches (5) try on the one hand to utilise academic methods whilst on the other hand still being conservative. These two quotes illustrate this:

[Boundary markers] are set up, not only to mark out a theoretical framework to guide our thinking, and to serve as warnings to those whom a sense of intellectual and spiritual adventure might lead too far afield, but for strictly practical purposes [like the remarriage of the divorced, the ordination of women and the use of church buildings for people of other faiths]. (Harvey, A., 'Markers and Signposts', in Doctrine Commission, 1981, p. 290)

Reformers out to change 'out of date' creeds, liturgies and formularies should beware. Tradition and the freedom of the individual are more interdependent than they suppose. This is indeed one of the attractive paradoxes about the Church of England.

(MacManners, J., 'The Individual in the Church of England', in Doctrine Commission, 1981, p. 229)

One remarkable chapter (Thiselton, A., 'Knowledge, Myth and Corporate Memory', pp. 45-78) explores the relationship between the individual and the corporate body and ends with a commandment borrowed from Wittgenstein:

I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting (p. 76)

Here is a humanistic approach to Christianity and the demand to enforce limitations on interpretation. Thiselton suggests that a community remains the same community by the transmission of corporate memory. In the Church these come through the creeds, the Sacraments and using the Bible. This transmission is a source of knowledge and a framework for reinterpretation.

He quotes Gadamer, and Wittgenstein where he says: "Only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning." (p. 57) He accepts with Kuhn that paradigms are guides and revolutions may take place in them, and in true Anglican style also accepts Popper's criticism that there is never only one paradigm and the framework never dictates the knowledge possible. (6)

He uses sociology too and Berger and Luckmann to say that roles are adopted and made operative only on the basis of "an objectified stock of knowledge common to a collectivity of actors" (p. 67).

[Therefore,] in these terms, a Christian concern about the place of the Bible, or about tradition or orthodoxy, has little to do with intellectual conformity as such. What is at stake is the maintenance of conditions under which it still makes sense to speak of "standards of role performance".

What matters, from this standpoint, is whether when deviations or eccentricities occur, they are identified as permitted deviations or eccentricities.

One cannot go beyond the Church: Luther said both "Here I stand" and "One cannot have God for his father who has not the Church for his mother." (p. 76) Christian belief cannot be private.

The chapter leaves a puzzle. When does innovation take place? According to Thiselton, people like Luther and Kierkegaard did not see themselves as innovators but appealed to the corporate memory and the continuity of its "effective memory" (p. 62-3). Thiselton rejects a simple religion of routine, like Jesus and Paul did. This surely means that Christianity is nothing more than another Reformed Judaism!

Secondly, revelation seems to have taken a back seat. So he states that myths, which outsiders may see as false, may be reinterpreted through the individual/corporate dialectic. Keeping old myths and reinterpreting them hold to tradition and keep their impact. However, myth is too open ended a term and should be supported for instance by the 1938 Doctrine Commission's view of God's self revelation.

Thiselton, until 1987 the Principal of the evangelical St. John's Theological College, Nottingham, but an orthodox liberal himself, is clearly trying to appeal to humanistic academic respectability. But throughout this is an institutional book, attempting to both recover from the diversity of Christian Believing (1976) and anticipating a break out of radicalism. This is the crux of the chapter:

What is at stake is whether the Christian way is turned into another gospel (p. 64).

There are overtones here of the debate in Esperanto movement relating to the Ido schism. The Esperantists' creed was the *Fundamento* which demanded a core collective discipline to protect the unity of the language (e.g., Cart stressed untouchability for the sake of unity). The authors of Believing in the Church almost sound like those of the Esperantists except that the Church effectively no longer insists on the credal details, only on that which preserves the whole. (see Forster, 1982, p. 110-144)

Very often the radical regards the development he proposes as a natural development, but this creates a split with those who regard the change as a threat to the identity and purpose of the institution. The result of such division is that the radicals become isolated and the defenders become more orthodox (see Forster, 1982, p. 141). Certainly the change in the Doctrine Commission was to this effect (7).

### 3 (d) vi. The Essentials of Orthodox Liberalism

This position is an approach which protects the boundaries. Christocentric-theism is conservative and static because the overall view must remain the same without too much supernaturalism but with a more 'realist' philosophy.

Its brilliance is that an individual can disbelieve in the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb, and a whole host of other details, and yet preserve the system. God may be demythologised but maintained; Jesus is the human figure of scholarship but remains part of the Trinity. It aims to be subtle, semi-

tolerant, have academic respectability, and synthesise supernatural religion with the Enlightenment. On the one hand it is liberal, but on the other hand (and this is what matters) it is claimed to be orthodox.

There is an identifiable biblical text which acts as the minimal orthodox liberal belief. The text comes from St. Paul who lays down where the break with orthodoxy comes (and where heterodoxy begins).

...if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ...For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15 vv. 13-14 and 16-19, RSV Bible)

This is a crucial orthodox liberal boundary which allows freedom of manouvre but enforces a limit. Christ must have been raised: really, historically and as a miracle to guarantee the *basis* of other belief. Christianity has had tighter boundaries than this, but in the present state of academic theology it acts as a pivotal point between acceptance and marginalisation. It all has institutional implications too: whilst the 1987 report We Believe in God was introduced as a work of theology, the Church Times reported the former Bishop of Winchester, Dr. John Taylor as saying:

"There will be unease amongst those who depend for their own sustenance, temperamentally as well as mentally, on something very cut and dried. Those with a leaning towards fundamentalism will feel let down. We argue that in the Anglican tradition revelation, reason and experience are woven together...those wanting cut and dried statements will be disappointed". Not only fundamentalists but some conservative evangelicals, and perhaps some traditional Catholics would be inclined to attack the report, he prophesied. "Don Cupitt,"

Dr. Taylor added with some relish, "would reject it". (Report in Church Times, June 5th 1987, p.1)

3 (d) vii. The Complaint of Conversionists, Traditionalists and Radicals

Robert Towler completely failed to see the existence and nature of this kind of conservative belief. Its use for the Church as a whole in terms of authority and holding the Church together is considered in later chapters.

This is not like traditionalist and conversionist belief: they both hold to the details in order to preserve and advance respectively. But radicals also think that the details matter and that the old machine only works properly if all its parts are in full working order. Often when for them the details break down they as a consequence break free of the package and leave, like to Buddhism, post-Christian feminism and humanism (for new corporate packages) and Unitarianism (for a free faith). But many in fact do not leave. Heterodox liberal writings are considered in the next section.

3 (e). Heterodox Liberalism

3 (e) 1. Towler (1984)

Robert Towler introduced three divisions of the Trinity discovered within the letters to John Robinson: theism (God) exemplarism (human heroic Jesus) and gnosticism (the spiritual). With some emphasis on the careers of writers of The Myth of God Incarnate, such viewpoints are considered here as heterodox liberalism (meaning none of them can maintain the basic Christian system).

3 (e) 11. Maurice Wiles, The Remaking of Christian Doctrine. (1973)

Maurice Wiles appeared in Christian Believing, The Myth of God Incarnate and

wrote his own The Remaking of Christian Doctrine. He was thus a leading theologian but perhaps since then he has been marginalised. Books like Faith and the Mystery of God (1982) seem to offer mild versions of theism. He denies the substantive nature of doctrinal language but continues to use it.

On pages 42-8 Wiles criticises theologians like Karl Rahner who begin at the point of accepting the Incarnation because one cannot start with a position which presumes something given. On the other hand Wiles admits he does not start from scratch because Christianity provides questions and answers although, he claims, it does not prescribe them. But given the cultural problem of not giving absolute authority to anything, reliable doctrine has to be found from the life of Jesus. But here lies a problem:

We do not need to discuss whether it would be philosophically and religiously appropriate to ascribe such authority to Jesus, for no such Jesus is available to us. A central part of the task of Christian doctrine today is to work out the implications of this fact for the structure of doctrine as a whole and for Christology in particular. (1973, p. 48)

This is a denial of the Incarnation. But then, as on the television programme Credo (which began the Durham controversy), the doctrine can still be referred to. After admitting the problem of the Trinity when considering a genetic, human, learning Jesus (like anyone else?), he states:

For me Jesus is distinctive and unique because I see him as a human person supremely responsible and open to the spirit of God and thereby able to express the character of God and to effect God's action in the world, in an absolutely distinctive way. And I think that this enables us to say most of the things that Christians have been insisting upon in speaking of Jesus as God, while seeing him more intelligibly perhaps as a responsive human person rather than in the traditional sense as in his own person and actually the

second person of the Trinity, God himself. (Channel Four, April 29th 1984, Credo, London Weekend Television)

This position leaves only a free market of supreme morality or a wide open God which is why many theologians try to hang on to the Incarnation. A way to do it is to hope for a unique Resurrection. But Wiles has this to say:

Just as most Christians today would see ancient belief in resuscitation of the flesh as false if taken literally, but true if treated as a symbol of personal survival, so it is clearly possible to regard belief in personal survival as false if taken literally, but true if taken as a symbol of the possibility of of rising to a truer and fuller life now. (Wiles, 1973, p. 136)

Yet he prefers the language of resurrection to immortality because of its symbolic inheritance (p. 137), but then rejects the body language of the resurrection as "dangerous" even when it means personality (p. 142).

Nevertheless he still has Christian hope by a belief in God, surely quite thin and at the boundary identified by Believing in the Church.

3 (e) iii. John Hick. The Second Christianity (1983)

John Hick taught at Birmingham University (8) but in the United States members of his United Presbyterian Church tried to exclude him from the ordained ministry because of disbelief in the Virgin Birth.

Hick is not interested in the "intelligibilities of traditional stained glass window theology" (pp. 9-10), but in the human forces that brought about Christ's death. Further he thinks the Resurrection was a matter of visions (p. 25). Jesus offers the quality of existence called eternal life or "this



positive unselfish goodness" (pp. 17-19) and would be "profoundly disturbing" if met. Although he wants to keep the Son of God language, he ditches the Incarnation:

That Jesus is my Lord and Saviour is language like that of a lover for whom his Helen is the sweetest girl in the world (p. 32).

Hick, however, refers to God the Creator as a cosmic mind with qualities concentrated in love. This is best seen not by theologians but by prophets who can interpret the scientific world as having the presence of God (p. 46).

Yet after beginning with Christian views and a semitic God he then wishes to qualify all pictures of God so as to allow each faith its view of the same mystery, even when that faith has no God! A "Copernican Revolution" (p. 82) of a "Universal Atman" or the plurality of the Trinity of God is called for. And there would seem to be little of Christianity left.

Hick's theism is also expressed in Why Believe in God? (1983), based on a dialogue in 1982 with colleague Michael Goulder who had left the Anglican priesthood and become a Humanist. Rather favourably Goulder says that Hick:

...lacks the first virtue of a theologian, obscurity. (Goulder and Hick, 1983, p. 97)

3 (e) iv. Michael Goulder, Why Believe in God? (with Hick 1983)

Goulder argues against the reliability of religious experiences of God, and of Hick's where "the austerity is chilling" (p. 96). But Goulder himself lacked

a sufficient experience of God to support his Farrer type interventionist theology. He was once set to answer why his defence of God was so weak:

My resolve was strengthened by a conversation with a Lutheran at a conference three weeks later. "I still take funerals sometimes," he said, "but it is difficult when you don't believe in the afterlife. (p. 28)

So he decided to leave the Church altogether:

...My *Fram*, my beloved church, was locked forever in the ice-floes of theological contradiction, a barren and chilling waste. (p. 28)

3 (e) v. Conclusion to Theism

The theism which Robert Towler described is outside the mainstream boundary of Christian revelation, a matter of institutional tension to the Church. Such a belief leads to either a non-Christian theism or effective atheism.

3 (e) vi. Towler (1984) and Exemplarism

Towler says this is belief in the Christ as an human exemplary figure and as such God does not come into it. The supernatural is not important and the Creeds are not relevant. It is the life of Jesus and his ideals which matters rather than his death, sin and life after death. This is against imposed authority, and for action in faith rather than contemplation in belief. Towler relates this type of faith to intellectual difficulties with orthodoxy which is of interest here.

3 (e) vii. Alistair Kee. The Way of Transcendence (1971, 1985) (9)

This was an attempt to produce an exemplarist faith in accordance with the

Christian tradition. The central concern is Kee's belief that whereas it used to be easy to believe in God but not in Jesus, now people desire to believe in Jesus but not in God. This claim is connected with the secularity of the age. It is by no means clear who such people are or why secular man should want to believe in Jesus rather than just know something about him.

On page 139 (1971) he tells us that the "solutions" of Ogden and MacQuarrie (existential theology) are not the answer because the preacher means one thing by God whereas the man in the pew hears something else. The 'way of immanence' is no solution because that is reductionist whereas he wants to escalate theology. People who cannot believe in God should not be second class believers as in the mainstream. God, as such, must not get in the way of belief in Jesus Christ.

The solution is this. First it must be accepted that Jesus was wrong about the world coming to an end, but if we follow 'the way of transcendence' our own immanent world does come to an end. Secondly, the language of Sonship and messianic status is a problem but it can be said that Jesus is the very incarnation of the way of transcendence. Thirdly it is impossible to say that Jesus Christ arrived at a time fully come but once there is belief in Jesus Christ then the whole history of revelation is perceivable from this position.

Such a belief is secular and true to historical study, Kee claims. A believer then dies and rises with Christ and he can then see what it all means. Although God is still there, he is not a blockage to a decision to faith. God is now the ultimate concern shown by belief in Jesus as the Christ.

Presumably the Church would still have to fully radicalise its intercession before such a believer could cease to be second class. But this is not exemplarism anyway: after the conversion the theological concepts work the usual way to be the guardian of the doctrinal position of Christ. So Jesus does bring about the Kingdom of God now, he does become the Son of God and is at the fullness of time. The "way of transcendence" is in fact "God by the back door." The convert becomes a Christocentric theist.

Kee understands that Christocentric theism is the only means to protect doctrine. A real free and open way of transcendence can be based on Buddha, Krishna, Jesus or nature, various philosophies and mixtures of all these.

3 (e) viii. Graham Shaw, God in Our Hands (1987)

This Anglican priest provides one actual version of exemplarism first in The Cost of Authority (1982) and then in God in Our Hands (1987). He does not believe in a creator God (as described by Swinburne, 1977, p. 2) like:

a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who is present everywhere, the creator and sustainer of the universe, a free agent, able to do everything (i.e. omnipotent), knowing all things, perfectly good, a source of moral obligation, immutable, eternal, a necessary being, holy and worthy of worship. (Shaw, 1987, p. 239)

He later states:

The God in whom I believe lives in the consciousness of his worshippers. In Mackie's words "he is not an objective reality but merely an intentional object, that is exists only in the believer's mind as do the objects of imagination or events in dreams". I would only question his use of "mere" and "only" in this respect. (p. 240-241)

He argues that the Resurrection claims robs Jesus's death of its seriousness and produces an evasive version of the God of power. Jesus's death does not mean that if you are good to others they will be good to you but the Jesus story illustrates the nature of humanity, and so takes away the desire for a guru. (pp. 136-139)

The question is how this relates to all the traditional language.

I have certainly tried to avoid resort to a nebulous language of personal relationship to God in Christ of which Mackie rightly complains. [(Mackie, 1982, p. 3)] Many of "the traditional names and descriptions" of God must I fear be repudiated, but despite the danger of misunderstanding I am prepared to "go on using... the familiar religious language". I am prepared to do so because I believe that theology can without inconsistency be self-critical. My confidence is based on the criticism contained explicitly and implicitly in the story of Jesus. The most radical critic of the religion of power did not abandon talk of God, he transformed it. (Shaw, 1987, p. 240)

But the point of the language is to protect the scheme, which he has lost.

### 3 (e) ix. Further Comments on Exemplarism

Renan the sceptic, Bishop Barnes ('the untheological') (See Robinson, 1980, p. 42), and Albert Schweitzer are examples of exemplarists. They show, against Towler, that it brings the tragic to the fore where Jesus the hero met his executioners. But it is unstable and logically must lead either to Kee's Christocentric theism by the back door or the basis of critical spirituality.

### 3 (e) x. Critical Spirituality: Don Cupitt (from 1979) and John Kent (1987)

In Jesus and the Gospel of God (1979) the exemplarist Rev. Don Cupitt stated:

So it would be more accurate to reverse the stock phrase and speak not of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith but of the Jesus of faith and the dogmatic Christ of history (p. 28).

Cupitt set aside the Incarnation because it obscured the eschatological Jesus. But positions which had given up an exclusivist Church were all lacking in vitality, like deism divorced from history, idealism and its synthesis of meaning, the syncretism of Hick (being God centred), the ascetic pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard keeping the Incarnation made for an obscure Church (pp. 90-1). So Cupitt concluded:

If we can see set aside the developed this-worldly dogmatic faith and recall the primitive faith, then we can see what links Christianity to history is eschatological hope. What is universal and absolute in Christianity is not the tradition which is behind us but the hope which lies ahead of us, not the church but the Kingdom of God. (p. 91)

Such a claim, an 'invented tradition' indeed, was combined with a non-doctrinal view of transcendence called 'the negative way' meaning the ability to self-criticise and not to be trapped by one's own partial view. Each programme for understanding God was human and always limited (10). This idea of transcendence was also given in The Nature of Man (1979) where he claimed that the scientific method as self-critical was never dogmatic.

According to the reprint of Crisis of Moral Authority (1985), Cupitt found his liberalism around 1972 to be a blockage to his own development (p. 9), but his views developed moved on. Exemplarism had no permanence and so he moved to an open ended, non-Christocentric personal spirituality aided by the myth structure of the old religion.

His Christ now sounds like an icon of personal spirituality (as evident in parts of Life Lines, 1986, especially p. 198), and his spiritual non-theism brings about a structure of faith like Buddhism as originally announced in Taking Leave of God (1980).

The issue remains whether such views, philosophically valid in a publicly paid career, are theologically valid in terms of the mainstream Church. There is also the problem that his Derrida-like deconstructionalist arguments of The Long Legged Fly (1987) defy the plain meaning and realist structure of the words in the Anglican liturgy. Cupitt retains commitment to Catholic symbolism but he is like a magician watching a magic show and yet still wants the experience of its illusion (11). As Michael Goulder put it:

The magic is gone from the Christmas stocking when the identity of Father Christmas is known; we may carry the ritual on for a few years for the nostalgia, but its days are numbered. (Goulder and Hick, 1983, p. 29)

Yet Cupitt's viewpoint reflects the crisis in believable religion. John Kent, a Methodist minister and Church historian, believes that:

A second death of religious images, not unlike that which took place in the eighteenth century but more complete, is occurring in Western culture, leaving the religiously-minded to grapple with the ideas of impersonal theism, of religion in a valid Buddhist style, which takes little account of older Western ideas about God. The barbarians have arrived, twilight has descended, and this time when it lifts the Western Churches will probably have ceased to function... (Kent, 1987, p. 220)

### 3 (e) xi. Towler (1984) and Gnosticism

Towler defines gnosticism as the overriding concern with the spiritual world

and its details (one step from mysticism). Evil is fundamentally unreal because it can be transcended. He claims that only a few believe it because of biblical contradiction and being frowned upon (p. 72).

3 (e) xii. Burton and Dolley, Christian Evolution (1984)

More than John Hick, these female authors (a Roman Catholic and an Anglican) wish to see emerge a global sense of religion. The gnostic Gospels may help:

After the findings at Nag Hammadi, the questions to be asked are surely: "Can some of the Gnostic Gospels be combined with the New Testament Gospels that we have been given? Can more of Gnostic Christianity be incorporated into orthodox Christianity in the light of this new understanding which is emerging? Will that ring of truth be restored to some of the traditional teaching to which we have become accustomed? " (p. 123)

Like with Bahá'ism, they believe that a New Age has dawned. All religions contain similar moral messages (p. 96). They look at what a school professes each morning and ask if this is not more helpful than the Apostle's Creed:

This day we will try:  
To find our way back to the Absolute  
To live according to the fine regulations of the universe.  
To live according to the Unity of the Self. (p. 95)

The book speculates on what Jesus might have said in this New Age. They believe he lived to the highest ideals and wanted people to find their light within. As such this New Age needs a global spirituality. Writing an epilogue in Iona, Ursula Burton wonders mystically if the sacred isle will not be the place for the Uncreated Light to break out and make all things new; Janice Dolley ends with a piece from the Chandogya Upanishad that the light beyond



all things is the light which shines in our hearts. Donald Reeves, Rector of St. James, Piccadilly, whose Church includes activities like Christian yoga and Inter-faith contacts, says the book is for those who feel cheated but give the institutional Church just one more chance.

### 3 (e) xiii. Conclusion to Gnosticism

Gnosticism is frowned upon not because it can be biblically contradicted (every position can be biblically contradicted and supported) but because of the ancient repression and expulsion of Gnostics given the overall victory of Hellenism leading to exclusive Roman Catholicism. Like modern critical spirituality, ancient and recurring gnosticism is a sub-alternative to materialist Christianity and in its freedom always seeks to go beyond the boundaries of the institutional Church. (12)

### 3 (f). Towler (1984), Popular Belief and Summary

With the exception of traditionalism, Robert Towler's descriptions of the belief types are inadequate. Conversionism has three sub-types: charismatic, fundamentalist and evangelical. Theism divides into orthodox and heterodox theism, as does liberalism itself. Orthodox liberalism is both theistic and Christocentric (using the Incarnation and Resurrection) but can spare the details. Theism, exemplarism, critical spirituality (which he missed altogether) and gnosticism are all sub-types of heterodox liberalism.

Towler was concerned with what he called the conventional religion of Christianity. But it is essential to take account of the Church as an institution. By using the new categories certain conclusions can be made about popular belief both within and outside this institutional boundary.

The traditionalist and conversionist ordinary belief has the advantage that it is the simple meaning of what Church doctrine and worship says.

Orthodox liberalism requires an intelligent subtlety of mind to be both liberal and orthodox at the same time. But simpler people who cannot relate Church doctrine to secular education and the practical nature of living (and find the gospel period supernaturalism to be out of date) may believe in a God of sorts as identified by Jesus. Their belief is often relaxed.

Heterodox liberal theologians may be considered as being "advanced"; but sociologically they mirror and are mirrored by outsiders who use churches for their own forms of Christianity, like the rites of passage where doctrine is replaced by the 'magical act' or social propriety. Some go more often for reasons of business or status and others because they like the music or the social gathering. This is where, like in heterodox liberal theology, religion is seen as primarily communal or the soul responding to art. Gnosticism and some uncritical exemplarism is believed by some churchgoers.

Towler believes (after Hoggart) that exemplarism relates to the Scouts, the Boys Brigade and the Samaritans and is found in the common culture and the unchurched working class. But the working class is probably not exemplarist as Towler states but more superstitious and supernatural (see Bailey in Moss, 1986 and Bailey, 1986) (13).

#### 4. The Ministers

##### 4 (a). Introduction and Methodology

This next section relates individual viewpoints to the essences of the new

typologies of belief. Also of interest is that there are three ministers of one religion who contradict one another on many subjects. The result of this analysis should leave us with a developed basis for understanding mainstream belief.

Three ministers were chosen for theological discussion. One was well known for his Anglo-Catholic views. One was recommended to me by a fundamentalist Anglican minister. The third I knew to be liberal although this might not have been obvious to everyone else who knew him. My interrogative approach to all three was in order to achieve a sufficient depth of discussion and to get at what they individually mean by the trinitarian language that they all share. I interviewed the Methodist twice to get further depth.

At the time of the discussion with the Anglo-Catholic I was a heterodox liberal Anglican, and with the others I was a Unitarian. Because I knew that the liberal Methodist had views at only one stage removed from mine, my interrogation seemed all the harder.

In between the interviews, and indeed partly because of the first interview, he underwent a questioning of his own beliefs (particularly in God). This obviously had implications for his ministry. I warned him against taking the Cupitt road (if indeed he intended to consider it) and after an Anglican advised him to "go slowly" in his thinking he stabilised and recovered.

It is advisable to first read Appendix 1 which gives their theological views according to the discussions I had with them.

4 (b). Analysis and Categorisation of Individually Held Beliefs

4 (b) 1. The Liberal Methodist

There must be some doubt whether the liberal Methodist would have held the beliefs that he did if it was not for the doctrinal demands of the Church. He consistently struggled to convert a secular view of the world into a Christian view, and vice versa (Appendix 1, Subject 4, Discussion C); his upbringing in the Christian tradition but particularly his need to equate to what Thiselton called "standards of role performance" (Appendix 1, S.2, D.D) created a tension in belief. He was torn between the instability of his exemplarism and the required Christocentric-theism.

He believed in "a cause at the heart of the cosmos" (Appendix 1, S.1, D.B) but his Jesucentrism created a humanistic viewpoint: "Jesus, as someone said, was God's action." (S.1, D.D) Even a rather liberal view of God and prayer presented problems: his God could not hear, but talking (in prayer) was a required performance in order to have a relationship with God (S.1, D.E). When it came to what mattered most, it was ethics and values (S.1, D.C). His God had been demythologised, and such a God nearly does not exist.

He was obviously attached to Jesus (e.g., S.11, D.F) but the problem came with how to express it. It was obviously insufficient to focus upon his good humanity (S.2, D.B). The difficulties mounted when Jesus's limitations came to the fore about feminism, nuclear power and Central America (S.9, D.A) and the need to translate from his period to ours. Yet to cease to act via Jesus implied that the religion is given up leaving no values or ultimate truths (S.7, D.I). So the minister was in need of finding doctrine from somewhere. The one main piece of evidence was the breakout of the Church, it being

after the experience of the Cross (S.11, D.D; S.3, D.B). It gave supernatural support, but that was the guarantee he was so uncomfortable with. He wished that God works in the ordinary (S.3, D.B) yet was unwilling to allow any interpretation of events which allowed his God to work *in* the ordinary because he needed the guarantee of supernaturalism. He knew what St. Paul meant in his first letter to the Corinthians that if Christ is not raised then Christianity is in trouble (S.3, D.C) but this minister took his doubts with him because he wanted no solution in fundamentalism (S.7, D.I).

The Bible could be understood critically like a source book or detective story (S.5, D.C; S.5, D.D). His weakness was not there, but what he then made of the conclusions he came to, and that was in doctrine (e.g., S.2, D.C).

So with doctrine there was much ambiguity. The package was not knocked when parts of it were removed, but he tried to live without the package, and his was Jesus who was just his frame of reference (S.4, D.B).

The holder of doctrine, the Church, was not favourably viewed. It was the source of prejudice (S.12, D.B), the habitat of those who reminded him of prehistoric animals (S.7, D.H), and contained an anti-female element (S.9, D.A); it became institutionalised unlike, he believed, the early Church (S.5, D.D), and British ministers had the reputation of not being men's men as his profession seems to offer nothing to society (S.6, D.E). The churches should be a loving community, which he had himself experienced (S.8, D.C). But secularisation is a good thing (S.12, D.B) and helped the process of ecumenism (see also S.10, D.A) which offers promise for the future although it was quashed by the traditionalists.

On other religions the same ambiguities resurfaced. They have in them what Christ as shown and it is arrogant to say that Christianity has all the truth (S.11, D.B). His use of the word Christ was not accidental, and yet what he liked about other religions was their tolerance and liberality, *humanly* understood. But, of course, when he was pressed, the praised virtues (in theory) of Unitarianism (S.11, D.F) he would derive from Jesus rather than as independent values. Yet he had to give loyalty not just to Jesus but to Christianity, so when he found a woman believing in reincarnation he considered (perhaps flippantly) that this was in the Church too (S.11, D.E).

To summarise and make an assessment, what came across was a mild theism and a strong exemplarism and a realisation that he needed doctrine. He was similar to Maurice Wiles and The Remaking of Christian Doctrine (1973), where the language is kept despite objections to the meaning of its constituent parts. His Jesus viewpoint was similar to Cupitt's Jesus and the Gospel of God (1979), but he was unwilling to dispose of the 'Christ of doctrine' and replace it with the eschatological Jesus of faith. There were also some similarities with Michael Goulder in 1977 (except that Goulder was not prepared to have a "last ditch" miraculous Resurrection):

In many ways the things which I have said about Jesus might be acceptable to a humanist. Humanists also believe in the primacy of love, and an unprejudiced humanist might be prepared to see and admire Jesus as the prime historical source for the first full teaching of love, and its realization in an ongoing community. I have not, however, become a humanist, and my intention in using the phrase 'the man of universal destiny' is to safeguard the divine initiative in Jesus. (Hick, ed., 1977, p. 60)

Goulder's fate showed that the "last ditch" (p. 60) miracle has its uses!

An important point is that this particular Methodist minister did not come across as very Methodist (S.7, D.H). Here was new denominationalism in action. What was clear was his liberalism, illustrating the dangers of exemplarism.

However, the mild theism, the desire for the benefits of doctrine without the consequences and the inherited language shows that individuals for varying reasons will express a muddle of concepts which come from different belief types.

#### 4 (b) ii. The Anglo-Catholic

The Anglo-Catholic in comparison was quite clear about the nature of the Church in the transmission of faith, about exclusivity and doctrine. The Church is the the explicit instrument of God's will and Christ as His most perfect expression (S.1, D.A).

Jesus was no definer of God; rather God either factually took human form and redeemed our human nature in sacrifice or the Christian religion is based on nothing (S.2, D.E). The Bodily Resurrection is such an historical fact. It cannot be spoken about if the matter has not happened, and in this he was referring to spiritual interpretations (S.3, D.D). The Virgin Birth is the same: the undivided Church (as Christ himself) said it happened and put it in the Creeds, whatever modern critical techniques might say (S.4, D.A). If criticism is accepted then contrary statements should be cut out of the Creeds (although that would go against the undivided Church).

But here lies a problem. The Creeds refer to the Roman Catholic Church (S.8, D.B). Suddenly traditionalism has to have a particular interpretation. It is

the opinion of Anglo-Catholics (and this has to be more than an opinion otherwise the whole lot will come crashing down) that there is no supremacy in the structure of the Roman Catholic Church (including the Pope) (S.8, D.B). Anglican Catholics believe that the validity of the Church is to be found in apostolic succession, the Sacraments and the Catholic faith. However, it might justifiably be claimed that the Anglican Catholic is choosing validity on the grounds not accepted by others: in the Roman Catholic view Anglican apostolic succession is invalid (although the orthodox are more generous towards recognising Anglican orders). So Anglo-Catholic traditionalism has its own viewpoint, and is not even the total of Anglican tradition.

If the ordination of females went ahead then the Anglican Church would fail to be valid, he claimed (S.9, D.B). Men and women together would become ministers, and ministers lack the power of valid priests to enact the Mass. He would have to leave. Narrow definitions cause narrowly defined actions. It follows also that Methodist ministers are members of the laity (S.10, D.B).

Charismatic practices can be part of the Catholic Church but they are not particularly important (S.7, D.A). He judged American fundamentalism on the basis of political moral majority activities (S.7, D.B). Within the defined Catholic Church of England there was some interplay between High and Low Church but the liberals now have broken the shared faith and just cause the Established Church to pander to popular religion outside (S.7, D.C; (S.6, D.A).

With doctrine based on the Church, there is no need to be fundamentalist (S.5, D.B). Presumably the Church being Christ Incarnate itself decides the relevance of the texts.



Because Christianity makes specific claims about a historical person, it excludes other religions which are sub-Christian and misguided (S.11, D.A). So the Church protects true religion. It also should protect itself from secularisation and not respond by throwing out difficult doctrines (S.12, D.A). That people ignore the Church does not mean the faith is wrong in content or presentation (S.6, D.B).

For the liberal Methodist, the Church influenced belief by telling him what should be believed and thus influenced what he did believe. For the Anglo-Catholic the Church is the belief. It stands at the very centre of a super-theory of the history of the world. God planned to redeem human nature by becoming man in an incarnate fashion (S.2, D.E). The Church is the continuation of this, and so it can tell us the history. So the Creeds are paramount, order is important, and the Church using the Sacraments continues the work of redemption.

This is clearly similar to the veneration given by Graham Leonard in Firmly I Believe and Truly. The Anglican element is important for interpretation for both of them. This is why a continuing Church is a better prospect for these people than joining Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy. But the main desire is to avoid apostasy as in North America where according to this view Episcopalian Anglicans are now no more valid than the Episcopal Methodists.

The weakness of the Anglo-Catholic was that belief had to be grounded in an institution visible to humans. Given that the Church is divided, his certainty rested on manifest uncertainty. He justified his faith in a way that the Roman Catholic Church does not, and increasingly in a way that his own does

not. All institutional purity, narrow definitions of belief and stance, carry the danger of schism. In the end, by denying the plurality at the heart of the Anglican approach to Christianity, he made his position contradictory and inevitably the Church and his position is bound to fundamentally clash.

#### 4 (b) iii. The Conversionist Anglican

The Conversionist had essentially another primary source for belief. This was the Bible where, whilst not every word is true (it has the odd scribal error) it is inerrant in totality (Appendix 1, S.5, D.A). So he did not believe in evolution. For the Bible to be so true, it needs a God that can make it true. For example, God spoke to Moses and although he was human God made sure that what had to go in the Bible went in (also S.5, D.B). So, just as the Anglo-Catholic's Church tells essentially its own story, so does the Bible. Like a fixed circle God wrote in it that God can write in it.

Young Mary agreed to God's suggestion that she would have his child (S.4, D.D); Jesus, 100% God and 100% man, was raised from the tomb (S.3, D.A) and there were angels. Whatever it was God could do it all and did so (S.1, D.F).

God speaks now as at Pentecost through charismatic renewal (S.6, D.G). In some cultures today this happens more easily than others (S.12, D.C).

Whilst some primarily believe in charismatic renewal, which therefore legitimises Pentecost in the Bible, others say the Bible account of Pentecost authorises charismatic renewal. This conversionist took the latter view (S.6, D.G). This puts him in the fundamentalist sub-group. It also is an invented tradition seeking legitimacy from the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

But the charismatic element is necessary for the Church to be right (S.10, D.C). This is why teaching and worship must come from the bottom (S.7, D.F). The Church is therefore not seen like the traditionalist Catholic. (14)

The conversionist Anglican was strongly influenced by charismatics like John Wimber (S.12, D.C). He founded the Vineyard Fellowship (a charismatic movement in the United States), prophesied that David Watson would be healed from cancer by prayer (he was not) and helped Michael Harper with ACTS '86.

Whilst he certainly differed with traditionalists, particularly Catholics, on the subject of the Mass and the saints (S.7, D.D), his biggest difference was with the liberals, especially heterodox liberals (S.7, D.E). He once wanted to convert them and could not understand their strange logic (S.7, D.G). The main thing was that they should not again get into the leadership and yet he wanted no expulsions (S.7, D.F).

For liberals it depends on their relationship with Jesus (S.7, D.E), but Muslims (S.11, D.G), Hindus (S.11, D.J) and even Gandhi (S.11, D.I) are unsaved.

Whereas the liberal Methodist answered my points head-on, the conversionist refused, like with the Kingdom of God and the Resurrection (S.2, D.A; S.3, D.A). This indicated how he approached the Bible and what happens when other interpretations are made (S.4, D.D). It is not sheer dogmatism, but the fact that the belief type is based on more than just the Bible. One source is the Creeds (also S.4, D.D), one example of doctrine determining interpretation. His faith is part of a community and is thus institutionalised like the Anglo-Catholic, and whereas the liberal Methodist was aware of the interpretations

of liberals and the discovered bottom line, the conversionist was aware of what other conversionists do and have said (S.6, D.G)

But, furthermore, real people do not obey created typologies exactly. They are constructions for convenient use, and groups and individuals use a mixture of influences. In the issue of women the conversionist Anglican believed that the Bible prevents a woman from having the final say in decision making, although she can take the eucharist. He seemed to wish that this was otherwise (S.9, D.C). Yet closer analysis shows a Church influence. Free Churchmen deny that women are prevented from making final decisions and it is no issue for their fundamentalists that they do (15). They also deny the significance of an episcopate (as the conversionist probably would if still in a Free Church). Here we see the influence of the Anglican Church itself. In considering new denominationalism, such points about the old denominations need to be considered.

#### 4 (c). Assessment

The very style of the ministers' replies indicated something about their kind of religion. The Liberal Methodist engaged in real debate and swung between contradicting opinions (like with S.2, D.D; S.4, D.C). The conversionist spoke the language of the ordinary person, so the disciples themselves did not want to be "stuffed" on the Cross (S.3, D.A), the Gospels were true or "a load of codswallop" (S.3, D.A), and Mary said, "Yeah, I'll do anything you like" (S.4, D.D). He also expressed statements of dogma rather than debate. The Anglo-Catholic spoke in an ordered manner with rounded statements in a style showing the certainty of his opinions.

It would be difficult to classify these ministers according to the Church/denomination/sect typologies. If the Church is the most generalised of all types of institution within the scheme, then the conversionist and Anglo-Catholic make bad examples. Even to focus on the tradition of the Church is to find the conversionist within it preferring biblical and charismatic renewal. The denomination is further towards the sect, but the Methodist was the most liberal of all. The ministers themselves show the need to think in terms of new denominationalism.

All three can be classified according to the new belief typologies. But there is a ready reminder that such typologies are intellectual devices. Whilst the traditionalist most clearly fitted his ideal type there are individuals who mix elements more than he did. The liberal Methodist showed the difficulty of classifying someone who was heterodox but trying to be orthodox. The conversionist Anglican was a fundamentalist, although not by his own definition (S.5, D.A), and also charismatic within conversionism. But there were two elements (and possibly conflicting) of tradition within him: Anglican and beyond the mainstream.

To take account of this need to allow for varying influences in terms of actual believers a diagram exists in Appendix 3. A real believer may be anywhere on the triangle, like a traditionalist close to the outer boundary, a conversionist charismatic near the Protestant traditionalist sector and a heterodox liberal close to the orthodox liberal sector.

The influence of the Church is a significant factor in their belief. It relates the believer to the community, however they define the community. It

also relates them in one manner or another to the outside religious cultural environment, and this is the subject of later chapters.

#### 5. Overall Summary

This chapter has been engaged on a task of recreating the typologies of mainstream institutional Christianity. The Church/denomination/sect typologies were found to have lacked sufficient explanatory value. Robert Towler's categories were a starting point but the literature allowed for consideration of the influence of the Church. Three ministers of religion provided support for the new typologies with a reminder of the nature of ideal types.

These are *Traditionalism* (various, some incorporating Protestant fundamentalism), *Conversionism* (Protestant and Catholic charismatic, evangelical, fundamentalist), *Orthodox Liberalism* (Christocentric theism) and *Heterodox Liberalism* (theism, exemplarism with critical spirituality, and gnosticism).

These beliefs relate to the internal community, but they also relate to the community outside the Church. The question is how beliefs exist outside the direct influence of the Church and therefore how the Church relates to its surrounding environment.

PART II (cont.) THE FAITH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

CHAPTER 4

The Religious Cultural Environment

1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the religious cultural environment within which the churches have to work. Peter Berger's views on secularisation and the response of Christianity (1967, 1971) introduces the importance of the topic and the theoretical debate about secularisation/pluralism. A practical approach is then used by which to view the response of the Churches.

2. The Importance of the Secularisation Debate

2 (a) Introduction

In two essays Peter Berger shows how sociology can be used to understand theological change. These are 'A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology' (1967) and his 'A Call for Action in the Christian Community' (1971), both reprinted within his Facing Upto Modernity (1977).

2 (b). 'A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology' (1967)

The first essay represents his 1960's opinion of the thoroughness of secularisation and the response of theologians. Most extreme of all, 'secular theologians' were using the language of existentialism and psychology and giving up the internal validity of their tradition. Berger called this "deobjectivation", being the disintegration of its plausibility structure. But some radical theologians, like Bultmann (1) misunderstood the processes at work:

...what equally cries out for explanation is the fact that Bultmann, and with him the entire movement, takes for granted the epistemological superiority of the electricity and radio users over the New Testament writers to the point where the theoretical possibility that there may be a nonscientific reality that has been lost to modern man is not even considered. In other words, secularized consciousness is taken for granted, not just as an empirical datum but as an unquestioned standard of cognitive validity...

It is at this point that a sociology of knowledge perspective begins to be useful... Just as the religious tradition was grounded in such a specific infrastructure, so also are the ideas employed to relativize the tradition. The general blindness of the relativizing theologians to the relativity of their own debunking points directly to the need for analyzing the infrastructure of their ideas. (Berger, 1977, pp. 211-212)

Given the internal validity of this argument (2), the sociology of knowledge links secularisation and new denominationalism. So Berger offers three theological responses. The secular theologian is not the same as the more moderate liberal:

The more moderate liberal position may be characterised as a bargaining procedure with secularized consciousness: 'We'll give you the Virgin Birth, but we'll keep the Resurrection'; 'You can have the Jesus of history, but we'll hold on to the Christ of the apostolic faith'; and so on. The secular theology disdains such negotiation. It surrenders all. Indeed, it goes farther in the abandonment of the tradition than most people who do not identify themselves with it. (Berger, 1977, p. 221)

Against this the conservative tries to rebuild a sectarian plausibility structure to avoid the built-in escalation factor where the tradition collapses from within (p. 219-220).

The fierce opposition to concessions of even a minor sort may thus be said to rest on a rather sound sociological instinct, which is frequently absent in their more 'open minded' opponents. (p. 220)



The outcome of Chapter 3 could be seen in these terms. Orthodox liberalism is the 'trading position' which gives and takes. Heterodox liberalism is that where the escalation principle is at work and where doctrinal protection has been lost. The traditionalist and conversionist systems are those which do not give an inch to modern consciousness and have formed sectarian systems.

However, before it can be thought that the new theological categories and therefore the decline in the Church/denomination/sect continuum is linked to secularisation through the sociology of knowledge, it is worth finding out why by 1971 Berger had changed his mind.

2 (c). 'A Call for Action in the Christian Community' (1971)

Berger admits in a theological essay written for The Christian Century that the thoroughgoing nature of secularisation did not come about:

Where some of us (myself included) may have erred, however, is in projecting the indefinite continuation of present trends into the future. Not only was this projection logically unwarranted, but there is increasing positive evidence against it. (Berger, 1977, p. 234)

Indeed, as also was evident, theology was not abandoned for other means of expression. Berger himself admitted this:

...I think I understand rather well the processes by which secularisation has undermined firm religious belief in recent history and has brought about a profound crisis of credibility for the Judaeo-Christian tradition in the West. Yet... the situation in which the Christian community finds itself today is more favourable to a regaining of confidence than the situation of only a few years ago. Then it seemed that the religious tradition was put in question by the massive certitudes of the modern world; today very few of these certitudes have escaped credibility crises of their own. (p. 237)

Thus we are moving to an age of potential faith, a resurgence of the old culture and a point where the Churches can proclaim.

..the time may have come for a simple but profoundly liberating insight, namely that we may have known more and better than we gave ourselves credit for. (p. 237)

This rather leaves a question whether conversionism, traditionalism, orthodox liberalism and heterodox liberalism has a sociological basis in secularisation after all!

In any case it is not clear if he is proposing a reversal of objective secularisation that allows objective religion to resurge, or that because everything else has also been subject to relativity religion can fill the vacuum. If it is the former then secularisation has been a linear process; if it is the latter then secularisation is at the least a complex process. This is the heart of the theoretical debate tackled below. Such confusion must be sorted out before any relationship to Christian institutions can be made, and indeed this approach may not be very satisfactory when trying to link the Churches to their environment.

### 3. Secularisation or Otherwise

#### 3 (a). Basis of the Discussion

This section asks whether the terminology of secularisation, used in both sociological and theological circles, is adequate.

The starting point of this discussion is to realise what secularisation or otherwise involves within ordinary living:

Only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of 'ideas', and the construction of *Weltanschauungen*. But everyone participates in its knowledge in one way or another. Put differently, only a few are concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the world, but everybody lives in a world of some sort. (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 27)

The question is whether that world has changed. Such questions can be tackled by models.

3 (b). A Basic Model of Change: From Tradition to Modernity

3 (b) 1. The Model

Both theologians and sociologists have looked into secularisation (see Gill, 1975, 1977). Don Cupitt, a theologian and philosopher, sees an overall change from tradition to modernity. He uses four titles: Cosmology, knowledge, social institutions and the self. (Cupitt, 1980, pp. 17-19).

About *Cosmology* he states:

In the old cosmology the universe was very complex and populous. It was like a very rich literary text, full of hidden symbolism. Values, purposes, omens, portants, occult forces and meanings abounded in everything. (p. 17)

The individual had to fit individually and socially into this order of meanings because the social order was thought to be a reflection of the heavenly order (p. 17).

However, modernity is quite different. Now the world is religiously and morally neutral and without magic. Art, science, morality and religion are all separated territories in a complex world. (p. 18)

About *knowledge* he claims:

In the old order 'knowledge' meant pre-eminently a fixed body of sacred traditional material which it was vital to keep intact, and the communion of the divine which was to be had through it. (p. 18)

The mind was not autonomous because God and tradition presented a saving truth. But in modernity the mind became autonomous. Modern knowledge:

...is man made, critically established, unmysterious, ever expanding and ever subject to continual revision. (p. 18)

*Social institutions* have also gone through a major change:

In traditional society these institutions - language, the family, the moral and social order, ritual, kingship and so on are thought of as divinely ordained. But in modern society they come to be thought of as all of them products of history, man made and subject to continuous development and modification in order to keep pace with social change. (pp. 18-19)

In traditional society *the self* followed a pre-laid path through life. Everything was ready-made (p. 19). But the modern person:

...wants to define himself, to posit and pursue his own goals and choose for himself what to make of himself. (p. 19)

### 3 (b) ii. Criticism of the Model

This explanation of change clearly states typological opposites but in so doing perhaps the change is overstated. Much in traditional society exists today and features of modernity were present before.

Cosmology in traditional society functioned to create an explanation of meaning and provide some security in a harsh world. But today there is still folk religion and even intellectuals dedicate their lives within explanation packages in the search for a sense of overall meaning.

In terms of knowledge, everything in the past was not simply given. It included some questioning of belief otherwise we would never have changed! Yet still today a great deal is not known but believed. Also there is little functional difference between consensual scientific views which change from time to time and the old consensual religious views.

Social institutions may once have been divinely instituted but those who exercised power within them were certainly aware of their humanity. Today human institutions can give the feeling of deterministic forces (political, social, economic) so that there is little sense of freedom from a set path.

It is a feature of simple explanations that they become too extreme. As ideal types Cupitt's explanation would explain something of the key features of traditional society and modernity, but the danger is in taking them as full reality. This problem is precisely what happened in the 1960's debate on secularisation, which is discussed next.

### 3 (c). Secularism and Secularisation

#### 3 (c) 1. Secularism

The 'theology' of the early secularists is a starting point for analysing secularisation. Secularism was founded on opposition to the authority and social position of Christianity and attacked its beliefs. Six positions of

secularism were contained in Holyoake's The Principles and Aims ...of the Central Secular Society (see Fallding, 1974, p. 218) (3)

- 1) Science is the sole providence of man.
- 2) Morals are independent of Christianity.
- 2) Man should trust reason and nothing else.
- 4) Universal, fair and open discussion is the highest guarantee of public truth.
- 5) In a utilitarian way there should be the fullest liberty of thought and action for every person.
- 6) Inequalities in this world should be put right in this world rather than worshipping the supernatural to correct inequalities in the after-life. The fortunate should enlighten the ignorant and badly off.

### 3 (c) 11. Approaches to Secularisation

Some views of secularisation are close to the aims of the Central Secular Society and involve a linear (Weberian) process where religion eventually has no further claim on society. This approach suggests that religion is dying because it was a social phenomena of the past.

A similar linear view of secularisation suggests that decline of the social compulsiveness and legitimating function of religion means instead that society is liberating itself and at the same time religion is being liberated and becomes challenging again.

A third view sees secularisation as an infusing of religious values into society, that in developed civilised societies the sacred and the profane become blurred (and is the basis of civil religion). (Durkheim, 1965, p. 250)

Radical and liberal theologians have often taken a linear view. But even a phrase like 'religionless Christianity' envisaged the renewal of Christianity. Bonhoeffer himself in the 1940's stated that still:

We live, in some degree, on these so-called ultimate questions of humanity. (Tinsley, 1973, p. 82)

But he suggested that intellectuals, degenerates, and the pedlars of 'the secularised offshoots of Christian theology' busy themselves with themselves over these matters whilst:

...the ordinary man, who spends his everyday life at work and with his family, and of course with all kinds of diversions, is not affected. He has neither the time nor the inclination to concern himself with his existential despair, or to regard his perhaps modest share of happiness as a trial, a trouble or a calamity. (Tinsley, 1973, p. 82)

Others have taken a similar view. John Robinson (1962, 1965) contrasted secularisation with secularism using a mixture of Bonhoeffer, Tillich and Bultmann. In the 1960's the debate involved a kind of one-upmanship. Harvey Cox intended to create an American best seller like Honest to God which meant that it had to be yet more radical. In his The Secular City (1965) the Tillichian approach was seen as definitely transitory. Cox proposed that the secular I-you relationship (as opposed to Buber's I-thou relationship) was the real essence of the new urbanised religionless Christianity.

Such theologies seemed to enjoy the self-destruction of religion, but given that that they still proposed the continuance of (presumably not degenerate) Christian communities the logic seems to be that of Alice in Wonderland.

Later on theology moved away from discussing secularisation: John Robinson became more conservative (1980) and his Truth is Two Eyed (1979), following Cox's about-turn with Turning East (1977), showed how fashions change. This reversal mirrored that of Peter Berger above. Other sociologists like Bryan Wilson also saw the limitations in this view of secularisation.

The secular society does not appear to depend in any direct way on the maintenance of religious thinking, practices or institutions. ...religionists have increasingly tended to describe religion as an individual matter, and a personal matter. (Wilson, 1966, pp. 228-9)

The secular society of the present, in which religious thinking, practices and institutions have but a small part is none the less the inheritor of values, dispositions and orientations from the religious past. The completely secular society has not yet existed. (pp. 233)

Such views create space for those who would say that almost *nothing* had been happening! David Martin insisted that the British remained religious and superstitious. He saw secularisation as largely non-existent. The real problem was the institutional history of the Church:

I challenged the notion of secularisation, especially in terms of any increase in generalised scepticism. I suggested that our society remains deeply imbued with every type of superstition and metaphysic. I further argued that the crucial division in either belief or morals is not necessarily between practicing Christians and the rest. It followed that the contemporary difficulties of institutional Christianity have little to do with moral and intellectual crisis. (Martin, 1969, p. 113)

3 (d). Complexity, Secularisation, Pluralism and Confusion

3 (d) 1. Introduction

Richard K. Fenn and Larry Shiner have called for a more complex approach to the subject.



3 (d) 11. Richard Fenn (1978)

Fenn in Towards a Theory of Secularisation (1978) analyses conflicting Weberian and Durkheimian based approaches to the term "secularisation". It intensifies the need to choose religion (Greely, 1972) and religious groups come to demand the freedom of the secular state (Dawson, 1958), but also there is the existence of religious values in wider social activities (Cox, 1965; Goffman, 1961; and Wills, 1971). Fenn states this:

The contradiction between these two sociological perspectives, I am arguing, is fruitful precisely because it reflects real and conflicting aspects of social life. Some would argue that the lack of agreement on concepts and methodology makes disagreements over secularisation as fruitless as they are inevitable (Martin 1969). But here it is important to recognise that an adequate theory of of secularisation will articulate rather than remove the contradictions... (Fenn, 1978, p. 27)

Fenn's more complex approach sees no one pattern in secularisation:

We must therefore be prepared to see the process of secularisation in complex patterns: as a cause as well as an effect of religious groups, movements and institutions; as proceeding according to a variable sequence of events and leading toward no single outcome; and as involving a number of reversals and simultaneous but contradictory developments at different levels of a single society. (Fenn, 1978, p. 29)

Fenn sees these (summarised) elements in the processes of secularisation:

- 1) The separation of distinct religious institutions.
- 2) A demand for the clarification of the boundary between religious and secular issues.
- 3) The development of generalized beliefs and values that transcend the potential conflict between the larger society and its component parts: that is the need for a basis of consensus (civic religion as in Bellah, 1967).

4) A rise in deviant beliefs and, in the face of civic religion, an ambiguity in claims to protect religious minorities by asserting the boundary between secular state and religious group, especially when the group challenges consensual values.

5) A separation of corporate and religious values through differentiation and specialisation. Religiously he suggests a difference between the Catholic (corporate) and Protestant (individualist) groups, the magical groups which limit the sacred and the issues which involve the sacred, and the sects which do the same. (Fenn, 1978, pp. 32-40)

His is an American viewpoint of secularisation involving religion and the state. In the English situation there is the complication where the Church of England represents something of both civil religion and the religion of the committed member (4).

Despite accounting for the conflict of approach in sociology, Fenn's approach is quite narrow, being focussed at the social and state level and that of the group. Secularisation also needs analysis at the level of bureaucracy, technology, science, relativist belief, humanism and other faiths.

### 3 (d) iii. Larry Shiner (1967)

Larry Shiner in 'The Concept of Secularisation in Empirical Research', in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. (Vol. 6, 1967, pp. 207-20), put further stress on complexity and did not attempt to come to an overall view but listed six approaches and problems of secularisation:

1) The decline of the influence of religious doctrines and symbols in society. (Yinger, 1957) The problem is in finding the former genuinely religious age.

2) Society at large and religious groups become less supernaturally concerned and more this worldly so that both become pragmatic (Pfautz, 1956; Herberg, 1955). The problem is that this is ambiguous

in measurement. The concern of a religious group with this world may only involve a shift of emphasis in its tradition.

3) The disengagement of society from religion leaves religion to the uninfluential specialised group (Arendt, 1963; Mehl, 1966; Galanter, 1965; Parsons, 1963; Bellah, 1964; Smith, 1963; given as examples). But this is evidence of secularism not secularisation, where religious groups are denied a political role in society. A more complex approach to this comes from Parsons (1963) and Bellah (1964) as in differentiation.

4) Society takes over functions carried out by religious institutions and pseudo-religions develop (as Marxism) (Klempf, 1960; Troeltsch, 1922 and 1958). There may be a similar function but no direct connection between religious beliefs and new ideologies. The state itself does not causally inherit the tasks once done by religious institutions.

5) Man becomes rationally orientated in a desacralized world where the supernatural and the mysterious play no part, as in Weber's disenchantment (Weber, 1948; Meland, 1966). The problem is that religions themselves desacralize the world and thus this aspect of secularisation needs qualification.

6) The sacred society becomes a secular society (Becker, 1957, 1964; Meland, 1966). Rational and utilitarian considerations take over. This involves a movement away from long established social habits (Meland, 1963) and is thus quite vast to consider. (5)

Each approach to secularisation (and there is much overlapping) involves difficulty both conceptually and in terms of measurement. The end result is a confusion of approaches including the problem of how much this is seen as a Christian based phenomenon. Larry Shiner concludes that secularisation as a term has been over used and should be dropped in favour of terminology like 'transposition' and 'differentiation'.

### 3 (e). Pluralism

Perhaps 'pluralism' helps the debate. Both Britain and America now share a multiplicity of religious institutions and 'pluralism' might be a better way to discuss the environment in which the Churches are a part.

Christian leaders and theologians lament the disunity of Christianity (although they may welcome aspects of its plurality) usually on two grounds. One is the "scandal" that the Body of Christ is divided and the other is that it practically makes evangelisation of outsiders much harder to achieve. The sociology of knowledge perspective on the problem is given here:

Subjectively, the man in the street tends to be uncertain about religious matters. Objectively, the man in the street is confronted with a wide variety of religious and other reality defining agencies that compete for his allegiance or at least attention, and none of which is in a position to coerce him into allegiance. In other words the phenomenon called 'pluralism' is a social-structural correlate of the secularization of consciousness. (Berger, 1969, p. 126)

So the argument goes that the multiplicity of religious institutions are not just affected by 'secularised consciousness' but that the history of Christianity and its various competitors have contributed to it.

This plurality of institutions can be historically traced in England. Other than inherited paganism, there was first *one religion and one Church* which institutionalised one plausibility structure of belief. At the Reformation, with European Lutheran, Calvinist and Anabaptist elements coming into the new Reformed denominations, there became *one religion and many Churches*. Paradoxically, until about 1850 Church allegiance was growing in numbers and between then and 1880 it was stable (Cox, 1982, pp. 272-3). Urbanisation had removed the *raison-d'être* for rural based pagan attitudes so that a more rationalistic Reformed Christianity and pagan substitute Catholicism had the field to themselves. The Labour Movement created an alternative meaning system and a general religious apathy grew. Increased world communications and the immigration of people led to the existence of *many religions and*

*many groupings* and now there is religious pluralism with freedom of belief and non-belief.

So the question is whether Berger's analysis is correct and consciousness is affected. Such analysis needs to be compared with evidence of belief and whether the pluralism available matters to most people.

### 3 (f). Conclusion

The theoretical approaches to secularisation are conflictual and and there is a need to return to the evidence. There is an interesting quote from Don Cupitt relating to this matter, and the reader should replace the word morality by the words secularisation and pluralism.

That morality is in various ways in a mess, I am not denying. But the apologist for morality usually claims that the mess is at the level of practice and particular judgements, and all will be put right if we will but buy his theory; whereas the case is surely rather that matters are relatively clearer at the level of practice and particular judgements, and it is at the level of theory that anarchy prevails. It is at the level of *theory* that we are utterly confused and bored by a plethora of blind alleys, illusions, broken-down ideas that have become a burden to us, and false styles of argument. (Cupitt, 1987, p. 38)

Of course explanations are needed, and the purpose of looking for evidence is to find one.

## 4. Practical Approaches to the Problem of Secularisation

### 4 (a). Evidence of Belief and Churchgoing

The provisional Survey of Church and People on Longhill Estate (Forster, November 1986; March 1987; June 1987) illustrates popular belief on a 1950's

(in origin) low rise working class council estate of about 5000 people on the outskirts of Hull (6), where the Anglican church is well sited and all others are peripheral or off the estate. Christenings were practically universal but then commitment dropped:

	Total	17-30	31-60	61 up
confirmed:	32.4	12.8	30.9	47.1
confirmed Church of England:	20.3	....	....	....
not confirmed:	61.3	69.2	66.0	51.5
never now attend church:	66.2	79.4	55.7	73.5
attend weekly or more:	4.9	....	....	....
monthly:	1.9	....	....	....
less often:	22.2	....	....	....
once attended more often:	73.9	51.3	79.4	79.4
did not attend more often:	20.3	46.2	16.5	10.3
Sunday School All children go/went:	54.1	11.8	51.6	70.0
Some go/went:	12.9	....	19.4	6.7
None go/went:	27.1	76.5	23.7	18.3

Despite these figures, over three quarters called themselves 'Church of England'. Basically this means that the available pluralism of religious institutions is unimportant. The question remains about secularisation and the nature of belief given the low contact rates with church rites and doctrines, and with the dramatic decline in the Sunday School figures.

	Total	17-30	31-60	61 up
consider self religious:	47.3	17.9	49.5	61.8
consider self not religious	44.0	79.5	41.2	27.9

More people, nearly 60%, believe some kind of God exists, including a third of younger people:

	Total	17-30	31-60	61 up
personal God, listens to prayers:	40.1	17.9	41.2	51.5
God as depth to life:	18.4	15.4	20.6	17.6
have prayed privately:	52.7	23.1	59.8	60.3
no private prayer:	42.0	69.2	36.1	35.3
God not asked about everyday decisions:	36.7	30.8	40.2	36.8
God asked about everyday decisions:	26.6	10.3	29.9	30.9

The interesting figures are for specific Christian beliefs for the extent to which they are maintained.

	Total	17-30	31-60	61 up
Jesus only son of God:	48.8	41.0	49.5	54.4
Jesus a good man who believed in God:	24.2	17.9	27.2	22.2
Jesus a leader like others of faiths:	11.1	12.8	7.2	16.2
Bible dictated by God:	14.5	15.4	14.4	14.7
Bible inspired by God:	33.3	17.9	33.0	42.6
Bible about God, may not be right:	30.9	30.7	35.1	23.5
Bible literature, and fairy stories:	17.4	30.6	12.3	17.7
Christianity truest (for children):	56.0	38.5	51.5	73.5
Christianity truest (adults):	31.4	10.2	27.8	48.5
Christianity as true as any other:	49.3	46.2	56.7	41.2
Christianity unimportant:	10.1	23.1	9.1	4.4

So, nearly half, including two fifths of younger people, think Jesus was the only son of God. Approaching half give the Bible a large even fundamentalist level of inspiration, being true for a third of young people. Only one tenth and under a quarter of younger people think Christianity is unimportant. However, many think Christianity is connected with teaching and discipline.

Other figures indicate that about one quarter think it unlucky to walk under a ladder and believe in ghosts, a fifth in reincarnation and one sixth in

unlucky 13, fortune telling and horoscopes. Belief in ghosts rises with age, the opposite with fortune telling.

Christian beliefs are quite high on Jesus, the Bible and the truth of Christianity despite continued church contact being so low. The crucial variable is the recent development with Sunday school: the figures suggest that not to go was deviant for one generation and now it is deviant to go. Peter Forster suggests that the secularisation theses are the most relevant:

No matter what the criterion used, the 17-30s nearly always turn out to be less religious than their elders.

This does not necessarily lead to outright secularism. Rather, the church seems increasingly to be viewed as a 'voluntary' organisation. Younger estate dwellers are not necessarily sceptical of Christianity as such; but they are certainly likely to object to any exclusive or mandatory claims that are likely to be made. (Forster, June 1987, p. 24)

If 'secularisation' is accepted as the process at work in the age ranges, then the problem returns as to which secularisation is happening:

None the less, the church is still seen as part of the overall culture of the English people; and it can be called upon for certain purposes, especially for rites of passage. (Forster, June 1987, p. 27)

Upto now Christian believing has not been fully dependent on continued churchgoing. But with the Sunday School turnaround little to no *initial* contact will reduce knowledge of church rituals and this is bound to cut the affiliation with doctrinally determined belief labels. But some labels and National Church allegiance may still be claimed and cultural religion may continue. The focus must shift to how and why this situation came about.



#### 4 (b). The Rise and Fall of Organised Christianity

##### 4 (b) i. Introduction

The success of the churches in the Victorian era was against the background of a population rising even faster. Later, the numbers of churchgoers fell. Analysis is concerned with the relationship this shows between the Church and its environment.

##### 4 (b) ii. The Weaknesses in the Rise of Christianity

In the late nineteenth century relative prosperity allowed greater time and space for religion (Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on U.P.A.s, 1985, p. 29) but still the working class mainly stayed away from churches. They reacted against its class inequalities, to mixing with other classes, and because they had neither the time nor the inclination for organised religion.

There were points of contact. E. P. Thompson (1968), taking further the Halévy thesis (see Hill, 1973, pp. 183-203), argues that religion was used by employers as a form of discipline and indoctrination. He has been accused of inventing a fictional Methodism due to his own Marxist bias (Kent, 1987, pp. 114-116). Hobsbawm instead (1964) states that Methodism and radicalism had much in common with the Sunday School a place of education, although this gave rise to working class respectability. Non-conformity, according to McLeod, expressed and legitimated the independence of the craftsman and domestic workers (1984, p. 22) and in this way found its niche in urban life.

It is common ground that chapels sprang up where the Established churches were weak: in new communities without their own parish church, in outlying hamlets, in working class neighbourhoods of cities. (McLeod, 1984, p. 22)

The Anglican Church did have some infrequent areas of success:

Evangelicals and Anglo-catholics succeeded in establishing some flourishing parishes in working class areas of later Victorian cities. The one point that all the well-attended churches had in common was that they all had big programmes of weekday activities, and used large teams of lay volunteers. (Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on U.P.A.s, 1985, p. 30)

On the whole, however, churches were middle class. They gave vent to their demand for morality within the chaos of the city. Certain churches provided practical means of concern for social welfare and leisure and a sense of community in the disparate nature of urban life. A strong outer ring of church leisure activity created a large inner circle of worshipping activity.

What was true for the Anglican Church was true for Free Churches, and becoming community centres lay them open to competition from other quarters:

Through boxing clubs, saving schemes, sewing circles, debating societies, mothers meetings and so on, the Church was to some degree in touch with a wide section of the population. But it was very vulnerable to the effects of the growth of the welfare state and of the leisure industry in the early twentieth century. (Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on U.P.A.s, 1985, pp. 30-1)

This was the soft underbelly. Churches became strong in Victorian days (McLeod, 1984, p. 64) but on a different basis to the parish church (p. 36). Being based on leisure and welfare meant that between 1880 and 1930 there was increased competition from the government (pp. 65-6) and growing private affluence. Churches therefore held little compulsion for the middle class and better off sections of the working class to meet. With the outer circle in decline the support for the habit of church worship fell away.

The argument has to be taken further. At this point mention can also be made of the First World War which did much to cripple the spirit of optimism on which much of non-conformity (in particular) had become based. Eventually, decades later, churches mainly catered for the rites of passage only.

#### 4 (b) iii. The Decline in Churchgoing

Is this a basis of argument for secularisation? Jeffrey Cox (1982) says no because it happened for particularly British/European based reasons. He looks at how functional differentiation affected the Church particularly in the English situation.

The shrinkage in all denominations from 1905 and 1910 (pp. 272-3) allowed a particular view of secularisation to develop:

Many people would have believed that Christianity was irrelevant even if the churches had been thriving; many Americans, especially intellectuals, are astonished to discover the facts about the pervasiveness of the churches and the Christian faith in America. But in England it was the actual collapse of the churches which allowed the complete triumph of the argument that religion is something which belongs to another age. (Cox, 1982, p. 276)

He is against the package called secularisation and the air of inevitability associated with this form of thinking.

I am not disputing the fact that our view of the world, our cosmology, has been transformed by scientific advances since the Reformation, a fact which poses new and unique problems for Christian thinkers. Nor am I asserting the advent of heavy industry, the polarization of society along class lines, the growth of cities, and geographical and social mobility do not, other things being equal, cause new problems for the churches which can, and often do, contribute to a decline of religious practice.

What I object to is the air of inevitability which results from wrapping up all of these changes into a package called the 'process of secularisation' and using that package as an explanation of social change in the modern world. My objection to that concept is based on an examination of the facts. The social changes involved in secularisation do not invariably and inevitably lead to the decay of religious ideas and institutions. (p. 226)

In the footnotes he wonders about the effect of a free market in religion in pre-modern society:

Some religions and some churches would grow and others would decline; religion would be more important in some places than others. (p. 266 footnotes)

Perhaps the problem is not really inevitability: little is effectively predicted in sociology. The problem rather is in the meaning of the word secularisation and if the word can be used for a situation of growth (for example, of conversionism) and decline. He uses functional differentiation. For over a millenium Christendom and 'Compulsory Christianity' was false, as demonstrated by schism and monasticism whenever control was relaxed. British churches failed to adapt to the end of Christendom, and when they lost their welfare and leisure functions they were left with little to do. Looking at the situation in Lambeth in London he concludes:

In sociological jargon, it was a process of functional differentiation, but it is important to remember that this change was not a global transformation which reduced the importance of religion everywhere in the world. It was a particularly British transformation which reduced the importance of Lambeth's churches only because they had chosen to invest so heavily in philanthropy as they competed for influence in Victorian society. In a different context 'functional differentiation' might even strengthen the churches. (pp. 273-4)

It is a plausible practical view that something unique happened in Britain, but American churches also invested in leisure and welfare and they did not collapse. So there needs to be at least another factor.

One factor is the private culture of the British (as compared with North Americans). Here it is less important to be 'seen' in terms of status. Then there is the class structure itself which in Britain was based on a rigid aristocratic inheritance unlike in America. Thus, here, church activity was associated with class, and 'charity' acquired a negative image. Also, American religion was not to the same extent affected by the First World War.

The problem with functional differentiation is that like secularisation it does not offer a sufficient picture of mass religion today. It does not say why people did not transfer allegiance to other religious institutions. It seems that people relate to churches for the rites of passage and wish for no more. The question is one of what does replace the churches.

#### 4 (c). Implicit Religion

##### 4 (c) i. Introduction

The survey evidence and Cox's argument allows for the existence of a civil religion (a more Durkheimian perspective) where Church decline caused by specific factors changes the nature by which a common religious base exists.

##### 4 (c) ii. The Popular Belief Structure Containing Christian Labels

Edward Bailey and the Network for the Study of Implicit Religion claims that there is in fact a widespread popular belief connected with Christianity. It is asserted (1977; in Moss, 1986; and ed., 1986) that people do not primarily

believe in God, Jesus or the Church but in 'Christianity' (a popularised version of the apostolic faith). (7)

This is the religion of the national cultural inheritance, and as such has a theology of its own. Bailey suggests that it is not that of Christianity but Hinduism (which has specific consequences for the use made of Christian institutions). Christ is the cultural figure similar to Krishna.

Mention of the self as the ultimate manifestation of sacredness within 'Christianity's' universe may sound more like a form of Hinduism than Christianity, at least as the Church has conceived it. ...Certainly there is a great gulf between the faith of the people, and the official, if not conventional, faith of the Church. (Bailey in Moss, 1986, p. 186)

...most of those who follow this creed describe themselves as believing in Christianity, rather than in Christ. In the last analysis, his historicity is comparable to that of Krishna: he is of cultural not cosmic significance. (p. 183)

The parallel with Hinduism is not quite accurate because Hinduism (why not Shintoism?) is socially active whereas implicit Christianity is not. Secondly, implicit Christianity has inherited the language of official Christianity into its concepts and so is not as all-embracing as Hinduism. But Christianity as a saving redeeming faith is turned into a faith of the round of life.

In this context the local parish church can be seen as as the local temple for the rites of passage. Bailey himself suggests that baptism is an entry into the human race and a superstitious act to ensure all will be "alright". It lets the child be a member of the Church so he will be able to make his mind up when older (p. 180). Bruce Reed (1978) theologically suggests that the surface features of Christianity are preferred to its deeper meaning.

The Hindu-like structure also helps to explain the presence of other beliefs like reincarnation and horoscopes. Secularisation (in the rational sense) is just one aspect of popular belief, humanism joining in with the multiplicity of personal beliefs. Evolution, for example, is one belief amongst others. This mix is expressive too of the British culture of moderation in all things. But the norm of propriety is very important within the cultural religion of the British, and the norm is not to regularly go to church.

None of this is particularly new. Rural religion, tuned to the environment, the risks of rearing children and avoiding pain in the afterlife, always was at some variance with the received doctrines of institutional Christianity. Industrialisation broke the back of ancient pagan belief and the churches were able to succeed, but when they declined they left a pale implicit religion of pagan roots and Christian labels where church symbolic expression now relates to few occasions in life.

Perhaps 'religion' today also includes the watching of soap operas on television and participating in social groups which frame a meaning for one's life. Ornithologist groups or Civil War societies (to name two of so many) provide worlds of meaning for individuals and groups. (8)

Christian labels are the cultural way to describe religious feeling and belief, and 'implicit religion' gives a better picture of the situation than terms like secularisation or pluralism.

#### 4 (c) iii. Implicit Religion and Communal Identity

Implicit religion is not pluralist because it has the function of giving

identity. This is the continued strength of the Church of England label. Indeed, the trend may be to move back effectively to one Church, like a nationalised industry, although only on the basis of implicit religion. Free Churches and Roman Catholicism are distinctly second class: it is the popular image of Church of England and its ritual which contributes to a cultural identity giving a new meaning to this statement (using my italics):

..this [cultural 'Christianity'] is one kind of Christianity; as village Hinduism is one kind of Hinduism; and as *ecclesiastical* Christianity, and philosophical Hinduism, are other kinds. (Bailey in Moss, 1986, p. 187)

So Christian doctrines are similarly used for the purposes of the identity of the population:

Christ is a phenomenon of this culture: his superiority is tied to its superiority. (Bailey in Moss, 1986, p. 184)

This was shown in the Dewsbury schools controversy. Parents refused to send their children to the Headfield Church of England (!) School because they believed that it was predominantly Muslim. They demanded a Christian culture which existed (they thought) within Overthorpe School. The parents were not supported by the Church, and they had no idea that religious education considers all faiths and none in every school in their area. What mattered was cultural 'Christianity', an identity of being culturally British which excludes those who are of another culture and "only live" in Britain.

Whatever will be the precise content of the 'Christianity' believed in, this religion as an agent of identity is a popular (if moderate) force, as with



religion in nationalistic disputes all around the world. (9) John Kent offers this on the subject:

...there still may remain sources of human feeling which do not simply reflect changes in social structures but manipulate them: it is highly implausible, for example, to argue that all forms of nationalism, the most powerful emotional imperative of the last two centuries, can be explained by saying that the secret of nationalist history is social history. Whether such sources of emotion are full of grace and truth is another matter. (Kent, 1987, p. 12)

#### 4 (c) iv. Intellectual Pluralism

The suggestion is that intellectual element of common belief is somewhat lacking. However, critical intellectuals also live in meaning-giving worlds, and these provide something of the function of religion: providing loyalty, understanding, contemplation, compassion and even celebration or despair of the nature of the world lived in. It is not that intellectual perspectives and pursuits intend to be a substitute religions, but they perform something of that function amongst various adherents.

The common linkage between intellectual views is the overall pluralist and humanist perspective. This is different from the nature of ordinary belief. The incorporation of some humanism into ordinary popular belief would suggest that the 'experts' of today now include those in institutions of education as well as clergymen. There is a new social 'great tradition' in almost the sense that Robert Redfield described it, where a conscious cultivated tradition is created and handed down (Redfield, 1956, p. 70-1). But, in fact, implicit religion submits intellectual pluralist humanism to the scrutiny of its function of cultural identification just as with Christianity.

This is not the same as the great and little traditions *within* institutional Christianity: this is discussed specifically within Chapter 7. This is just to say that implicit religion is a mixture of influences from present and past 'experts' absorbed for popular use.

5. Conclusion: Popular and Intellectual Religion and the Churches

As discussed, Peter Berger for a time believed that the thoroughgoing nature of secularisation resulted in the three theological responses of the Church. Bryan Wilson too believed similarly:

Our concern is specifically with the loss of that influence on the part of Christianity. Superficially, comparison might be made with the changes in religious thinking, practices and institutions which have occurred in the decay of other major religious traditions - the periodic decline of Buddhism in Ceylon for example or the indigenousization of Buddhism in Tibet, or of Islam at the periphery of the areas under Muslim dominance. But these are essentially dissimilar processes, in which the great tradition of a faith is gradually corroded by a more pervasive, but still supernatural or magical, beliefs of a particular society. ...Such a development merits scholarly attention in its own right, as a process of religious change: it is not, however, a process of secularization. (Wilson, 1966, p. xiv)

Yet the decline was in churchgoing because of factors in the churches, leaving an implicit religion to which the salvation religion has to react, and giving (as Cox argues) succour to 'rumours of secularisation'.

Instead of Berger's direct relationship of secularisation invading belief, the situation is more complex. If people do not go to church, the Church in its different sectors will attack, defend, accommodate and even lead. In between theology and culture stands authority types which define parts of the Church

towards, alongside, in attack or in defence against the general culture as well as responding to and creating belief patterns within.

This is the subject of the next chapter considering authority types in the Church, their reactions to the popular culture and how that relates to the belief types outlined in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 5

Authority, Belief, Religious Culture and New Denominationalism

1. Introduction

This chapter first looks at how Peter Rudge (1968) and also Paul Harrison (1959) applied typologies of authority to the Christian Church. In stages the chapter connects authority typologies to the belief typologies of Chapter 3 and the findings of Chapter 4 on the religious cultural environment, and then asks if each collectivity of theology, authority and reaction to the culture gains more loyalty from adherents than is received by present denominational structures.

2. Rudge, Harrison and Typologies of Authority

2 (a). Introduction

Peter Rudge (1968) developed five typologies of Church organisation. He was mainly concerned with the mechanics of authority in the working activity of churches. The fundamentals of his approach (organisation typologies in connection with the Church and culture, doctrines, ministry) were developed from the work of Minear (1961) and H. Richard Niebuhr (1952). This means that he fused Christocentric theology and sociology into a religious sociology, and his interest was to apply the most appropriate authority model to the divine institution of the Church. Harrison was interested the concept of the non-authoritarian Church (based on American Baptists; 1959, pp 207-216) and in applying Weber's categories to it.

Rudge and Harrison used Weber's charismatic, traditional and bureaucratic (called classical) typologies. Rudge added systemic (from organismic authority in Burns and Stalker, 1961) and human relations authority (from Mayo, 1933), whilst Harrison created three sub-types for non-hierarchical organisation, namely quasi-charismatic, mimetic-traditional and rational-pragmatic authority. The main types used in this chapter are in Rudge, but those used both Rudge and Harrison are outlined and initially criticised.

## 2 (b). Explanation and Commentary on the Categories

### 2 (b) 1. Charismatic Authority

Charismatic authority is the leadership derived from the inspirational qualities of one man, like the prophet. Clearly in the case of the Church Weber's *routinized* charisma is of interest. Harrison's sub-type of authority called quasi-charismatic is basically routinized charisma where successors maintain sufficient qualities of the original leader. (p. 213)

Rudge clearly thinks that whilst charismatic authority has a basis for existence in the Church it does not represent the whole and should be moderated by, for example, an emphasis on tradition.

The charismatic conception of the church is deeply embedded in many parts of the New Testament, but it can lead to false conclusions when taken in isolation from other images in such a way to exaggerate the radical nature of the change. One corrective of this tendency is the abiding historical emphasis implicit in the image of the people of God. (Rudge, 1968, p. 42)

This view, according to Niebuhr, is an either-or position as regards its relationship to the wider culture and is referred to as 'Christ against

culture' (Rudge, 1968, p. 51) in the Christian Churches. It creates a religious sub-culture within the Church and rejects the outside culture.

2 (b) ii. Traditional Authority

Niebuhr promoted an incarnate view of culture in his explanation of traditional authority. He used the phrase '*Christ above culture*' where the supernatural comes into and enriches the world. The either-or situation of charismatic authority does not exist here.

The preservation of the culture holds the treasures of the supernatural within it. Society and the religion are seen as inseparable. But Niebuhr (1951, p. 151) also saw traditional authority in a defensive preserving mould against the culture and given the findings of Chapter 4 this chapter will consider traditionalism in this particular light.

Harrison's mimetic-traditional authority continues to use symbols which no longer keep their original meaning in order to prevent anomie (Harrison, 1959, p. 214). But it could be argued that traditionalists very much continue to believe that the symbols contain their former meaning (1) and that it is others who express some doubt about the continuing meaning of all symbols.

2 (b) iii. Bureaucratic (Classical) Authority

Niebuhr's view of bureaucratic authority is that there is a conflict between the Church and the surrounding culture and therefore the culture must be dominated by Christ. This may even be carried out by force and represents the intolerance in Christian history. This is very different from his traditionalism where culture is enriched by the supernatural element.

However, in criticism, bureaucracy is a creation and product of perceived rationalism. It seeks to define organisational boundaries whilst being a part of the *wider rational world* view. If bureaucratic authority is to justify by rational rather than supernatural means a basis of authority then rule by domination of the supernatural would seem to be unbureaucratic.

Harrison, again with reference to non-hierarchy, discusses rational-pragmatic authority (p. 209). The offices are arranged in terms of social function, knowledge and experience, which is like the organismic!

Rudge, sees bureaucratic authority operating in terms of ecclesiastical administration but regards it as out of step with the Christian religion:

...a church conceived on classical (bureaucratic) lines has no foundation in the New Testament: there is nothing to give validity to such points as rationalization, the mechanistic structure and relationships, the discrete parts joined in a mechanical way. The handling of ecclesiastical situations in a way that implies these elements has no basis in biblical doctrine - but it has a theology, namely, that there are whole areas of life and activity in the church that are separate from God and organized regardless of the biblical nature of the church. (Rudge, 1968, p. 39)

This is a matter of religious opinion but bureaucratic authority has been very active in the Church. One example of this was the predominant view of ecumenism upto the 1960's. In Bryan Wilson's (1966) understanding, the congregations were happy with things as they were but the ministers would meet each other and take the broader educated view of the future of their organisations. They were the bureaucrats or pseudo-professionals looking for a professional purpose. Merging together (then popular with business and government as the answer to British economic decline) would give bigger

units of activity and a greater sense of self importance. But Wilson was wrong in so far as the Churches stayed divided.

Bureaucratic authority also refers to the use of guidelines about faith and belief. It is a managerial approach, as discussed later.

#### 2 (b) iv. Systemic Authority

The systemic model in terms of organisation comes from in particular the organismic model by Burns and Stalker (1961) used to illustrate decision making within a bureaucracy dominated by professionalised and specialised concerns in a position and climate of uncertainty.

The systemic model is similar to Harrison's rational-pragmatic authority. There is decentralisation to theological knowledge and conscience as forms of authority. This is the use of the systemic concept made in this chapter.

However, Rudge sees systemic authority as the diversity in unity of the Christian Church (in 'the vine and the branches' image). It is not domination but service so that the fullness of the served world can come out. Again drawing on the work of Minear (1961), Rudge finds the systemic typology to be the most complete.

The church is the first fruit of the resurrection which will be extended to all. The church now is the body where the head is fusing together the one new Man, a growing process in which all will attain 'the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4: 9-13). The process is carried through by Christ not through external extension, not by adding more and more members to his body, but through the inner transformation of life. (Minear, 1961, p. 243, and in Rudge, 1968, p. 45-6)



However, the aim of this chapter is to show that members have different belief stances with different attitudes to the outside culture, and therefore they have varied views on authority. This is not to see which authority system fits the whole Church the best, which would imply theological as well as sociological judgement, but to apply authority types to all the belief types and all the attitudes towards the religious cultural environment.

## 2 (b) v. Human Relations Authority

In Niebuhr's view, human relations authority, based on personal elements within groupings (from Mayo, 1933), involves 'the Christ of culture' where Christ is seen as the best in humanity, as in democratic and other Western institutions. But Rudge claims that Niebuhr went further than the scope of human relations theory (1968, p. 48) by indeed seeing the function of Christ in the culture of the world (close to his traditionalist view).

Rudge is equally critical of Minear's viewpoint about the infusing of the supernatural in the fellowships of people in the human relations model:

...this kind of organisation is a voluntary human creation; and this is a denial of the doctrine of the church as a divine society, which is implicit in those images that appear to provide the theological basis for the human relations approach. (1968, p. 41)

This approach represents a human developed pluralist (post-industrial) form of operation where the goals of the group emerge from the meeting together of the group. Self and group responsibility comes with the freedom that is established. That is the understanding used in this chapter and in the thesis as a whole.

## 2 (c). Rudge's and Harrison's Typologies and this Chapter

Rudge aims to find the theologically correct typology of authority which most represents the function and being of the Christian Church. In this chapter it is assumed that each member and group will draw on the authority patterns available by which his theology and response to the general culture makes sense.

Harrison's typologies do not form a model for the chapter, though he usefully indicates how within a non-hierarchical organisation (where various authority types apply) tensions rise between centralisation and local control with the danger of disintegration. This features in this thesis in the sense that orthodox liberals try to hold the Church together in the face of belief and authority views of different groups.

It is worth pointing out that beginning with charismatic and traditional authority the typologies of bureaucratic, systemic and human relations authority as presented here are less authoritarian respectively.

Authority views affect perceptions of ordained ministry, denominational government, available theologies, specific Protestant and Catholic traditions and charismatic renewal. (2)

## 3. Authority Typologies and their Application to Belief Typologies

### 3 (a). Introduction

This section develops the various typologies of authority (as adapted for use here) and attaches them to the typologies of belief as discovered in Chapter 3.

3 (b). Explanation and Commentary on the Categories

3 (b) 1. Charismatic Authority and Conversionism

Charismatic authority rests in individuals. They are, to use Thiselton's words (Doctrine Commission, 1982) 'innovators' and bring 'authentic focus'. They come from a tradition and exist in a general culture and act to create a new tradition. To take the case of Jesus: he was able to choose disciples, to pronounce the coming of the Kingdom of God, to act and be heard in the messianic culture and the occupied territory of his day, and after his death his charisma intensified.

Routinized charisma is the development of the original charisma to continue to recreate what was made new. But this through time (the revolution cannot last forever) generally leads to the development of a tradition. So when in the early Church the new Kingdom failed to arrive the forward expectation of the apostles was modified and as a result routinisation became dominantly backward looking traditionalism with charismatic offshoots.

Some Christians today look to the events of Pentecost and the release of the Spirit, the growth of the Church and the divine guidance of the writing of the New Testament. They attempt to 'invent' (as in Hobsbawm and Ranger eds., 1983) charismatic traditions using their routinized charisma of today, in order to recreate the original excitement of the early Church (see Appendix 1, Subject 6, Discussion G).

Charismatic authority as used here fits the position of the dynamic, forward looking conversionist. He can be a Protestant or Catholic charismatic, a fundamentalist, or an evangelical. Conversionism itself requires an authority

system which is dynamic, active and ready to press across to those inside and outside the Church their theological position. Very often this dynamism comes from the influence of key individuals (see Appendix 1, S.12, D.C for those today who might influence a charismatic).

Indeed, the *theological* charismatic sub-group needs individuals who can themselves inspire others. There have to be healers, translators for speaking in tongues and leaders of expanding fellowships, who all must be considered personally gifted and sound in their activity in the eyes of other leaders.

The fundamentalist must find a home in traditionalism or conversionism. The fundamentalist conversionist uses charismatic authority because the Bible needs to be interpreted. Fellowships and evangelical bookshops in particular promote personalities who transmit the correct biblical interpretations. The Bible being open to various interpretations creates the need for people to produce authentic and "sound" interpretation.

The evangelical, as a milder version of the conversionist, fits into this authority type in that evangelicalism involves a nineteenth century history of personal vision and campaigning. The evangelical does not express the outward spirit of the charismatic or the biblicalism of the fundamentalist, but it is a passionate position to hold and profess, and it is here that strength of personality matters.

A number of the leaders of the conversionist movement become themselves cult figures. This is a tension which it has to deal with all the time and involves a need to self regulate its tendencies (they cannot ever upstage

the 'original Messiah'). However, the movement aims to be forever on a high and has to find ways to renew the renewal.

Such dangers have been faced by charismatic personalities. David Watson in this country almost developed a cult following of his own. It is only the discipline of an existing tradition which stops cult activity developing.

Conversionism and charismatic authority exist in purest form outside the mainstream in Evangelical, Pentecostalist and House Churches.

Like left wing socialists at a time of ideological decline and confusion, the conversionist in a mainstream Church may find himself often defending gains made as well as promoting a more dedicated renewal. This creates frustration and is one cause of a number of conversionists joining House Churches and Bible based sects, just as the socialist might join a fringe party. Those who stay can become a 'Militant Tendency' within the whole Church.

### 3 (b) ii. Traditional Authority and Traditionalism

Traditionalism is conservationist. It is designed to defend against opponents inside the Church.

Traditional authority equates well with those of traditionalist beliefs. They feel the need to conserve the details of the Creeds and emphasise the whole or even their part of a denominational tradition. Therefore they may well create 'invented traditions' which point to inheriting the past (like rituals promoted by the Oxford Movement) (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). But variations in Christianity lead to the necessity of defending rather narrow positions.

Sometimes the traditionalist draws authority from outside the denomination but it is always transferred to the specific Church itself (for an Anglo-Catholic view of Roman and Eastern Catholicism see Appendix 1, S.8, D.B).

Members defend the tradition against both kinds of liberals who water down the doctrines of the faith and conversionists who upset the purity of the denominational inheritance. Within his own denomination, the traditionalist seeks to defend his faith by compulsion over others who waver. He is an authoritarian and the traditionalist will use institutional strength all the time that it is available.

This group is like the conservative forces of politics, interested in maintaining tradition, status and moral order. It is not modernistic at all and sees the past as worth conserving. Therefore just about every practical measure for renewal (liberally or charismatically) will find opposition from this quarter.

### 3 (b) iii. Bureaucratic Authority and Orthodox Liberalism

Bureaucratic authority involves the use of rational rules. It is a highly managerial approach to religion, aiming for compromise where it is to be found and hoping to hold diverse elements together. In fact it hopes to hold together elements of belief and authority in conflict with it. The need is to maintain the doctrinal identity of the Church whilst allowing for biblical and Church criticism.

This suits the orthodox liberal position, a philosophical approach which protects the overall structure of the revealed Christian package. This means

that Christocentric-theism has to be conservative and relatively static, but it is not conservationist because the Christian system (in the opinion of orthodox liberals) does not need all the creedal details in order to defend its very structure.

Also in the orthodox liberal belief type the Creeds are more a system of guidelines for faith than a revelation for all time. God is broader than he used to be but the Church maintains the same public beliefs and rituals. This position reflects the loss of detail guaranteed by supernaturalism but keeps the same central demand for order at the more human level.

Bureaucratic authority also looks for rational solutions to problems. Whereas the conversionists will try to convert and the traditionalist will defend, the bureaucratic orthodox liberal will want to define and compromise.

Present denominations may even be regarded as being past misunderstandings (the liberal Methodist's view in Appendix 1, S.10, D.A), so at the Nottingham Conference of British Churches in 1964 it was hoped that by Easter 1980 there would be one non-Roman English Church. In India two geographic Churches were established which combined her Christian denominations. It made no sense in India for a minority faith to have so many denominations. In Britain, contraction lay behind the need to combine and mix resources for a desired re-expansion. The theological reasoning that the Church should not be divided is given added relevance by bureaucratic authority. But in England the non-episcopal Churches were unable to merge with the episcopal Churches because of disputes over authority. Ecumenical moves since then have had to avoid this problem and find other local ways to join resources.

The Tiller Report (1983), with its proposals for pooling ordained ministry, and Faith in the City (1985), with its recommendation about the deanery as a resource assistance for parishes, represent the bureaucratic approach.

The orthodox liberal may well be a bureaucrat, as in the Bryan Wilson understanding of him. They are strongly represented on committees and in high office. The ordained orthodox liberal can most easily be a careerist because in a Church bureaucracy the 'right kind of man' is promotion material. For example, in the Church of England, a priest with an academic bent in a specialised ministry and trained at Wescott House, Cambridge, has a higher chance of promotion than, for example, the neighbourhood vicar who only had minimal degree qualifications. (3)

Orthodox liberals face a dilemma not unlike the SDP at the time of merger with the Liberal Party. The SDP inherited a managerial ethos, once known as "beer and sandwiches at Number Ten" from the 1960's and 1970's. But the Conservatives were rewriting the political agenda, and, to modernise, part of the SDP followed on. At the merger, a right wing "Continuing SDP" (4) split away leaving the others to join the flexible social liberalism in the Social and Liberal Democrats. The orthodox liberals too have a managerial feel, inheriting a post-1960's liberalism which seems to have nowhere else to go except either dangerous heterodox liberal scholarship or greater orthodoxy.

### 3 (b) iv. Systemic Authority and Heterodox Liberalism

Systemic authority is about the authority of the knowledgeable individual within an organisation. The biblical critic, the Church historian and the theologian who finds his educated viewpoint at variance with the minimum of



the Incarnation and the Resurrection may acquire the conscience to develop his own form of Christianity if this remains relevant. Such a change in theology to what is not based on supernatural or objective revelation inevitably involves a relevant change in the basis of authority.

Whereas the orthodox liberal uses the Creeds and other statements as definitive rules and guidelines of faith, the heterodox uses them only as the second hand definition of a tradition to which he belongs. The real doctrinal decision making takes place through the informed individual conscience.

These liberals, whilst not unfavourable towards ecumenism, see it as unimportant and are not bureaucratically minded. Whilst for the orthodox liberal the organisation is important for collectivist and managerial reasons, the heterodox liberal is concerned whether he has the liberty to think for himself. If not then he reluctantly leaves; if so he may carry on.

An Anglican theologian who believes the Resurrection was simply a series of visions and therefore was not unique wrote:

As H.B. Wilson argued in 1860, Essays and Reviews, Christianity in the future will have to be "multitudinist", i.e. pluralist. We will have to recognise that in all churches there is likely to be very significant diversity. Already in the C of E many thinkers are in practice Unitarian. (Letter to me from Rev. Dr. Paul Badham)

Theologians of this kind often begin as more orthodox, and can rise in position and status (e.g., Don Cupitt; Maurice Wiles). But recently the stress of such material as Believing in the Church and We Believe in God has been to marginalise them. But this does not happen only to the famous; once dogma

declines beyond a certain point then belief in a saviour of all is in trouble (as with the liberal Methodist in Appendix 1, S.2, D.C).

The heterodox liberals of systemic authority are like the radicals in the Social and Liberal Democrats who are denied by the hierarchy any long term success in case that involves upsetting the maintenance of the middle ground. Some others think that they bring fresh questioning into the system. In the Church setting, the heterodox are tolerated as long as they remain marginalised, and because they stop orthodox liberals being at the edge of permitted belief in the Church.

Because, as Thiselton has said, heterodox liberals saw off the branch on which they sit (Doctrine Commission, 1981, p. 76), at least as far as the position of the mainstream is concerned, they sometimes leave the mainstream to find a new basis for religious activity. When they do this they may acquire a new kind of authority, as shown next.

### 3 (b) v. Human Relations Authority and Heterodox Liberalism

Human relations authority is the voluntary basis of acquiring belief in a group which enshrines individual conscience. It is not the compromise of bureaucratic authority or the tension of systemic authority but the diversity which comes through freedom, reason and tolerance.

This view of authority is beyond the mainstream. As conversionist sects may attempt to enjoy pure structures of charismatic authority, and traditionalist Churches maintain traditional authority only, the liberal groups have an authority system to themselves.

Those in the Quakers, Unitarians, or who move to informal religious or social groups with meaning giving attributes, cease to relate to a bureaucracy of doctrine. The individual only meets others on the basis of shared interest. The systemic model of authority is too restricting for these people because the demands and weight of the mainstream bureaucracies prevent fundamental change. Alternatively, just as many prefer to stay within systemic authority and refer to a strong Christian memory of faith through detailed rituals and language, others join new corporate faiths, like Buddhism, and then use the authority systems intrinsic to those faiths. (5)

The separation of heterodox liberals takes away the threat of dissenters within the ranks. Then sympathy comes from mainstream heterodox liberals and respect from the orthodox liberals, but dismissal comes from conversionists and traditionalists.

This group is like the Green Party or unaffiliated issue groups who may occasionally have influence but are on the edge of organised politics.

### 3 (c). Summary

Each authority typology relates to a belief typology. Charismatic authority interacts with conversionism; traditional authority matches traditionalism; bureaucratic authority relates to orthodox liberalism; systemic authority connects with mainstream heterodox liberalism; and human relations authority is found in heterodox liberalism beyond the mainstream.

As a result a conversionist should derive authority from ultimately the interpretations of approved persons, a traditionalist from the Creeds,

articles and documents, an orthodox liberal from the faith in its essentials (and the organisation), and the heterodox liberal from his conscience within the mainstream or outside it.

4. The Interrelationship Between Belief, Authority and the Culture

4 (a). Introduction

Theology and authority relate to the cultural environment either negatively (defensive or attacking), neutrally or positively.

4 (b). Explanation and Commentary

4 (b) 1. Charismatic Authority, Conversionism and the Culture

As with Niebuhr's use of the phrase, *Christ against culture* is an adequate title for charismatic authority and conversionist theology. It rejects folk religion and desires to convert outsiders. The opposition becomes all the greater where the outside culture is perceived to be unspiritually secular (such as the conversionist Anglican comparing Korea with Britain in Appendix 1, S.12, D.C).

Yet there is a sense in which conversionist religion uses the culture. In what Michael Taylor the Baptist has called its "mindless ditties", the charismatic movement copies the pop culture of the day and sings choruses of repetitive verse with much use of modern instrumentation. This, in one sense, is nothing new in that it was Charles Wesley's popular tunes which attracted many to Methodism during its expansion. However, his hymns intended to teach the faith in more than the tabloid headline style of, for example, Mission Praise (a product of Billy Graham's Mission England in 1984) and Songs of Fellowship.

#### 4 (b) ii. Traditional Authority, Traditionalism and the Culture

In Niebuhr's sense the traditional organisation can be embedded within a traditional culture. However, Chapter 4 showed that the Church receives cold indifference from the culture, except for the continuing habit of the rites of passage which for traditionalism represents a move to residual religion (as in Appendix 1, S.6, D.A). Traditionalism responds to this situation by defending the truth against the culture, just as it is defended against fellow denominationalists.

Its authority system recreating the past is designed to be defensive. Therefore 'Christ above culture' should be replaced by *Christ in defence of the rump* because it sets itself up as the repository of the true faith.

#### 4 (b) iii. Bureaucratic Authority, Orthodox Liberalism and the Culture

In Niebuhr's view bureaucratic authority suggested domination of the culture and intolerance. Here it suggests something very different. Bureaucratic authority is a working part of orthodox liberalism.

Orthodox liberalism is sentimentally against the rejection of the culture, either defensively or aggressively. On the other hand it wants to identify itself as being distinctive. It is in essence the *via media* and an attempt at compromise both with other typologies of theology, authority and the culture itself and thus relates to rites of passage.

This perhaps *Christ alongside the culture* position is in constant tension because the walls between it and the environment can seem to be so thin. But this only makes the basic rules of identity more important.

4 (b) iv. Systemic Authority, Heterodox Liberalism and the Culture

This is the authority and theology system which thinks that the Church should be in advance of the religious cultural environment and alongside the intellectual environment. It promotes innovation and change, and religion itself can be seen as prejudicial (for example the liberal Methodist's attitude in Appendix 1, S.12, D.B). The belief position might be described as *Christ within the culture*.

It is important to note that, as Daniel illustrates in Catholic, Evangelical and Liberal (Martin ed., 1968, pp. 115-23), many liberals have a Catholic rather than Protestant inheritance. Very often for both ordained and laity, Catholic style in worship provides background security for liberal thinking whilst relating to the Church. For the ordained it involves dressing up and being ritualistic, and for both clergy and laity includes the ordered worship of singing hymns, psalms and using the often incomprehensible English of the 1662 Prayer Book. This (like heterodox liberalism itself) is parasitic on the style used more literally by traditionalists, but it prevents stark religious humanism and relates the believer to the greater body of the Church in terms of art if not of belief.

4 (b) v. Human Relations Authority, Heterodox Liberalism and the Culture

The human relations model of authority represents the greatest connection between religion and the culture. Christianity as a background belief in the human relations group depends on the continuance of cultural Christianity in society. But there is a more overt acceptance of humanism than with systemic liberals. Therefore, because of diversity of belief, a 'Christ with culture' tag should be replaced by *plural religion with the culture*.

#### 4 (c). Interrelationships between Authority, Belief and the Culture

##### 4 (c) i. Introduction

The five interrelationships above can work in different ways.

##### 4 (c) ii. Interaction between Attitudes

In some cases for individuals and groups, belief determines the reaction to the religious cultural environment through authority. But reaction to the environment can determine belief and authority views, and authority views can determine belief and reaction to the cultural environment.

Here are some specific examples: The theologian who has concluded that the Resurrection was in essence not unique may demand systemic authority in order to remain within the Christian Church, and he will be positive towards and in advance of the culture. A new industrial chaplain, having to work with the indifferent world outside and the religious world in the Church, may acquire bureaucratic authority and develop orthodox liberal beliefs. The individual who considers the world sinful may acquire both a conversionist theology and use charismatic authority in order to convert it. Someone authoritarian in stance may find traditionalist belief most to his liking. He then becomes defensive against the unsupportative religious cultural environment. There are many more possible permutations.

##### 4 (c) iii. The Intensification of Attitudes

For decades attitudes have intensified. Those radicals who wrote in Essays and Reviews (1861) would today be orthodox liberals; in the nineteenth century most Unitarians (like Martineau) believed in the Resurrection and Christ, with a wide view of Incarnation. Traditionalism was more a custom

(see Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) of the denomination (although the then new Anglo-Catholics had to push for reform against severe opposition) and the conversionist was simply the biblical Reformed Protestant.

A number of factors have changed. The theology of Essays and Reviews has become standard, creating a new central Churchman with the Incarnation and Resurrection as minimum beliefs for revelation. Martineau's Christianity of conscience inevitably went humanistic. Of course, in Victorian Britain there was an active Christian culture which has now become implicit. So against this, radicals have become more radical, central Churchmen hold the line, traditionalists have become defensive and renewal movements attack.

But it is the authority types which have *allowed* change. Whatever the actual theology in Essays and Reviews, they were *radicals*, and after a time such systemic authority was accepted and became part of theology testing the limits. Equally, bureaucratic authority had the potential of allowing a floor of revelation to be found to relate to all parts of the Church. Traditional and charismatic authority types were bound to become more distinct.

#### 4 (d). Summary

Theology, authority and reaction to the culture influence each other, and change has caused an intensification of these distinct relationships. So the next stage is to look at these interrelationships as collectivities.

#### 5. Loyalty and the New Groups

##### 5 (a). Introduction

The interplay between typologies of belief, authority and reaction to the



religious cultural environment can be developed into a systems approach by which the intensity of these collectivities can be assessed against loyalty to the present day denominations.

5 (b). Demerath and Hammond - A Model

Demerath and Hammond (1969, pp. 163-8) extract and adapt the general view of Parsons to develop a systems approach of how an institution maintains itself. There are four analytical elements: latency (the world view), goal attainment (the specific goals of the body related to the world view), adaptation (the relationship to the outer environment), and integration (the internal collectivity). These four elements interact with each other functionally. Then, in an unrigorous analysis (pp. 168-173), the authors discuss the relationship of the religious beliefs of churches as relating positively, indifferently and negatively with latent religious values in wider society.

Like with Demerath and Hammond, the approach developed here is also a four unit approach. The characteristics of the different approaches to belief, authority and the religious cultural environment shows the strength of collectivity that each create and the extent of division between them. This is the heart of understanding new denominationalism:

Theology ↔ Authority ↔ Response to Environment → Collectivity

If the collectivities within the new groups (heterodox liberals/systemic authority, conversionists/charismatic authority etc.) are stronger than those within existing denominations (Anglicans, Methodists, U.R.C. etc.) then new denominationalism is at work and a New Reformation is knocking at the door.

5 (c). Functional Collectivities

5 (c) 1. Charismatic Authority and Conversionists

The individualism within the conversionist approach to salvation is countered by a strong authoritarianism of interpretation and leadership. This structure of motivating personalities, with the Bible based and Spirit-filled belief, and the recreation of an image of the New Testament culture which strongly opposes the general culture, produces a close collectivity of 'first class Christians' which stretches across denominational, Catholic and Protestant boundaries.

Thus some conversionists will oppose traditionalists on certain matters (like mariology and the mass, in Appendix 1, S.7, D.D) but even more so the ways liberals think (S.7, D.G). That may make the conversionist and traditionalist feel closer than before (S.10, D.C), although the conversionist gives strong support for renewal (S.6, D.G).

5 (c) 11. Traditional Authority and Traditionalists

Traditionalists have little time for modern movements (like speaking in tongues, in Appendix 1, S.7, D.A) except where they can support traditional positions (like the moral majority, S.7, D.B), but they have least time for liberals (S.7, D.C) and certain movements towards ecumenism (like Anglo-Catholics with Methodism, S.10, D.B).

So the traditionalist's emphasis on conserved belief and authority, and the creation of an image of the past culture defended against the effects of the general culture demands a highly disciplined group of the defenders of the faith producing a tight effective denominationally based collectivity.

5 (c) iii. Bureaucratic Authority and Orthodox Liberals

In this typology of authority the Church as a unit is defended (Appendix 1, S.11, D.E) and whatever the difficulties arguments must be found to maintain the essential doctrinal boundaries (S.3, D.B; S.3, D.E) for general boundary making activities.

As a result the orthodox liberal collectivity is not as strong as the conversionist and traditionalist camps. It also tends to 'leak' into the surrounding culture. A general collectivity of moderate faithful Churchmen across the mainstream denominations is produced.

5 (c) iv. Systemic Authority and Heterodox Liberals

Whilst this position contains a contempt for traditionalists (Appendix 1, S.7, D.H; S.10, D.A) and opposition to fundamentalism (S.7, D.I), at the same time it is near to something like Unitarianism (S.11, D.F) and the perceived secular (S.12, D.B) and appreciates other faiths (S.11, D.B; S.11, D.D).

But systemic liberals vary in their theologies, and are at heart only individualists within a system. This, with an appreciation of pluralism in general, can only produce a loose collectivity of experimental radical Churchmen across the mainstream denominations.

5 (c) v. Human Relations Authority and Heterodox Liberals

The nature of human relations authority and heterodox liberalism with the emphasis on total individual authority and individual belief, and a positive relationship with the culture, creates small voluntary collectivities of the radically religious.

5 (c) vi. New Groups and Old Denominations

The traditionalists and the conversionists are the most cohesive, and then, in order, the orthodox liberals, the mainstream heterodox liberals and the separated heterodox liberals.

This may help to explain why traditionalists within the denominations have been more successful than those who propose change. They also have a grip over the orthodox liberals because the latter are ambiguous in that they strive for ecumenism but do not wish to rock their own boat (6). Then the heterodox liberals simply need the freedom to dissent in any structure. Only the conversionists see great advantage in changing structures with those of their own kind. So whilst there is certainly a dynamic at work towards new denominationalism, structural change will be a long time coming. Essentially, it depends upon the decline of traditionalism (7) and more freedom of manoeuvre for orthodox liberals to allow structural ecumenism and a New Reformation to get under way.

5 (d). Friction in Denominationalism

Another factor for inertia concerning structural change is 'friction': in economics 'friction in the market' indicates a state where the market in existence cannot operate freely (8). In organised Christianity friction is any state which simply maintains past practices despite having lost the justification for them. A great deal in the operation of denominations maintains the status quo, for example the Anglican parish and Methodist circuit/district systems, existing leadership patterns and the uneven distribution of buildings and congregations.

This shows that ultimately it will take an act of intention on the part of the churches to reform, but this may happen either through planning (e.g., bureaucratic ecumenism) or religious politics and schism. Probably planning can only take place after schism has reduced existing stresses.

5 (e). Stress within the Old Denominations

None of this stops links between like minded groups. This strain within the old denominations is great despite the inertia against structural change.

The analysis here, whilst attempting to illustrate the problems faced in terms of structural renewal, needs further consideration about where belief and authority types are to be found within the Churches and how their distribution affects them. This also involves the basis and problems of leadership, and is considered in following chapters.

6. Overall Summary and Conclusion

The belief types each fit with authority types. Authority types are brokers between the belief types and the religious cultural environment outside. Each produces a collectivity of a particular intensity, and traditionalism's strength compromises the orthodox liberal/bureaucratic desire for ecumenism because of its desire for compromise. But the real alliances are across the current structures, and this means that the level of stress is building towards schism of some kind.

Part III analyses how stress also exists in terms of the distribution of belief and authority types and what problems this creates in particular for the leadership.

CHAPTER 6

Two Case Studies of Dominant Trends of New Denominationalism  
within Churches

1. Introduction

1 (a). Inside the Churches

The next two chapters in Part III look at the empirical evidence and the theoretical understanding for the distribution of belief and authority types in mainstream Christianity. Chapter 7 will be more general but lead off from where this one ends. This chapter looks at the teaching, the drama, and the personalities in two youth fellowship groups, one in 'Risemere' Methodist church and the other in 'St. Heimdall's' Anglican church in 'Lowcarr' (the names of many localities, the churches and the people in them have been changed) in Kingston upon Hull. The analysis shows what kinds of belief are encouraged and what kinds are suppressed in the development of church people and how that relates to new denominationalism at the local level.

1 (b). Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that local churches do not choose their beliefs by chance but processes exist by which certain belief types succeed and others fail. This helps explain the bias of new denominationalism in the churches.

The study focusses on one Anglican (Leila) and two Methodists (Janet and, to a lesser extent, Adrienne) and how they, who might have been influenced by a liberal approach, respond to both conversionist and mixed Churchmanship.

1 (c). Why Teenagers?

Fellowship groups offer close involvement for church members. They give a chance of interaction not possible within the church service. Beliefs can be expressed and shared and therefore those out of line can be encouraged to be within the boundaries of acceptable institutional belief.

Adult and teenage groups each offer leisure, teaching and discussion. But the teenage group has some interesting extra properties not to be found to the same degree in the adult group. There is the greater potential for an inequality of authority between the leaders and the led; teenagers are at a critical learning stage (with examinations approaching at school); their approach to religion may be growing in personal sophistication; there is the psychological development of adolescence and the exposure of emotion in religion; there is the competition of new alternative reference groups linked with youth culture and coming to adulthood; and there is a high wastage rate with only a minority who will keep the active faith, and it is they who may be the leaders of tomorrow and who have to have the right kind of faith.

These concerns feature to varying degrees in the Risemere and Lowcarr study but this is not a study as such of youth religion. The leaders are just as important in their own right. Of interest here is how churches mould teenage theological development and therefore renew adult belief in the churches.

2. A Study of a Religious Group

2 (a). Introduction

A study from the 1950's of adolescents in an Anglican church fellowship

group is of interest (Martin, 1967). It is from a different era and ethos but there are general applications to be made.

2 (b). Adolescent Interaction in an Anglican Church (1967)

In not being primarily concerned with the participants' subjective religious experience, the approach of Bernice Martin's article, 'Adolescent Interaction in an Anglican Church', in Social Compass (1967) pp. 33-51, is:

"...merely to acknowledge that all social activities and institutions meet needs other than those for which they overtly exist, and that often the participants are not articulately conscious of these needs, however vital they may be, partly because the conventional language in which the activity is described makes no reference to them. (Martin, 1967, p. 34.)

This shows the usual interest of sociology in latent functions of groups. But for new denominationalism it is the sociology of the manifest function (see Merton, 1949) of how religious faith is moulded that is important.

Bernice Martin's description in Social Compass gave in essence the name of the group in which she had been a member, the centre and periphery structure of the membership, its central locality within the town, the connections between the group and other bodies in the church and with the nearby direct-grant grammar school. She showed the central position of the church choir, the promotion of the status of the choirboys, and that the school with its music department had a key role in the church. This was all part of the ethos of upward mobility. Parents of the upper working and lower middle class outside the town centre and parish would send their children to the school and church. Putting a boy into the church choir was seen as a way of



getting him into prep school, although this often worked the other way around. "Muscular Christianity" incorporated the masculine public school and Oxbridge ethos.

Latent functions affect manifest functions. Thus there was ambivalence about belief which had to be moderate. Boys were more macho and:

"they upheld episcopacy on organisational rather than theological grounds" (Martin B. 1967, p. 43).

Girls were allowed to be more pious than boys (but boys preserved the aesthetic area of music for themselves as the girls were only the choir supporters). The wastage rate was massive: out of the eight of the core who did not move away no one became a regular churchgoer. One boy did go on to become a priest. Of the thirteen in total who lapsed only one gave intellectual reasons. But all were married and had their children baptised in church. Politics was much clearer than religion: the Conservative Party had most support amongst the members.

In this group, therefore, there was an interrelationship between the environment and the type of belief being expressed. 'Muscular Christianity' and desires for upward mobility mitigated against extremity of religious belief.

The article looks for a means to analyse the structure of such groups and their implications, as suggested in this list from Martin using a continuum of ideal types:

led/leaderless  
stable/fluid  
autocratic/democratic  
tight/loose social control  
short/long lived  
self-expressive/purposeful  
unifunctional/multifunctional  
homogenous/heterogenous age, sex status etc.

Such a group structure analysis has uses in the Risemere and Lowcarr study and could help illustrate authority and theology within religious groups.

Martin states that there is a conflict between specific description and general understanding. The former is more realistic but does not easily lend itself to wider group comparison. The latter can be too vague. So description should not be carried out at the expense of comparison. This guideline is followed in the Risemere and Lowcarr study.

She suggests that groups should be considered in the wider institutional context such as the Church/ denomination/ sect continuum. Here they are related to new denominationalism.

### 3. The Groups and their Environment in Risemere and Lowcarr

#### 3 (a). The Local Scene

The localities, churches, the groups and individuals are first introduced.

The city of Hull has suffered some economic decline. It has been said that its people are informal. Humberside has become known as the most non-churchgoing county in England but because it is not notably multi-faith a number of schools retain traditional Christian approaches to religion.

Non-conformity grew from before Cromwell's day (see Whitaker, 1910, p. 53). The Methodists were once influential and at merger the Primitives continued a separate voice. The Salvation Army has declined. There is a small but notable Anglo-Catholic element and a fair number of Roman Catholic churches. Conversionism exists in the mainstream, in Pentecostalism, in the old-style Independent Evangelicals and in the House Churches. The now liberal Friends and the Unitarians have declined. Spiritualism is quite active.

3 (b). Introduction to the Localities of the Churches

3 (b) 1. St. Heimdall's and St. Odin's Anglican Churches

St. Heimdall's is in a private housing area close to Baldermere, a council estate. It is in a large parish, a hangover from rural days which became illogical and impractical, Churchgoing is so weak that in the evening only one church of a number, St. Odin's, opens for services. The Rector was a moderate Catholic who, with the believed encouragement of his wife, had a reputation for considering that he had a high social status. Once the Rector spoke to me about his disappointment with the area's fundamentalism. He said that he refused entry to an evangelical lay-worker from outside the parish. But the St. Heimdall's minister (as others) was a conversionist and indeed strongly opposed the consecration of the Bishop of Durham. (1)

St. Heimdall's own church council was in continuous conflict with the Parochial Church Council based at St. Odin's. This, the dramatic dispersal of the St. Heimdall's flock (see Appendix 2) and the barren church attendance of the area became the subject of a Church enquiry in 1985. It suggested that there should be more decentralisation but the Rector disagreed. As a result nothing changed. The Rector stated in the local press in September 1985:

This is a unique parish and although we didn't quite see what they could come up with, we were always hopeful. For instance, we did hope the Archbishop would recommend cutting our diocesan quota.

We don't think the visiting team, who only came in for two days, understood the pattern. We feel that, ideally, we would like a much more centralised team than we have, with all the clergy living here. Because, like it or not, it is to Risemere that everybody comes for weddings, baptisms and so on. (2)

In fact, St. Heimdall's minister, Paul, wanted decentralisation and more involvement at St. Heimdall's. Family commitments stopped him leaving. In 1985 the teenage leader Gerald told me that the Rector was "breathing down Paul's neck" and Anne and her father described how the Rector caused the congregation to leave and disperse (see Appendix 2).

Then the Risemere church, being architecturally attractive, has further problems. The Rector's wife, who was a deaconness, stated in 1983:

The sheer weight of the weddings, funerals and baptisms is so great that a lot of the work we should like to initiate we are not able to do because of the heavy load. ...The work comes to us up to sixteen hours a day.

We don't feel the primary duty of the church is to get the people into the pews. Many of the people are terribly unsettled having been moved from a close knit community and they are desperately lonely. We feel the role of the church is to love them and make them feel they matter and try to give them a new sense of security. (3)

### 3 (b) 11. Risemere Methodist Church

Risemere always was a small centre of shopping and from the 1960's found itself close to the Baldermere estate. The Methodist church was fairly large within the circuit having a Membership Roll of about 200 and a community Roll of about 500, with congregations of 50 and over.

Its people were well involved at District and National levels. The fellowship group, overlapping with the youth club, was part of 'Methodist Association of Youth Clubs', also known as 'Marriage Arrangements for Young Couples' by many. There was the November trip for a religious meeting at the Redeaves hotel in Scarborough, the District Summer Event and variations, various sports meetings and the main 'London Weekend' and its provincial equivalent.

3 (c). Basic Information about the Groups

3 (c) 1. St. Heimdall's at Lowcarr Group

There was about an average of ten people present in the teenage group. It was felt that numbers were falling as was the case while I was there and they did so dramatically when the dispute over the 'How to Share Jesus' course came to a head.

Before my research period there was just one youth club and coffee bar with a religious epilogue. But this changed. The older and senior religious teenager girls formed one group. Then they considered that the evening was theirs, and after an hour of religion they wanted their own time and space afterwards. So eventually the coffee bar youth club for outsiders was closed after bad behaviour. There was also present a group of young boys of around eleven years old connected to the Boys Brigade. Some girls acted as leaders in the Boys Brigade and the Sunday School and so it was an in-group.

All girls but the minister's daughter were in the older group even though Leila had asked to be in the younger boys group. The boys at times got upto silly behaviour but they liked to demonstate their considerable knowledge of the Bible; in contrast the girls were slow and very resistant.

All girls except Leila (and the visitor Nora) had active church attending parents. Gerald did not have church-going parents. All the girls except one (Judith) in the older group went to a single sex ex-grammar school. All girls but one (Heidi) lived in Lowcarr whereas all males came from Baldermere. These are their changed names and approximate ages.

LAYLA.....	17
JUDITH.....	19
ANNE.....	16
HEIDI.....	16
DOREEN.....	16
NORA.....	16
LINDSAY.....	15
ANITA.....	18
HARRIET.....	14
VERONICA.. (adult helper).....	30's
GERALD.. (leader).....	17
JAMES.....	18
BRIAN.. (main leader).....	30's
JACK.. (main leader).....	30's
NICHOLAS.....	18
ROBERT.....	12
PAUL.. (minister).....	40's
MATTHEW.....	18

There were moral issues under the surface. Gerald had fathered a child when 14 and was trying to go out with Leila. It was obvious to many that his pressure to make her 'accept the faith' had other motives involved. A past attender Anita became pregnant by a policeman. The leader Brian had once given advice about morals and sexuality to Nicholas who took it seriously as he was engaged. Going to the pub raised little controversy but Anne did not go because of her father. Heidi often didn't go as she had to get a bus. Sometimes on the way home the language and conversation would become blue and one evening Gerald said he was concerned about the image of the group I was picking up (January 30th 1983).

There were connections between the Lowcarr and Risemere groups. Gerald was the leader of the conversionist Baldermere High School Christian Union where Hayley and Sarah of the Methodists (see below) attended. Heidi's parents were Methodists and her younger sister Mary was in the Methodist fellowship, but Heidi went to St. Heimdall's because Anne had told her "it was a scream".

3 (c) 11. Risemere Methodist Fellowship Group

'Sunday Night at Eight' began in 1973 and in cycles replaced itself but became progressively younger. So as couples formed and left the 1980-81 group (in 1980: Males 21-28 years; females 15-19 years) Sunday School children were asked to move into the group. Some were as young as twelve (the minimum was supposed to be thirteen) but by 1983 they were in the 14 to 16 years age range with one or two younger. Overall an average of twelve attended with these approximate ages in 1983:

HAYLEY.....	15
SARAH.....	15
JANET.....	16
ADRIENNE.....	16
PETULA.....	16
GERTRUDE.. (leader).....	23
LEANNE.....	13
WENDY.....	13
MARY.....	13
BORIS.. (leader).....	31
CARY.. (leader).....	24
CHARLES.....	13
CLIVE.. (leader).....	34
JAMES.. (minister).....	50's
JACK THE LAD.....	16
SHAUN.....	14
TIMOTHY.. (leader).....	30's
DARREN.. (leader).....	24
FREDDY.....	14.
ARTHUR.....	16.
PATRICK.....	16

In most of 1983 there was mayhem where the males created noise, the females sat around talking and the older people spoke with themselves. A change to more seriousness came about when confirmation classes approached. An issue of morality created division (see below). Noise reappeared and so Boris "walked out". Also one assistant leader, always popular for promoting pop music, began to drop out. Finally the minister intervened, set up his own group and it soon failed. Clive later formed a group which met less often.

#### 4. Methodology

##### 4 (a). Introduction

Before coming to specific research findings, this section looks at the methodology using other participant-observation studies.

##### 4 (b). Comparisons with Other Participant Observation

Comparisons can be made with Street Corner Society (Whyte, 1955) and Tally's Corner (Liebow, 1967) as well as a general history (see also Chapter 1).

There were two groups I might have studied within the Risemere Methodist church as I was in their previous fellowship group with my secular friend (4). I chose the later group for reasons of simplicity, because of the issues it raised and to avoid conflicts over material collection within the first group. Since 1980 I had been keeping an extensive diary for my own purposes. Over one thousand words a day were written about activities, conversations and other interests. This continued as the 1980-81 Methodist fellowship evolved into the one in this chapter. From October 1982 its participants knew I was doing a thesis and the collection of material ended on January 13th 1984. So here the field experience came before the research.



The Anglican church, however, was approached to compare structures and activities but I had no idea that it would provide such fruitful contrasts.

Such an irrational way of getting into research is not unusual. Whyte admits he chose Cornerville for largely unscientific reasons (p. 283).

Whyte and Liebow, by way of race, found themselves to be outsiders (although Liebow's Jewish roots helped him feel some familiarity with his field locality). Each needed to participate and tried to be accepted but was never totally successful. I shared this feeling particularly at at Lowcarr where they regarded me as a "foreigner" and a non-Christian intruder. It was thus necessary to participate, and in Tally's Corner a poignant point is made:

In retrospect, it seems as if the degree to which one becomes a participant is as much a matter of perceiving oneself as a participant as it is of being accepted as a participant by others (Liebow, 1967, p. 256)

In Street Corner Society Whyte points out that the researcher is *also* human.

He has a role to play, and he has his own personality needs that must be met in some degree if he is to function successfully. Where the researcher operates out of a university, just going into the field for a few hours at a time, he can keep his personal social life separate from field activity. His problem of role is not quite so complicated. If, on the other hand, the researcher is living for an extended period in the community he is studying, his personal life is inextricably mixed with his research (Whyte, 1955, p. 279)

After the St. Heimdall's religious session (where I was most accepted by the teenagers) I liked to enjoy myself. Whyte enjoyed himself and took a girl out

which caused others to think that he had acquired a steady girlfriend when he had not. It might have interfered with his work:

After this time, even though I found some Cornerville girls extremely attractive, I never went out with them except on a group basis, and I did not make any group visits either (Whyte, 1955, p. 299).

I did not go out with a girl! But in the predominantly female group there was always an interesting general atmosphere of 'sexual chemistry'. James, the only regularly attending male, considered that Heidi put across her personal charisma and at times this did seem to be the case. Doubting girl Leila was being 'chased' by the conversionist teenage leader Gerald. She resisted him because of his past and possibly his belief system. Once some girls chanted "Anne and Adrian" because we talked for a period of time and because her real name has a similarity to mine. (March 20th 1983).

Both Whyte and Liebow came to rely on key informants. Doc helped Whyte find his feet in Cornerville, and Tally performed a similar function. Such people gain the privilege of knowing more about the research in return for acting as key informants. The teenage leader Gerald put himself forward as such a figure but he wanted to *control* the information. Mine were James and the peripheral Nicholas. They were critical of Gerald, his utterings and his past life. James was then the only person to become friendly outside the Lowcarr setting (once Gerald visited my house unannounced). In November 1986 Anne became a key informant about what happened after my observation period (See Appendix 2). At Risemere the talkative Boris and Clive were the nearest to being key informants where in any case I had a knowledge of the grapevine.

For both Whyte and Liebow the focus was changed by results and thinking as time moved on. This was so in my case. I began considering the connection between religion and youth respectability but the focus changed with the reading of academic theology. With the publicity around the Bishop of Durham I did consider dropping the research into these churches altogether in favour of work on new denominationalism using theological literature. But instead I felt it was important to keep an insight into what happens at church level.

#### 4 (c). Further History in Terms of Methodology

Because of the experiences with the previous Methodist group where some had seen part of my diary (some on overnight events), and because although everyone wanted to read it but no one liked it, the second group did not even see its cover. With this matter out of the way, the 1981/2 to 1984 group offered a clearer study of religion and groups.

In the Methodist group I was a participator and in the Anglican group I was more of an observer. Yet, things were not quite so distinct. In the Anglican group I would afterwards go to the pub with some others, they would ask questions of my opinion and they knew I was in the Methodist group. It was the Anglican leaders who mainly saw me as the outsider looking in. In the Methodist group I was never a complete participant because of my agnosticism and being neither a leader nor a full member. So I had become one of those peripheral hangers-on that groups acquire, a "somebody else" who didn't quite fit in. My agnostic friend who joined in with the group with me had got a girlfriend and they left. The new group often behaved so chaotically that I would just sit and talk with the impotent leaders. The research kept me there longer and gave me a role.

Upto October 1982 where the material is pure participant-observation I had some effect on activity, but such involvement allowed me to be close to and better understand events. However, it was my altered interest in Christianity within the Methodists that confused my role. The agnostic and peripheral position I was in (5) meant that the boundary between me and the current and intended faithful was clear; in January 1984 and a new personal interest in liberal Christianity it became unclear. The conflict of research and personal roles reached a peak in giving Janet Honest to God (which I took for absent Cary for non-research reasons). This accidental "methodological device" (see Cohen and Taylor in Bell and Newby, 1977, pp. 71-2) was matched in the Anglican group when I told the teenagers how I was comparing the basis of their group with the Methodist fellowship. In my inexperience, this allowed the Anglicans' frustration against their course to come to a head.

5. Individuals, Events and Religious Belief at St. Heimdall's Church

5 (a). Introduction

The course was central to the teenage group. Then an overview of events is given and finally their expressed beliefs as related to those events.

5 (b). The Course

The main course booklet, How To Share Jesus With Your Friends (Smith, 1981) contained bold cartoons of teenager based situations (e.g., young faces, a big fist and a motorbike) and is written in simple language, using quotations from the Good News Bible much favoured by conversionists.

The first section is called 'Know What You Believe' and in its first stage it has this interesting Creed:

God is the Boss.  
He made the world.  
He's in charge of all things (Smith, 1981, p. 3).

The second stage asserts the fall. Man messed up the world and himself:

People are sad, unsatisfied, lonely, depressed, bored and with no purpose. Many homes, marriages and lives are broken... (p. 3)

Even worse is the saying, thinking and doing things that the Bible calls:

...'SIN'.  
For examples; [sic] murder, lying, violence, greed and bad thoughts (p. 4).

The third stage outlines where our sins make us enemies of God. He is a just judge who must find us guilty. Man wants God so life has meaning and God wants man to know him but his sins stop this. Man can do nothing about it. The solution given in stage four is that God provided a way out:

JESUS THE FACTS....

Born of Mary.  
(Matthew 1 v. 25)

God in human form.  
(John 1 v. 14)

Lived the perfect life  
(2 Corinthians 5 v. 21)

Offered - peace, joy, security, eternal life, forgiveness.  
(John 6 v. 47, John 10 v. 10, John 4 v. 10)

Died. (Mark 14)  
Back to life again. (Mark 16)

Alive today (Matthew 28 v. 20) (p. 5)

Jesus shows that a new start with God is possible because his death paid the price for our sins. His coming back to life showed who he really was and that he can keep promises. The personal call is made:

He's alive today in the hearts of all those who believe in him. He's changed my life and he could change yours (p. 6).

Readers and potential evangelists are urged not to forget that they are not alone. There is "another helper" who is the Holy Spirit.

The second section is called Know How to Share it (pp. 7-17). In step one the teenager has to write down how he came to know Jesus and think about God and the difference it made to his life. He is to leave the list in a safe place for a few days and go out and "play football or something". Later the list is changed and written in longhand and then left again. A few days later he must read it, ask himself how long it takes and if friends would get bored with it, and if there are some good illustrations of his Christianity. Then it is read to a Christian friend for comment, practiced and learnt off by heart. If this is too difficult then when evangelising the teenager should say what his beliefs mean to him. 'Lead-ins' (given in step two) are then to be used on non-Christian friends. One is this:

After a time of general chat you might ask....

What d'you do in your spare time?

I usually go out on a Friday night, and play football on a Saturday.

What do you do?

Normally on a Friday I go to our Church Youth Club.

CHURCH!

Yes, can I tell you why?...

You follow on with your lifeline (p. 9)

Alternatively (step three), the lifeline follows the non-Christian's initial inquiry.

In step four the respondent, if favourable, is encouraged to pray, go to someone who can lead him to Jesus or go to an "evangelistic night". The method of conversion is A. B. C. R.: Admit that you are a wrong doer, "Believe everything I've told you about Jesus is true," (p. 12) Count the cost of reading the Bible, saying prayers, going to church and of being made fun of, and Receive Jesus and the Holy Spirit with forgiveness.

Step five advises the use of the Good News Bible and going to a Pathfinders/Christian Youth Fellowship Association church (not any one!). Step six says take the plunge if he has not started, or to realise it is Satan if he's not getting anywhere. If the new believer says he feels no different then he is to be told that it is facts not feelings. Parents may give problems too.

Section 3 is an Action Plan which is in the form of a guide with space for filling in answers as in any workbook.

No leader dissented from the course book. Eventually it was a source of a great deal of friction as each teenager had to have a personal interview to develop their lifeline for telling to their unchurched friends. An available follow up booklet by Jim Smith called More Like Jesus (1981) was not used.

5 (c). A Brief Outline of Events

5 (c) 1. Early Complaints and Dissatisfaction

January 9th 1983 was the beginning of the course. The first opposition came

when Leila threw in two cards that everyone had to sign to show their commitment to Christianity and evangelising it. Jack (who was out of the room) had announced that the course should need about eight weeks.

On February 13th 1983 some had their personal lifeline interviews with Jack. No one liked them and resentment was building up. Only Leila told me what she had said. She felt on the borderline of belief. Unlike others she would speak up to the leaders.

On February 27th 1983 Leila was collared to take the meeting the following week. She refused more than once (and in the next week she did not attend). In the religious session Leila said it is wrong to evangelise someone who is not interested. Later on Judith described Leila as "too argumentative".

5 (c) 11. Resistance and Decline

Jack left the room delegating this March 13th 1983 meeting to Anne who found little response. Instead there was a free flowing conversation and some anger about another course to follow this one. I asked if it was about Uganda (I remembered seeing a book on the country). One answered, "No, it's the same thing." I told of my research and mentioned a distinction the Anglican "evangelist" and Methodist "communalist" groups (6). This was an unintended catalyst to their frustration. Doreen said, "I'm narked." Judith complained, "It's the leaders." Leila said she had wanted to be in the learners group anyway. But Heidi said, "What do we come here for?" and Anne agreed. An emergency meeting was called. Because Jack wanted to "bawl at them better" he suggested that I should only listen at the door (he did not seem to be serious). Three girls alerted by Anne about the meeting said to



each other, "Say nothing!" Over half an hour later it ended and Heidi stormed out saying to me that they complain outside but in there refused to speak. But Leila did, because Judith told her that she spoke very well. After this meeting I deliberately asked if religion affects fellowship. The answers were suprisingly positive. Heidi said, "You can tell members your secrets"; Judith said, "You understand one another better, more than say a friend at school" (Judith was now at work); James said "You trust each other" but Leila said, "Don't know."

So on March 20th 1983 Jack said he wanted "democracy" and to seek agreement about what should be done next. There was very little reaction. A week later there was a confirmation service at St. Odin's and some were away. This meant that only Leila, Doreen and Lindsay were present. Brian led them and Jack said that as an outsider I cause disruption. Commenting on an essay I wrote he said they agree to evangelism but not to people they know.

I returned after a break on April 24th 1983. Few were present: Leila was not. My last visit was on July 3rd 1983 when just two girls and James (with a friend) were there. In the autumn I found out that only Judith, Doreen and Heidi from the older group were continuing in attendance. But most came back until January 1985 when the congregation left *en masse*. (See Appendix 2)

5 (d). St. Heimdalls Leaders

5 (d) i. Brian

Brian was in his thirties and married with children. He lived outside the parish about fifteen minutes drive away. He and Jack rotated between the teenagers and the young boys (doing their 'Driving Instuctor' course).

He told me how he began his church life. Originally churches were places to keep away from. But once he was with a friend when a voice said, "Go to Church." He asked his friend if he had heard the voice and he had. They both went to church. Then Brian went to see Billy Graham who pointed at him so he had to go forward. He has never been the same since and all his life has been made meaningful by Christianity. He had his lows but always at the last moment he was plucked out. (Said to me: January 30th 1983)

He believed that Jesus could not just have been a Jew because he kept to the predictions about him. For example the method of killing Jesus was predicted long before crucifixion was introduced. Jesus could have been a crank but it is a good experience if he was. As a scientific person (he worked in a laboratory) he liked to know "the facts". (January 30th 1983)

Brian regarded other religions "with sympathy" but people had to go through Christ. On liberal Christians he said that mere mortals should not argue with God. This, including Humanism, is "intellectualism". The Bible says the road to God is very narrow and all humans since Adam have sinned and must find their way back to God; the Devil is allowed by God to do his worst and this tests the believer's strength. (April 24th 1983). He did not like the Church's commission on God (which wrote We Believe in God, 1987) (May 1st 1983).

I asked how he knew that his interpretation of the Bible is correct (May 1st 1983). He replied that one must pray before reading it otherwise it is "nonsense" and can prove anything. For example, the Church of England's policy on baptism takes a passage out of context. The Bible is divinely inspired and under the Spirit it becomes true.

Brian (with Heidi) thought that the rapture will happen before rather than during God's destruction (May 1st 1983). His firm's computer printout showed it lasting for three and a half years before Christ comes and rules for a thousand years. He naturally dismissed the Jehovah's Witnesses' said view that only 144,000 will be saved but admitted that people get different things out of the Bible. He even said it must all be put into its Jewish context. Given the numbers of people and landspace involved; I asked if the Soviet Union was the anti-Christ (a view of some American fundamentalists). Heidi thought not because there are Christians in the Soviet Union. Brian wished there was more information given because there is not enough to say that the Soviet Union will bring the apocalypse. In any case the destruction will be God's whereas the "field day" of Satan will be elsewhere. To my suggestion Brian thought the Pope could be the anti-Christ because no man should put himself so high up, and worshipping through Mary is "dangerous". Roman Catholics are also wrong by worshipping through the saints because "saints" means *all* Christians. I (wrongly) claimed that the Church of England calls itself the only true Catholic Church so one of them must be wrong. He wished he knew which one it was. To my question he said that salvation will be on dogmatic grounds rather than for well meaning people.

On July 3rd the minister told the boys' group that a Baldermere woman had contacted him about a suspected poltergeist. Brian asked for a prayer of support and spoke of the "victory" that the woman knew where to telephone.

Brian liked the Charismatic Movement. He talked approvingly to the boys' group about speaking in tongues. He said the Holy Spirit directs the speech and the people are unaware of what they do. (February 13th 1983)

Some time after this research Brian died (See Appendix 2). He clearly demonstrated the views of a conversionist along fundamentalist grounds and promoted the disciplined salvation approach of charismatic authority.

5 (d) 11. Jack

Jack was in his thirties and lived locally. His views on God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were those of the course booklet except, perhaps, about dying: Jesus lived the perfect life and did not have to die. Dying is totally caused by sinning. Because Jesus gave up his life he saved everyone else's sins so they can have everlasting life. In this meeting (23rd January 1983) he said evangelism needs a desire that is similar to marriage. Our material life is a life of guilt but Christ sets us free and he felt free. He said, "Either you believe what Christ said of himself or he was a nutcase."

Jack believed that world is hostile to Christians. For example, if he says "blast" at work he is told: "You should not say that." (March 27th 1983)

Like with Brian, there was an element of fundamentalist debate. On May 15th, 1983, a diminished group of teenagers was being led in a discussion about cults. Looking at a C.Y.F.A. leaflet warning about them (e.g., that a Christian following Transcendental Meditation "may be opening himself to satanic forces"), Jack asked, "Provocative thought: are we as C.Y.F.A. groups or evangelicals any way like the cults; and even more provocative, what can we learn from them?" He thought the Mormon stress on the family was a good thing. The leaflet's criticism of total dedication within the cults was a puzzle so he asked, "Aren't Christians supposed to be totally committed?" Jack mentioned the early Methodists who used to grab people and shake them

but, "Now they are as dull as dishwater." He agreed with the document that cults are secretive, evasive and deceitful and claim authority by being 'Christian and'. It was dangerous to share prayer with them because they will then knock on doors claiming they were at the church, as had happened (7).

Many objected to Jack's methods. Nicholas told me that he did not go anymore to the religious session because Jack was too dry. Here was Jack's approach to conversionist fundamentalism. He clearly rejected the outside culture which he considered to be hostile to Christians.

5 (d) iii. Teenage Leader Gerald

The seventeen year old was chosen to be a leader mainly for the younger boys. He told me that God forgave him for fathering a child and that he once tried to commit suicide but God stopped him.

Before being a Christian he used to drink and fight. He was a leader then. He had been in the Boys Brigade but dodged church. His parents did not go and his father even went in the army to avoid churchgoing. He went to the youth club because of girls. One night he ran out. He had to sort out his mind and within ten minutes he received "the knowledge of God". He realised that the Son of God had died for "you". He described his religion as "weak" and defined himself as evangelical. (Interview, November 28th 1982)

Gerald told the young boys (February 20th 1983) that because of Jesus he believes there is a Devil and his trick is that he may not be believed in. The greatest risk of disbelief is when becoming a Christian. Later on Gerald told me that his experience makes him believe in the Devil.

I suggested to him that his faith is a reaction to his dramatic personal history and he might go just as dramatically to the other extreme. Although he admitted people do leave the faith, he said "Jesus lets no one out of his hands." Jesus kept to all the predictions equivalent to a man blindfolded, looking amongst piles of dollar coins two feet high the length and breadth of Texas and finding just the one coin that had been marked. On this day of conversation (January 30th 1983) he said that the Pope is blasphemous and that Jesus only rated Mary as equal among friends. He told the young boys "I believe" when they suggested that everything in the Bible is true except Genesis. He also approved of speaking in tongues.

On February 20th 1983 Gerald said to me that authors of books who question the Resurrection cannot be Christian and he asked me, "What about the five hundred?" On March 27th 1983, he told the boys of five hundred, "...who, it is written, saw Jesus reincarnated." He claimed this was the number who saw Jesus in their *sleep* as well as when awake (when 'sleep' in fact means they were dead!). He ate a daffodil sandwich and asked what if five hundred came out of a school assembly saying they had seen him eating a daffodil sandwich? He then said he had actually done this. In 1985, after the research period, he told me he approved of the St. Heimdall's minister but the Rector does not believe in miracles or in the Resurrection.

Here was a fundamentalist conversionist and charismatic in authority. Later in 1985 he moved into the new Lowcarr Christian Fellowship House Church.

5 (d) iv. The Team Minister

I talked with the minister and listened when he passed through the groups.

He delegated authority to the lay leaders and did not take any group whilst I was there. Each fortnight in rotation the teenage and the young groups met in the vicarage.

He told me that he first attended a low liberal church but left it to go to a low evangelical church where "it clicked". He did not like high churches. He chose a Bible based theological college (probably Oak Hill) to develop his personal beliefs. He had become frustrated and told colleagues that if he did not get a permanent parish soon he would "stop it" (8) because he was "always scratching around". He wanted to develop St. Heimdall's and make it a Community Centre. (June 19th 1983). Team ministry necessarily involved him other churches of the parish. For example, he took services at the main St. Odin's church which used 1662 as well as 1980 services.

After the research period he gave a service there and stated that "sin kills". He had asked a group what is the most important thing to do other than worship God. The reply came, "speaking in tongues," and he told the church, "Rubbish." If the Bible says anything it is man's sinful nature to God. A believer is made sinless by God but if he then commits sin he must declare it to God who will remove the although committing such sin does not affect salvation. He suggested that believers try to see through the "eye of God", although God's demands are very high and no one can achieve that of Christ. This confused sermon perhaps did not relate to the predominantly old congregation unlikely to share his enthusiasm for the charismatic movement.

Although conversionist he told the younger boys that Genesis should not be taken literally (January 30th 1983). However, he said to me that there are as

many scientific theories of creation as scientists. So he might be described as a creationist and not a Darwinist.

5 (d) v. George

George, a leader, was a religiously silent weightlifter and mainly concerned with the youths from outside. He had been a Christian for four years. His heretical view was, "There are no facts in Christianity: it's all faith".

5 (e). The Teenagers' Belief Response at St. Heimdall's

5 (e) 1. Introduction

This section looks at how in the teenagers more liberal views were unable to develop. Leila and Heidi were the most religiously active of all. Others who played some contribution to the group are also included.

5 (e) 11. Leila

Her parents were not religious and she entered the church through its one youth club. She, unlike many, was interested in the epilogue. In her four years at church she had been on a weekend, became involved with the Boys Brigade, played in a rock-gospel group, became a Sunday school teacher and took assemblies at school. She was doing a commercial course in the sixth form at the girls' Muspell school.

She said she was getting more into Christianity but had and was experiencing "a few dips". It means life after death and there is a social attraction (November 28th 1983, by initial interview). Leila spoke about her lifeline interview with Jack (February 13th 1983). She said she accepted Christianity as it is (as it was told to her) but did not know whether to believe in it.



She was "on the border" and waiting for "something to happen", but realised that the next move was hers. As a declared agnostic I suggested that she might read the Bible, disagree with it (even all the time) but find that she still had an undercurrent of faith and perhaps did not need Gerald's attitude of "I believe". She replied that she was more interested in "top things" than the "little things. I asked if her reluctance was fear (conversionists speak of a big change of life with belief). She did not know what she would find. Leila asked me if she was "bad". I replied, "No." Then she asked if Gerald was bad in his religion so I said her's is preferable. I did suggest that she, unlike others, might find speaking in tongues difficult.

The following week, Gerald, having heard about the above conversation, told me that Leila's faith was "closest" to his. Her religion was "experience" and she had it to come. However, on February 27th 1983 James said it was not and he saw things in terms of Gerald trying to go out with Leila.

In the religious session of that day Leila complained about the immorality in evangelising to friends if they make the approach. If others begin to talk it is acceptable to evangelise the lifeline. This criticism was widely felt but it was left to Leila to say it. She had missed the leisure period because Jack had "collared" her to take the group, like others had, the next week. Jack told her that she had a free choice but still had to do it and she was given a yellow and green booklet for that purpose. She refused and the next week went with Veronica (the adult) and Gerald to see an abbey.

Before the point of the rebellion (March 13th 1983), she along with the others had to say what God had done for them in the last two weeks. Her

reply was, "Get me through my exams." Leila's faith was also shown the week later when all members were having a game of finding meanings in doodles drawn spontaneously and co-operatively between teams of two people. Leila drew a † which a youngster made into a P = Jesus. This was something which touched Leila and she spoke about it at the nearby pub afterwards.

On March 13th 1983 Gerald told Jack that, "The tide is coming in slowly: if you push her she'll rebel." Leila did rebel and had a break but did attend again. After the January 1985 walkout she went to Muspell Anglican Church (a broader evangelical church) for a while. Then she left home but returned and began attending a Pentecostal Church like some others. (See Appendix 2)

This last point is most interesting. She was not naturally a conversionist and resisted the authoritarian demands of personal evangelising. But she had no chance to develop her faith in another manner. Gerald's emotionalism and resultant dogma was the norm; and despite being fed up with the leaders there was no information about the existence of other Christian approaches. But she wished her belief could match the environment of her social life, and perhaps this wish continued when back in the area.

#### 5 (e) 111. Heidi

In the February 27th 1983 meeting, Heidi (to my question) said she would use her testimony on me if I was genuinely interested and because she knew me. "It is a duty," she added, and Jack said that it depends on the relationship.

But Heidi was a peculiar enthusiast. On March 13th 1983 she put it to me that "Jesus is a false idol really." Wondering what to say I replied, "Not

really." She then said one is told to worship God through Jesus but why? I said that some Christians question God, but she thought they could not be Christians. There were many evangelical booklets to take but she kept throwing them down and saying: "I disagree." I mentioned these alternative views to Jack. He replied, "She's thinking and asking deep questions."

The difference between Heidi and Leila was that whereas Leila was interested in "top things", Heidi was more interested in the details. She was within the conversionist "top things". She was one of only two against the rebellion. Trying to puzzle Helen out at the time I concluded that for her religious belief had more to do with teenage eros than theos.

She told me she wanted to do a theology degree (even though she was only doing O-levels). She was planning to do A-level Religious Education and had asked at school about sociology. Later in another week she said the school did not do sociology. So the best explanation for her original conversation was that it was a reflection of who she was talking to.

I was surprised to learn in Autumn of 1986 that Heidi no longer went to church when she left home. It would seem that her family and friends were a decisive influence in churchgoing and perhaps beyond them it just simply evaporated.

#### 5 (e) iv. Other People in the Group

Although there was a constant demand on the teenagers to respond they did so infrequently meaning that there is often little research about them.

Judith's family were originally Pentecostals but moved to the Anglican Church when her father became a Sunday School teacher and her mother a church organist. She first went to St. Heimdall's back in 1970 (before the actual church was built in 1971). She was a Sunday School teacher and played in a rock gospel group. She told me that her Christianity had a long way to go. (Initial interview, November 28th 1982)

Judith mainly kept quiet about her conflict with the course. It worried Jack that she was far more interested in the social side of Sunday evenings. She saw the lifeline testimony as an invasion of privacy and differed from Heidi by saying that she would not evangelise to me. She did not like my research interest and called me a "foreigner" from University. (February 20th 1983)

After the congregation dispersed in January 1985 she became a member of the House Church, Lowcarr Christian Fellowship (Appendix 2).

Doreen was a Sunday School teacher. She was born in Cyprus and had been in churches for eleven of her fifteen years. She called herself a committed Christian whose belief would strengthen in the long run but dipped in bad situations (November 28th 1982). On January 23rd 1983 Doreen described the course as "boring". Since 1985 Doreen went with Anne occasionally to Muspell Anglican Church (Appendix 2).

Anne was sixteen. When she was twelve her parents said she no longer had to go but she did continue according to habit and came to church of her own free will. Her father was a church warden. Her confirmation class only lasted

six weeks and she had far to go. (November 28th 1982) Anne was the only person to take the side of Heidi against the rebellion (March 13th 1983).

Anne often did not attend (she was ill for some time) and was frequently late. She had a friend from Muspell school who did not want to go to the church. Nora came once and then only after the religious session. She was never persuaded by Anne into joining the Church. St. Heimdall's people were not her closest friends, she told me in a lengthy conversation on March 20th 1983. Like others there she was a fan of Cliff Richard.

She had some perceptive comments to make regarding my written work about them and the middle class nature of church going. She wondered whether I considered them middle class because of church going rather than middle class and just happened to attend church.

After the February 27th 1983 summarising meeting I suggested to Jack that Anne had been alright. He thought not. In the session Anne had said her mother uses the Bible guide Daily Bread but Jack preferred Keynotes. Anne had showed a large degree of interest in the meeting but there was here a specific dispute over beliefs and the way Anne might be going.

Although in 1986 she reported a Christian faith at university (which seemed connected to emotions), when back home she considered the Pentecostals but did not go and only rarely went to Muspell church (Appendix 2).

Anita was known to James though not involved anymore at St. Heimdall's. He was frightened she might return to the church and try to be his girlfriend.

She had left the church and had a baby by a policeman. Once in Brian's learners class she became scared when he promised death to the unconverted.

On January 13th 1983 Harriet's mother told me that she accepts Jesus as "her Lord" but was unsure about evangelising. So Harriet escaped being in the older group, unlike Leila. She often went with Hayley (the Methodist) to Risemere Methodist's youth club.

Veronica used to be a youth club helper. A number of people used to go to her house on Thursdays. She attended the group a number of times. She must have been something of a counsellor to Gerald and between Leila and him. He once described Veronica as "mother and sister in one".

When a boy said to Leila that "Jesus isn't the answer to everything" (during the doodles, March 20th 1983), Veronica replied, "Oh yes he is." But in the pub she asked me if I had seen the film Gandhi. I replied no. She claimed that it changed Ben Kingsley's life. Had I a vision of God? I replied no again. Had I looked at other religions? Yes, I replied, Islam and Judaism for the purpose of politics. She responded, "That's really good, that."

James stayed away from most religious sessions. He was the clown and the focus of the girls. He was taken to church by his parents until fourteen. He then became aware of Christianity and was in the Salvation Army Band for two years. Then school friends took him to St. Heimdall's and had been there for three years. He said he was attracted by the females. On Christianity he said he would not backslide because bad things bring him closer to it. (28th November 1982) But not one of them visited his mother in hospital but were

only content to pray for her, so she stopped attending (July 3rd 1983). He was often fiercely critical of Gerald. As he came in on February 27th 1983 James said to me, "Here's mouth." Meanwhile, Nicholas had to tell James a number of times to stop drawing the dole when earning money for piano playing in drama productions and that he should get a regular job.

On March 13th 1983 Jack sneered that James has no religious opinions and was just used for his piano playing. But on May 27th 1983 in a pub James said he could not believe that non-Christians do not go to heaven because so many did good things. He thought that the flood of Noah's Ark only happened in a small locality and not all over the world. One of his Christian friends present responded that the Bible is just a book of stories. This again is evidence that the leadership dominated how religion was to be understood.

Nicholas moved to the independent evangelical "S Street" church and only visited St. Heimdall's. Wars and famines were making him have to sort out his views on God (March 20th 1983). Once when walking with him I told him to watch out for an on-coming bus. He responded that when he dies he'll tell me if Christianity is true and if not he'll tell me not. I said if not he wouldn't because he'd be dead (July 3rd 1983). He and I used to discuss the leaders and the church's sexual skeletons in the cupboard.

On July 3rd 1983 I told him about the minister and the poltergeist. So we wondered if the minister would be shouting at it or telling the woman she is barmy. We settled for the latter. Beyond our own discussions, his thinking of famines and war suggested that his faith was becoming more questioning in nature. He said I had posed him some "very challenging questions".

Matthew too was based at S Street. He was having a year off school before going to Exeter University to study theology. Despite some crude views he showed some non-fundamentalist tendencies. On February 27th 1983 in responding to my work Matthew differentiated between theological religion and sociological religion. He believed that Jesus had said that although the Pharisees and Sadducees had the garb (sociological religion) they were not (theologically) religious. He agreed that Jesus did say many Jewish things about himself and that Christianity developed from Judaism but God may not have wanted it that way. Christianity should be reasonable, and he claimed that he was opposed to dogmatism. He claimed an interest in the philosophy of religion. The American Soldier (9) illustrates behaviour according to the group aspired to rather than the present one, and he was looking to a wider theological world. But his religion had been framed by fundamentalism.

I met Matthew in the Anglican Fellowship of Vocation in 1985. He said he agreed with the Bishop of Durham but those who do have to keep quiet. Yet he thought Don Cupitt should be stripped of his cloth. By 1986 Matthew was helping out in a distinctive Anglo-Catholic church. He trained at Wescott House, the liberal academic college, for the priesthood. He had changed!

5 (f). St. Heimdalls and Conversionist Religion

The management made sure that St. Heimdalls had nothing to do with the supposed *via media* of Anglicanism. This Anglican church was like a sect, evidence itself of the weakness of the Church/denomination/sect continuum. Littered with errors even of orthodoxy, its theology was in the world of evil poltergeists, the anti-Christ, the five hundred and all the other supernatural details, which was unashamedly conversionist.



The teenagers were living within the knowledge of a broader culture and as such the associational religion generated feelings of guilt, and created either apathy or resistance. They were mainly there because of their parents, because of Muspell school friends, and due to leisure considerations. They were not sectarian and some, especially Leila and perhaps Heidi, might have benefitted from another unavailable liberal approach to Christianity.

6. Risemere Methodist Church

6 (a). Introduction

This church differed from St. Heimdall's in that it had a mixed leadership in terms of belief positions. The interest here is not focussed as such on individual teenage beliefs but events as the teenagers moved towards and away from their membership service. The issue remains one of models of religion available to them and whether this included forms of liberalism.

6 (b). Brief outline of Events

These dates are marker posts to events. On June 5th 1983 the group turned from mayhem to an interest in religion as the membership Service on October 9th 1983 drew nearer. There questioning Janet had an instant removal of her doubts. They had still gone by Sunday October 23rd 1983 but relationships were then becoming strained. Thus towards the end of the year the doubts returned, the mayhem was restored (like on Sunday December 4th 1983) and meetings of the fellowship group became infrequent.

The material on the leaders comes from before 1982 and is used on the basis that it still applied in respect of the teenage group under study.

6 (c) The Leaders

6 (c) 1. Boris, Leader of the Fellowship Group

Boris lived with his mother and step-father. His Christianity was accompanied by strong interests in trains, cricket and photography. Frequently he would go and photograph trains in the south west of England and watch Yorkshire play cricket at Headingley.

He knew of ministers who preached "the social gospel" (for him a watering down of Christianity) and when I told him of a priest who did not believe in the Virgin Birth he wondered what he was doing in the ministry (December 30th 1983). He was biblically based and in a discussion about Elijah v Baal he described the Bible to be "true as written" (June 25th 1980).

Boris claimed that God is more important than Jesus. God is the Creator of everything because it says so in the Bible, and a friend had told him that although it may not have taken seven days, the order of creation was as given in Genesis. When I suggested that some liberal ministers do not hold to a literalist "telephone line" view about prayer he said does not delude himself when he prays because God hears and listens. (December 30th 1983).

Jesus is both Son of God and man too, that is, God turned into man. Joseph was not the father and if he was the Cross is meaningless. (December 30th 1983). Son means son (July 13th 1980). He believed Jesus was born in Bethlehem and when he showed slides of his visit there he included the 'birthplace' which is shown to tourists. He joked that he saw no angels when he was there (December 23rd 1983).

He was not "blessed with the gift of tongues" but would go to Pentecostalist churches and charismatic meetings, like Hollybush Farm. He believed that in such places the Spirit fills the person.

On October 12th 1980 he was talking about a visit to Hollybush Farm but a lay leader, Mr. Logan (Cary's father), called those who speak in tongues "cliquish" and the minister said they act as first class Christians making others second class. Boris instead called it "meeting God in a particular way" and, for example, one person walked regularly five miles to go to Hollybush Farm. But, he said, many held back because it was no holds barred.

The dullness of the Risemere church disappointed Boris. On December 30th 1983 he told me he liked Pentecostalist services "for a change" but was not sure if he would like them all the time. He recognised that the Anglican Church was at the forefront of the charismatic movement.

Conversion and experience was important. He was telling me about a service celebrating John Wesley's conversion at Aldersgate in 1738. I put it to him that some say his effective conversion was in 1725 because he sought God. Boris replied, "Going to church is not enough." (May 23rd 1982) (10) He said it is possible, without wanting it, to be converted to Christianity, the Jehovahs Witnesses or even Marxism if he went to one of "those meetings" (July 23rd 1980). Conversion could be painful too: Boris comforted a girl who said her boyfriend would no longer speak to her after an alter-call in an M.A.Y.C. service (July 15th 1981). He told her that God often causes such troubles otherwise she may not have committed herself. The preacher has it on record that M.A.Y.C. had been following a path of "pussyfoot religion" but

"his avowed aim was to take some youngsters to Jesus Christ," claimed Boris. He gave me the "classical analysis" of conversion. Nobody can be perfectly moral. We are all sinners and God exists to save us when we die. Jesus, the son of and the same as God, died for our sins. Joining a church is only public commitment and not personal conversion. (July 15th 1981).

There were differences with a biblically based lay preacher in the Risemere church. He led a house group which Boris called "traditional" whereas he preferred "Christian hugs" (August 14th 1983). On March 14th Boris told me that the lay preacher preferred a hymn-sandwich service rather than the playlet the group had been rehearsing, although the playlet went ahead.

Boris had held office in the District but did not find his Methodist identity important. He would instead call himself "Christian" yet would then add "evangelical". Such qualification was significant, and clear evidence of new denominationalism.

6 (c) ii. Cary, Assistant Leader

Cary had an outgoing personality with a strong interest in pop music, and he became radio disc-jockey. He had held office in the District. Unlike Boris, his parents were churchgoers and Methodists. He worked in a Hull newspaper.

He said little about religious beliefs. After the research period I heard the most definite statement when I asked him what he thought of the Bishop of Durham. He replied, "It maybe a bit simple but I'm with Mission England. You either live by the Gospels or you don't." On a later occasion however he thought he might be of the same sort of faith as the liberal.

He was influenced by a group of evangelists visiting the church from the Cliff College in the 1970s. He told me he had doubts and thought that other people think Christianity is a good thing but that Jesus Christ never existed (August 24th 1981). In a group discussion about St. Francis I mentioned, in the context of curing past faults, that people should aim for "morality" and so Cary suggested "God" and that I meant the same thing. (October 3rd 1983)

Although his personality and pop quizzes led to good relations with the youngsters, there were reservations about him. Janet commented that she knew what others believed but not Cary (January 1st 1984). To my knowledge he only ever took two sessions with a religious teaching content (this in four years). The first was from Paul's Letter to Titus about making a Christian community free from criticism. He gave the group a list about what they wanted in life and they chose, in order, satisfaction, security, friendship, fame and fortune (September 18th 1983). The following week, with little response, he spoke about Christian character and the content of services.

He could not have been a leader in a church like St. Heimdall's. Indeed Boris suggested to me that he had no faith or religious seriousness at all.

6 (c) 111. Clive. Youth Club Leader

Bringing up a young family limited Clive's involvement in the church. Clive was only occasionally involved with the fellowship group until towards the end of my research period. Later, as a result of crises and machinations, he became the main leader. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic but its "God of fear" never came to him. He became a Methodist for the "wrong reasons" of wanting to be in the church structure, but had since experienced an instant

conversion. Yet he had mixed feelings about going to Pentecostal evenings with Boris.

Clive was popular with the teenagers but Boris and the minister considered him to be something of a dissident. For example, when the Anglicans pulled out of an annual Easter Parade in Baldemere in 1984 the General Committee of the church considered that with not enough people it should be cancelled. Clive told them that with a celebration of Crucifixion and Resurrection one person is a parade and asked if they were remembering Easter or is for the participants to say "look at us"? The minister retorted that nobody would have *that* idea. In the event the parade was called off. (February 3rd 1984)

Clive's greatest act of dissidence was to become a lay preacher and then to give it up. It is supposed to be for life. He did not like having to have an instant rapport with unknown congregations. Later he resumed preaching when getting a national M.A.Y.C. appointment. A minister within the circuit suggested he consider ordained ministry but he thought it impractical.

He found the minister to be an interference with his many ideas for Risemere church and so would circumvent him. But some others said that Clive had a lot of big ideas which never saw the light of day.

The summary of Clive's religious views here are only taken from within the research period (11). He told me that he does not pray to Jesus but God is prayed to through Jesus. The local preacher course introduced him to biblical investigations which he enjoyed with friends and he was not fundamentalist as regards the Bible. He believed in paradox as in one of his songs in a

'Family Evening' of December 23rd 1983: by our logic Jesus would have been born in a palace but by God's wisdom he was born in a stable, and this wisdom and ability of God - which we see as illogical - features in the Virgin Birth, Original Sin and other elements. (February 22nd 1984). His openness to the critical approach was shown by his liking for the of the radical (if careless) Jesus The Evidence series on Channel Four. The group itself saw the second programme in the series. Adrienne told me that she noticed that Clive liked it but Boris did not.

This was a curious mixture of a conversionism and a liking for investigation. But it was his style rather than belief which was maverick.

#### 6 (c) iv. Gertrude

Gertrude appeared on the scene only in August 1983. She was quite popular with the young people but her appearances at the fellowship group became few in number. She put this down to her strenuous work as an assistant manageress in a department store.

Clive told me that years before in the youth club she met some "obnoxious Jesus freaks", one of whom she was going to marry. She became a hardened fundamentalist and was going to become a local preacher.

But she had changed. She believed in God but beyond that had "not put her mind to it recently". She only believed in parts of the Bible. Genesis was "hogwash" like Adam and Eve and the world created in seven days. Gertrude said that when eighteen people accept what they are told but as an adult she could think for herself. Yet she also said that whereas the old people

believe Genesis the younger people identify with evolution despite the older people saying they do not mix. She had not been to church for ages, would not go for purely social reasons but only from choice. No one would tell her to go and they never did. (August 10th 1983).

On November 13th 1983, the minister, Janet, Adrienne and myself had a secret meeting about Boris walking out on the fellowship group (with Cary having somewhat disappeared too). I suggested that Gertrude might be an effective disciplining agent (she was known for having no nonsense) but the minister did not agree because she had yet to develop her thoughts.

Boris reckoned that her wanting a social life might be God's way of bringing her back to the church. When I suggested she believed in God he replied, "So does the Devil." (October 9th 1983).

Things changed. Gertrude and others went to the National M.A.Y.C. weekend at Norwich (October 14th - 16th). She went forward to the altar-call and came back crying. Boris later declared, "This was a restrengthening of her faith." (October 23rd 1983). Emotion preceded knowledge, however, because in Norwich a young fellowship group girl asked if Gertrude believed in reincarnation and she replied yes, "Because Jesus had been reincarnated." (November 11th 1983)

She was going to go to the Christmas Carol service, her first for a long time, she told me (December 16th 1983). But she was not there and then soon disappeared. In fact she began to live with someone connected with another part of the church. Gertrude's short stay showed that a conversionist faith can evaporate when ungrounded and unrelated to personal and social needs.



6 (c) v. The Risemere Minister

This middle aged minister began with a good reputation for getting on with young people. He was interested in music. He once was an Anglican but moved into the Methodist church, beginning his ministry in the 1960's. He had served (one very isolated) rural and urban churches. He was chosen to minister for a second term at Risemere but after I had left he failed to achieve a further extension which disappointed him.

He equated teenage religion with fundamentalism and had reservations about charismatic emotionalism (January 2nd 1984). I introduced myself on June 8th 1980 by saying I did economics, politics and sociology at university and he replied, "They are all interested in finding the truth." Yet, to my point (January 13th 1984) that the 'Death of God' theologians could not do without God he replied, "God must be laughing at the theologians." He claimed that, "The vast majority of Methodist ministers are traditional."

He told me, "Jesus was not just a good man, you know." He came from God and the fact that he was a man is all part of the mystery. Just because the Virgin Birth is in only two of the four Gospels does not mean that it is not true. (January 13th 1984). After the research period he said that the Bishop of Durham was trying to explain the Virgin Birth but did it in an odd way.

Four sermons in three services gave insight into his metaphorical style of religion. At Harvest Festival (September 20th 1981) he claimed a togetherness in need between man and God concerning crops, that it is better to give than receive but it is right to receive with grace. The Sea of Galilee receives and gives so it is a lovely water with people working and children playing

all around it. However, also fed by the River Jordan is the Dead Sea. It receives and gives nothing so it is horrible and polluted.

Another picturesque sermon (May 8th 1983) looked at religious behaviour. There was a beautiful garden surrounded by desert and in that garden was a beautiful bamboo tree and a sparkling stream. The gardener first told the bamboo tree that he had to use it by taking it out by the roots (which would do much damage). The tree protested but gave in gracefully. In stages the gardener announced each task and each time the tree submitted gracefully until it became a tube. The gardener used it to divert the stream and then allow the desert to bloom. The minister told everyone, "It's a parable" and God asks us to give ourselves up totally so that greater good may come.

In one service (May 9th 1982) the congregation had to walk over stage boxes laid out in the shape of a cross. Boris demonstrated that it was a good job Jesus did not mean you should carry your Cross literally. Here the minister first preached This Religion is For You about a yobbo who became famous in religious circles. A group burst into the church but the minister present grabbed one and challenged him to say, "Jesus died for me and I don't care a damn." The youth said it all once, stopped at "care" when asked to say it again and finally said, "Jesus died for me." The second sermon was about the film Genevieve. The London to Brighton Car Rally had a return leg. The evil ones tricked their way into the lead but on returning into London got stuck in a tram line and veered off the set route away from the finishing line.

The sermons show something of the decline of church religion. When people more habitually went to church, saying "this religion is for you" might have

had relevance, but not to the already converted! They showed an old-style Methodism in its call to perfection of behaviour. Also, their picturesque nature as reflected by Vahanian, the Death of God theologian, himself using a parable, shows how church religion is decaying:

*Vladimir:* Do you remember the Gospels?

*Estragon:* I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Very pretty they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy. (Vahanian, 1961, p. 55)

On October 3rd 1982 it was almost eight hundred years since the birth of St. Francis of Assisi so the minister decided to tell the group about him. He heard a voice or voices (the minister was not sure) to repair the 'church' but realised it was the people who needed repairing. Then the minister got into a muddle about his order of Monks because it was obedient, poor and chaste but he also believed in freedom. The minister first asked what causes people not to be good and what has to be given up to make goodness. Then he thought his questions too deep, so the second question would be answered first. The practical answer given by some was a need for a new Church and also a change of services. But then they thought their revolutionary answers might not be right and the minister noted their eventual conservatism. I raised the radical change of Methodist meeting houses into churches but he rebuked me that the only radical period was Christ and the disciples.

On June 5th 1983 the minister proclaimed that science and religion are not in conflict and God and evolution go together. However, he said Darwinism is a dogma and theory so Darwin denied man his uniqueness and man did not come

from monkeys. But one member declared that Darwin had studied species on various islands and proved the reality of evolution. Janet joked that she could not perceive men coming out of monkeys. I suggested that man acquired his "uniqueness" on leaving the ape stage and Darwinism today includes stepped mutations. He replied it still leaves the missing link.

In these discussions the minister had the problem that he was muddled with religious thinking and could not control the the effect of secular based enquiring minds. The minister was therefore running out of defences:

Paul Tillich said ...that after 1859 Christian theology was like an army retreating in the face of another advancing army. With every new breakthrough of the advancing army Christian theology would attempt to protect the Christian tradition which still remained untouched. Then a new breakthrough would make a previous defence untenable, and so another retreat and setting up of a new defence would be necessary. (Kent, 1982, p. 4, from Tillich, 1967, p. 158)

The minister on meeting the army a century later than the theologians, tried to retreat a little and re-group on the basis of the old scheme. But he could not shoot straight and was running out of ammunition. Perhaps he had too little time for reading. His sermons were almost old fashioned. This moderate traditionalist position demonstrates why clearer and more dogmatic traditionalism and conversionism has to dominate in the churches.

6 (d). The Teenagers' Response to the Leadership

6 (d) 1. Introduction

The teenagers moved to and beyond the membership service. Their viewpoints, particularly those of Janet and Adrienne, are given within the context of meetings and events.

6 (d) 11. June 5th 1983, Fellowship Group Meeting

In this meeting, including the minister, the teenagers - particularly Janet and Adrienne - discussed their religious views.

Janet had been reading about reincarnation and thought it existed so the minister replied that it would be better if she did not. However, she and some others (about a dozen present) said that people can remember events from past centuries. He responded that none of this had been proven and called it an "easy belief". I reckoned such a belief is difficult so he changed it to "easy way out". Adrienne then mentioned ouija boards (her mother was a spiritualist). People had spent eight years on an ouija board and had discovered seven planes of life. Clearly Janet and Adrienne thought religion was a range of possibilities of which Christianity was one option.

About Christianity, Janet asked how Christ can be Son of God and God at the same time. The minister replied that it was a "kind of description" but said no more to help her. She then wanted to know how God can allow volcanoes to kill people. The minister strangely replied that over the period of evolution people had not learnt their mistakes. She thought it unfortunate and unfair that God allows some people to be born handicapped when he should not. At birth people are the "purest" and have not done anything wrong. The minister replied that perhaps they find their inner peace, like Helen Keller did.

I asked Janet if like me she considers faith as second best to evidence (12). She agreed with me and said, "There is no evidence." So the minister told me that knowledge comes through faith and then told Janet that she was after an insurance policy whereas what she needed was *assurance*. She believed in

Christianity and therefore life after death, she said, but if, after death, it was "not there" then she would feel cheated. The minister asked if would matter if by then she had achieved fulfilment through belief. Boris interjected with the title from his recent service, "Let Go, Let God!"

So Janet declared that she did not think she was a Christian. She was not sure. The minister responded that her learning was healthy. Thinking of Brian at St. Heimdalls, I offered the point that some people say that to question God is to put yourself above God. The minister replied with a quote from Tennyson (who wrote about the encroachment of science onto religion) so I came back with the comment that I wondered why Christianity had so much to do with the arts, probably because it cannot deal with the sciences.

This session then returned to something more typical when they began to sing some dirty lyrics. Cary was waiting to use his guitar so the minister asked him to get this singing stopped. Also, when it came to prayer time the minister had to insist on silence for thirty seconds to do a prayer. One person timed it as lasting fifty seven seconds. So the minister recalled a hymn that lasted for fifteen seconds and there was a game when people were invited to stand up once they thought two minutes had passed.

Clearly, the interest in pagan questions showed that although the young people played up in these meetings some religious thinking had been going on sometime. The questions on Christianity were secular and Darwinian in basis and the minister was unable to sufficiently answer them. There was therefore a generally rejected view that the only way out for Christianity was "Let Go, Let God" conversionism.

6 (d) 111. October 9th 1983. Membership Service

At the service Janet experienced an instant removal of her doubts. Although Cary said to me, "God, struth, We don't want an in-depth interview!" I got some instant reactions. Janet told me that at first she thought she should not be there. Then she thought she should be there and went through the reasons in her mind. She had a beaming face and said she felt completely different from the beginning. So her emotions had been tapped and she had gained the experience that Leila in St. Heimdall's was unable to achieve.

Others agreed, more or less, but there was one dissenter. Hayley had decided she did not want to be a member. She told me she had been bothered by being excluded but not now. They had only made themselves look silly. So Janet reacted that *she* looked silly. Hayley went on to say that she had attended all the classes but felt that she was not ready. It may have been her age. More than this she would not say.

I found out why on 1st January 1984. Hayley had also told the minister that she might be too young, but this was not the truth Janet and Adrienne told me. Hayley and Sarah went to the conversionist Baldermere School Christian Union (involving St. Heimdall's Gerald) which told them that membership would mean a change in their behaviour with an end to all blaspheming. Sarah had "switched off" and ignored this but Hayley "drank it in". She thus turned down being a member.

But there was also further division between the teenagers: Petula, her brother and Arthur had been confirmed separately with the adults. Adrienne told me herself on November 27th 1983 that she began going out with Arthur,

as evident at a New Year's party. Petula reacted against this by saying she must choose between her and Janet as friends. Then Petula started spreading malicious gossip about Adrienne, and ringing her up and crying. Eventually Petula's mother confronted Adrienne on the church steps about her and Arthur. Adrienne said to her "You should know" about what their activity was and got a slap from the mother. Adrienne replied, "Thank you." Then Arthur refused to back her up and they split. So in March, Cary had asked the divided group if they wanted to continue with the fellowship group or perhaps they would leave it a while, meet in pubs and talk about football or something.

Clive told me that Petula's parents were "pharisaical" fundamentalists. For example she did not allow some house painting by a church member because it was a Sunday.

Petula, and later Arthur too, moved out of the fellowship group and the membership class. Adrienne described Arthur as "racist" and mad about Margaret Thatcher. There was also the complaint that Mr. Logan in the Sunday School had allowed too much political discussion there.

6 (d) iv. Sunday October 23rd. Fellowship Group

The doubts had still gone. Janet told everyone that it was not until she had actually been through the communion that she had felt so good. When she sat down she felt so different. The laying on of hands had only been a part of it. She and Sarah said the minister tried to push them through the floor. I asked about its effect. Janet said it strengthened her belief; she had many doubts but after the service they had gone. She could not say why.



Then Boris asked had they considered doing something extra at night like a prayer or Bible reading? At this point the questioning spirit returned. Janet said she could not see the point of prayer because if God knows her every thought and she talks to him all the time then why should she pray? Asking people for help carried the danger of leaving someone out. Wendy kept asking why prayer was illogical if God hears all the time. "No!", said Janet for everybody, "We mean at a fixed time." So Boris explained that prayer is a discipline and the believer is "not always on the mountain top but down in the valley." Prayer discipline keeps it all going.

So, despite her experience, Janet was not acquiring normal conversionist behaviour. She was still questioning. For example she thought a preacher at the Norwich weekend had said no Christian can agree with nuclear arms. She disagreed with this. Boris and the others responded that in fact he had said if everyone followed Jesus there would be no need to have nuclear arms.

Wendy said that at an evening meal in Norwich people rushed out and the preacher called out to stop them: "All who believe in Jesus keep sat down." The minister was furious calling it "spiritual blackmail". She thought this worthy of report (perhaps she thought that ministers should not disagree amongst themselves).

Hayley was absent. Walking home Janet suggested to Boris that Hayley was "not being Methodist" by refusing membership. However he admired her. Janet asked that surely membership is the "first step" to the correction of wrong doings like drinking. Boris instead asserted that she should let God come through to correct her wrong doings.

When Janet had gone Boris told me he was concerned about Cary's behaviour. The journey back is usually quiet but Cary encouraged bawdy singing and jokes. "You would not have thought it was a religious weekend," he said.

The next week there would be a speaker from outside. Boris was not sure that this was a good idea. "The group is only now just beginning to pull together," he said. The speaker did come along.

6 (d) v. The Return of the Doubts

The speaker was a minister who had been in Africa. Asked by me if he was competing with other home grown religions he responded, "Christianity is adding to their knowledge of God." Boris did not comment about this. (13)

A week later there was no meeting and on November 13th 1983 Janet and Adrienne told me that at Sunday School the playing up was so bad that Boris had walked out of and said he would no longer lead Sunday Night at Eight. On November 25th 1983 Boris told me that he was thinking of setting up a "splinter group" for those who wanted serious discussion. It would include Petula. He certainly was identifying with her fundamentalism.

On 27th November 1983 Adrienne on her own told me that Hayley was asking questions of her and Janet about not behaving more seriously. She thought the minister had over emphasised the experience element of taking up Church membership. She told me her religious history. She was baptised an Anglican, went to a Roman Catholic school and joined the Methodist Church (this despite (?) her mother being a spiritualist). "The trouble is," she said, "people go to church and think they are saved." She said she knows that the

youth club leader Clive believes differently to Boris, and that the youngest people in the fellowship group felt that I was there to put them off their religion. I spoke about my thoughts on the Christian and Bahá'í faiths.

Eventually the group met on December 4th 1983. Boris was not present. A teenager from another church but in M.A.Y.C. described the behaviour as "mayhem" despite the presence of the minister. Cary agreed to lead the group but not in the next few weeks. Later, there was an element of reconciliation when on December 18th 1983 Boris joined others for some carol singing.

Parallel to the breaking down of the group was a loss of faith. Only Janet, Adrienne and I arrived for a fellowship group meeting on the 1st January 1984. Once again no leaders turned up. So there was a chat. Janet told me what she believed. God is, in a sense, a filter through which everything is explainable. But a physics teacher said he only goes to the church so his son can choose, otherwise it is an "easy way out" for anyone (14). She disagreed. So I asked what she thought about the gods of mythology and she replied they all became one. Aiming for precision I asked whether 'Jesus is alive today' means he is "stood there". She replied not, it is like the Spirit. So I asked if "Spirit" is like "The spirit of man is limited", and the answer was no. I asked about the existence of the Devil. The devil works through you, she replied. Few talk about it today as in Mediaeval times, I claimed. She described her belief in predestination that if a person does something wrong then somebody else will always find out.

These questions were probably nothing like what she had been asked before. She told me, "To tell you the truth, I don't know what I believe anymore."

Sunday School and membership classes had said "nothing" but there was so much to find out. She even claimed she could not remember what happened in the membership service. So I gave her my copy of John Robinson's Honest to God which I had hoped would give me a clue as to what Cary thought.

Janet spoke about the leaders. Cary never said what he believed, Clive let them say what they thought. She liked the previous minister with his moral stories, but now a choir member did the Bible reading and a person was not a full member of the church unless in the choir. When they were at Norwich, Radio 1 wanted to know what listeners were doing. They were going to send in a risqué "Oggi, Oggi Oggi" verse similar to a chant of "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" from the pulpit in Norwich. "Yes," said Adrienne. Yet the minister said that he would "disown them" if they sent it in. But the local Anglican Rector fared no better. Janet called him "sickly" and his predecessor was "evil".

#### 6 (d) vi. Postscript

On the 2nd January 1984 I saw the minister about the decline in leadership, the disputes between the teenagers and indeed my own membership thoughts. Everyone had to attend on January 8th 1984. In it Clive refused to answer the minister about his ideas for taking over the group (in case they were stopped dead). However, the minister persuaded Boris to lead the group in rotation with himself. By affirming minority opinion, the minister ignored the majority view of the teenagers to temporarily rest the group. After the meeting Clive told me he would wait for the new group to collapse.

The Friday after I was excluded from the fellowship group. This was because in the meeting I had openly asked Janet what she thought of Honest to God

(she said she could not understand it). The minister said my theology creates too many doubts. Also I later found out that it had as much to do with my advice to Janet and Adrienne that it was best to continue to keep away from the Baldemere Christian Union given its effect on the membership service. This remark ended up at the St. Heimdall's minister and he complained to the Risemere minister.

The group did collapse because the minister was too busy and Clive had influence especially with Janet and Adrienne. He told them they did not have to go if they did not want to. I sent a letter to the minister about my view of the meeting, for others to see. For a short time I maintained my contact with Clive at his youth club. Later I discussed the letter with the minister.

The best information I have is that all the teenagers at Risemere Methodist Church no longer go to its activities. The leading teenagers began to go to pubs rather than the youth club, and Clive's group stopped meeting. In 1987 the organ player at the church told me that so few young people stay on.

6 (e). Summary of the Risemere Methodist Group

In the Methodist fellowship group a middle way religion did not work, and the vacuum was filled by conversionism with emotion. Like a rabbit out of a hat it took away Janet's doubts until relationships deteriorated.

Conversionism came from Boris and the influence of the Baldemere Christian Union. It stopped Hayley taking up membership and subsequently split the Methodist group. It was all wrapped up with fundamentalist morality.

All in all this overcame the mixed leadership. The mixture did have one influence - confusion. But the liberal road was not available: Clive was a maverick, but only in style as his belief remained related to conversionism. Eventually he conformed for the demands of M.A.Y.C. office.

## 7. Overall Conclusions of the Studies

### 7 (a). Introduction

Bernice Martin advised reference to group structure, interconnections and the relationship with the wider institutional framework. This summary looks at teenagers and then the churches more generally.

### 7 (b). Specific Issues Involving Teenagers

Carrier, commenting on studies among American and French Catholics, showed that despite differences in culture, teenagers show increased and then reduced commitment (Carrier, 1965, p. 241) for pedagogical, psychological and sociological and cultural reasons (p. 244). The first concerns the connection between religious instruction, spirituality and participation, but other factors are needed to help explain wastage patterns (p. 245). Psychologists suggest that teenagers who leave have been rejecting parental authority and developing their own basis of life away from religion (which threatens values, traditions and religious attitudes). They fail to develop integrating and religious values when they psychologically mature (pp. 245-6). Sociocultural factors are the confusion of roles the teenager plays where he is no longer quite a child but not yet an adult. There is also the confusion of reference groups between the general environment and the church. After membership the competing groups win the attention of the teenager against the church (p. 246-50).

A.G. Smith shows how the psychological and social factors win teenagers greater self-autonomy. The effect of these changes is that they move in a liberal direction, and they need to know that liberal options of Christian belief are available:

The obvious changes in physical and emotional development which adolescence brings are accompanied by less obvious but equally fundamental changes in mental powers. Most young people now enter upon a period of considerable mental activity with a new questioning spirit. Junior age children have a love of factual knowledge, but they have very limited powers of abstract or critical thought. Young teenagers, except for the slow learning, now begin to develop adult ways of thinking. Childish concepts of magic are now finally discarded, and a much more logical and scientific attitude takes their place. ...Prove it now becomes a common attitude to religion, and the unscientific aspects of religion are regarded with varying degrees of scepticism. (Smith, 1969, p. 20)

They ...need to know that among Christians there are different interpretations of the miracle stories... The childish ideas of God need to be discarded or grow into nobler, spiritual concepts... They need to see that scientific and religious ways of looking at the world are complementary, not contradictory. (pp. 21-22)

But this was not the case in the churches under study, despite differences in group structure and the intensity of authority. The teenage group at St. Heimdall's using Bernice Martin's categories was like this:

strongly led  
unstable  
strongly autocratic  
tight control  
short lived  
largely unfunctional  
homogenous age and sex status etc.

In comparison the group structure of the fellowship at Risemere Methodists was like this:

led  
unstable  
democratic  
loose social control  
short lived  
basically unifunctional  
heterogenous age, sex status etc.

It is not suprising that liberal approaches to Christian belief were not available at St. Heimdall's. A united and strongly autocratic leadership was dedicated to indoctrinating the need for conversionist belief and action. Yet in the Methodists, although the leadership was mixed and the influences varied (Clive's freedom, Cary's pop music, the minister's confusions, my agnosticism and Boris's fundamentalism), the effect was still that liberal religion could not develop. The same was on offer: emotionalism to support conversionism.

Of course churches realise that their younger people question the dogma and leave when it has no further social and psychological relevance. But their reaction is to confirm them, and to pursue the route of emotion, belief and commitment. A clue to this process is given by Michael Goulder:

The classes were marked, as I later came to see that confirmation classes nearly always are, with the spurious seriousness of sudden devotion. It was time for us to be done, and we were doing our best to respond to an artificioal challenge... (Goulder and Hick, 1983, p. 3).

That is just what happened at the Risemere church. Behavioural chaos indeed turned to reflection (some of the time) and Janet achieved the experience which Leila thought would solve her problem. But the challenge was artificial, and it did not last.



But it can for a few people. Some who went to St. Heimdall's continued to attend church eventually within the success stories of Pentecostalism and the House Churches. Whatever their doubts, the model was set. They craved for social and religious fun, and it is not possible to have an emotional faith without certainty. You cannot sing to the rooftops about doubts.

Local churches are not willing to liberalise as this involves too much risk. Teenagers would want to know why what they were once told was no longer true. But more simply, Christianity is creedal, and liberal interpretations are a complicated business: they are not seen as enhancing belief but undermining and watering it down.

What this means is that the teenagers who stay on to become tomorrow's leaders will be predominantly conversionist. The dynamic is all in this direction: there is no moderate future in the sub-culture of the churches.

7 (c). Conclusion: Churches in General

The first obvious general point is that the Church/denomination/sect continuum is inadequate. The Anglican church was more sectarian in content than the Methodist denomination. Evidence rather suggests that churches on the ground limit the forms of Christianity available to members whatever is their mainstream denomination.

The conversionist group structure was more intense than the mixed. This would be a general finding: conversionists put great stress on authoritarian structures of delegation, direction and control.

Emotion is the route towards strengthening belief, and belief is dependent on the maintenance of that emotion. It is not simply a teenage experience but popular throughout charismatic circles (as Gertrude showed).

The basis of church belief, following on from the nature of creedal belief, encourages a unilinear approach to all dogma. The language of the Trinity is the same whether used by the liberal or conversionist; a liberal using it is unlikely to be understood in a liberal way, and in translating it may just water down and confuse. To the uneducated ear it is 'either more belief or less' and so the adult believer can either be conversionist, traditionalist or apathetic. Perhaps liberalism requires a minimum level of sophistication and education not found or encouraged within the churches. Clive approached some liberality through his local preacher's course (not all do) but even then it only touched the surface of his understanding.

So liberals have to be created beyond the churches. The effect is that new denominationalism is unevenly distributed: the active liberal element is confined elsewhere outside the local churches on the ground.

CHAPTER 7

The Tensions between the Distributed Belief and Authority Types

1. Introduction

Chapter 6 indicated that liberalism is squeezed out of the churches. This chapter takes a more general view of the distribution of belief and authority types within English mainstream Christianity with reference to great and little traditions.

There are comparisons made with Eastern religions and great and little traditions, asking whether Christianity is divided or democratically unified. The Durham and Bennet affairs illustrate some points at issue, and as well as investigating the role of instrumental leadership the question is asked, with reference to Joyce Thurman's M.A. (1979), whether educated faith or that of the churches is in the ascendancy.

2. The Locality of Christian Belief Types

2 (a). The Educational Arena

The local church exists for worship, in reverence and in praise, and is not usually a place of inquiry. That happens in the educational arena, where the methodology of study involves the risk of disbelief in set doctrines. For the Christian there is a tension between both types of institution given the expectations of the academic and religious communities.

Those who look to their Christian pastors and teachers for spiritual nourishment and for edification of faith cannot but feel a sense of

moral betrayal if or when these very teachers seem to undermine aspects of the corporate witness of the believing community. The Church no less than the academic community, has 'rules' by which it lives and hands on its spiritual resources. (Thiselton, The Morality of Christian Scholarship, pp. 20-43, in Santer, ed., 1982, p. 28)

Universities deal with knowledge for its own sake and theological colleges apply it to ministry (although there is some overlapping within the two types of institution) so the university and secular college is freer in terms of study. Non-Christians sit alongside Christians and religious studies have in some places replaced theology. As a result the Church, particularly the Anglican Church, puts itself at risk. But the theological college (even when mainly liberal and ecumenical) is more conformist and:

...has to help to give to the Churches the ministers they think they need. Unless it conforms to the standards which they lay down and broadly follows the curriculum they prescribe, and fulfills their expectation of ministry, it will not receive their support and will either have to be the focus of a new sect or, more likely, cease to exist.

...Yet a college also has the duty to ask radical questions about ministry as training proceeds; not simply "what are we doing?" but "why are we doing it?" and "what style of ministry do the last decades of the century demand?" (Prospectus for The Queen's College, Birmingham, 1984, p. 8)

The theological colleges are concerned with applied Christianity. This is usually the training of the ministry (but includes other applied projects).

Some colleges are more liberal than others, such as ecumenical arrangements at Cambridge, Birmingham and Manchester (many of these with Free Church elements mix churchmanship); others are more traditionalist, such as the Anglican colleges at Chichester and Oxford; others are more conversionist,

such as Oak Hill and Nottingham; but whatever their stance all have to take account of developments in liberal theology because they have to train clergy into understanding academic theology. (1)

Conservative evangelical theology, with its prior demand for the "correct" results of study, cannot compete with liberal methodology in the theological colleges and certainly the universities (2). Conversionism and traditionalism are minor belief types in theological study.

The real clash in secular education comes with Christian students and their worship. Whilst academic work is (or should be) approached in a questioning spirit, most interested students tend to see religion as an authority, a psychological support and an escape. So conversionism is quite strong in universities beyond theological work.

The Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF) publishes mainly conversionist books and is the umbrella organisation for Christian Unions. Although undenominational, they approve fundamentalist and charismatic churches in each locality that members might visit. In great contrast, the Student Christian Movement (SCM) combines orthodox and heterodox liberal Christian publishing with an umbrella organisation for students who are members of denominational societies. It encourages 'intelligent belief', and this provides a source for the ministry. Being undenominational and multi-denominational respectively, IVF and SCM represents structural new denominationalism in action. (3)

## 2 (b). Beyond the Educational Arena

Sometimes suburban churches with a middle class ethos put little demand on

dogmatism; but rural areas demand less because the local church relates to the community. Specialised ministries like industrial chaplaincies may also be relaxed in character because they have to relate to unchurched people in their work. These places are comfortable for orthodox liberal ministers and similar churchgoers. Extremes of churchmanship are counter-productive.

Yet in rural churches and specialist chaplaincies, forms of liberalism cannot easily surface. Theology is a private academic language and without training it sounds just the same as the traditional language. Only within academic circles does liberal religion have a chance of real existence; in the easy going churches it is more a case of "no questions asked" (4).

Rural churches and chaplaincies cater for existing situations, and folk religionists have only occasional contact with them. In contrast, to avoid decline, most urban, suburban and dormitory churches find it important to create groups of strong active believers. So in the towns and cities the church represents the gathered community. The ethos is either traditional or especially conversionist. The consumer can pick and choose churches and churchmanship.

The churches also face the financial problem of operation. This creates separated religion all by itself:

One of the results of the financial revolution of the seventies, which has forced Church of England parishes to become much more dependent on regular financial support from parishioners, has been to make an increase in congregational commitment imperative for survival. This has probably done more to change the character of the Church of England, and to push it in the direction of becoming a denomination with gathered congregations, just like other denominations, than any other single factor. In addition the decrease

in the number of clergy has imposed severe limitations on their work, forced them to spend more time in attending to the needs of their congregations and in dealing with specifically ecclesiastical matters, and has thus further reduced both the inclination and the opportunity to respond to the huge demands of uncommitted folk religionists. (Habgood, 1983, pp. 88-9)

## 2 (c). Further Sociological Explanation

Orthodox and heterodox liberalism dominate in theology, whilst students divide between dogmatic and less dogmatic worship. Conversionism and traditionalism dominate over and above both liberalisms within churches.

Tönnies (1955) made a distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. This promoted rural living as natural to man but progress leads to an impersonal market orientated urban lifestyle. Network studies and combined approaches (e.g., Frankenburg, 1957) maintain the communal and associational dichotomy. The former is a close-knit dense role network with a high degree of reciprocity, the latter is the opposite in both elements.

Communal Christianity exists in dense social networks. Its formal worship must give privacy to avoid intensifying interlocking social relationships. Associational Christianity is part of simpler network structures with greater anonymity from the religious cultural environment. Its active specialised worship intensifies otherwise loose urban social relationships.

More than one network may be available. So whilst the IVF is on the edge of academic life it is a part of the associational urban network. SCM, in contrast, is communal to the academic scene. In the theological colleges some communalism with the churches forces a greater orthodoxy of approach than in

the university. The churches themselves divide between rural communalism and urban associationalism whilst chaplaincies are communal to their localities.

With urban networks encouraging traditionalism or conversionism, rural and communal networks putting churches and chaplaincies in an ambiguous position and theological circles creating heterodox and orthodox liberalism, the leadership is left in a dilemma. It has to relate to all parts of the Church, and also to the world outside in terms of the general religious culture. It has to be orthodox for the churches, be able to use the liberal language of theology and must translate theological language into secular language for the concerns of society and state. Given these functions and needs, the leadership becomes related to at least the *idea* of the intellectual 'great tradition' which interacts with the possible little tradition in the churches.

### 3. Views Promoting Great and Little Traditions

#### 3 (a). Introduction

The question arises as to how ordinary church belief relates to academic belief, how the leadership responds, and if there can be identified a great and little tradition as some already claim exists within Eastern religions.

#### 3 (b). Great and Little Traditions with Reference to Eastern Religions

##### 3 (b) 1. Introduction

A great tradition is where a religion is carefully developed and preserved at a higher intellectual level than at the little tradition level of popular use.

##### 3 (b) ii. Early Ideas

The dichotomy has its roots in early social anthropology:



The early anthropologists were mainly interested in the beliefs of primitive societies, and devoted much of their theoretical efforts to distinguishing between religion, magic and science. The reasons for this were mainly diplomatic - it was necessary to assert that ludicrous and superstitious beliefs (magic) had always been independent of true religion and/or morality, and that the latter would persist in an ever-purer form, whereas science would cause magic to wither away. Tylor, his pupil Frazer, and other evolutionists were preoccupied with the view that the difference could be found in the beliefs themselves - religion was ethical, science true, and magic a vulgar but understandable error. (Budd, 1973, pp. 23-4)

The great and little traditions dichotomy is an adaptation of this given that magical practices are found within religions.

3 (b) iii. Robert Redfield

In Peasant Society and Culture (1956), Redfield describes three types of belief. The primitive has independent magic rituals, the peasant's magic is semi-dependent upon religion and is therefore the little tradition of the great tradition, which in turn is the religion enjoyed by the cosmopolitan educated elite. Redfield states (1956, p. 70) that the great tradition is cultivated in places of education which when handed into the little tradition is not subject to much scrutiny. However, surely scrutiny must take place for the educated tradition to be *translated* into a mass uneducated type. He also claims that influence works both ways (p. 71), although all understand that the great tradition is superior (p. 87). According to Redfield, the eastern religions of Hinduism and Taoism show variations along the lines of the dichotomy he has set out:

Even one who knows as little of India as I do may suppose that the world view of the little traditions of India is on the whole polytheistic, magical and unphilosophical, while the different strands of the great Vedic tradition choose different intellectual and ethical emphases: the Vedas tend to be polytheistic and poetical,

the Upanishads abstract, monistic, and not very theistic, while the important Vaishnavism and Shaivism are theistic and ethical. (pp. 87-8).

He quotes Derk Bodde (p. 88) that in 'great' philosophical Taoism, which excludes the divine, the emphasis is on the subordination of man to nature, whereas in 'little' religious Taoism, which promotes the existence of many deities, the goal is the acquisition of immortality through magical means.

### 3 (b) iv. Max Weber

In The Religion of India (1958), Weber states that the upper educated strata attempt to escape the continuing wheel of existence through exemplary religion based on philosophical knowledge of the world and its life.

Right knowledge has infallible consequences for right practices.  
(Weber, 1958, p. 331)

The literary and political elite strata was not successful in attempts to break the dominion of magic which permeated the peasants, labourers and the middle classes.

...the 'magic spell' remained therefore the core substance of mass religiosity. (Weber, 1958, p. 335)

In The Religion of China (1951), Confucian ritual did not distinguish between civic and religious rites as such, but religion (under bureaucratic control) was politically managed so as not to threaten the position of the elite. In this situation, Taoism, originally tolerated for its philosophical base, and (non-redemptory) Buddhism, became a mass of deities and magic.

3 (c). From Eastern Religions to Christianity

3 (c) 1. Religious Progress and Educated Liberal Christianity

Weber himself (1930) noted that for historical, economic and religious reasons there was an intimacy between Western Protestant other-worldliness, asceticism and piety and accumulation. Owners of capital, management and the upper ranks of labour were generally Protestant. This concerns development, but here the interest is in how development reflects back on religion.

Great and Little traditions are part of a world view that higher (great) forms of religion reflect social development. The greatest of these (over all religions) was seen as the development of educated liberal Protestant Christianity which itself could be seen as a great tradition of Christianity.

The important point here is the observation that the beginnings of so-called higher criticism of the Bible were directly related to speculative currents of thought. In the early nineteenth century German romanticism pictured human history in terms of progress from primitive society to the peak of classical civilisation. (Linders, Bible and Church pp. 1-19, in Santer ed., 1982, p. 7)

Hegelian and other ideas promoted the idea of human progress (see Carr, 1962, 103-127) and Christianity very much fitted into that model.

In Victorian Britain, biblical theories of the origins of man, culture and religion were breaking down, creating an intellectual fear of an absence of ultimate meaning. But in fact evolution gave Victorian religion a confident view of its place in the world. Primitive peoples could be understood as like Western stone age man who had simply not yet begun to climb the ladder of progress. With Western man on the highest rung, they believed that there was

just one ladder and so a linear view of development - including religious - was established. The Reformation was itself a decisive step up. The American experience of fluid religious development encouraged the view there of the superiority of, in particular, liberal Protestant non-conformity.

Today such views remain ingrained. For example, Bellah (1964) suggested that there are five stages of religious development. The first stage is primitive religion where people and mythical beings are closely bound together through ritual. Space appears between people and myth at the second cult stage where religious functionaries gain importance. At the third stage the main world historical religions, transcendence and other-worldly salvation theologies develop. This creates the opposites of institutional religion and secular society. At the fourth stage religious functionaries become less important and a more personal salvation by faith takes over. At the fifth stage this-worldly ethics replaces the importance of the next world.

But, of course, Christianity is diverse. Catholicism contains a high degree of ritualism and particularly attracts folk magical beliefs. Outside the boundary of English churches there is a continuing folk religion and use of the rites of passage. Theology is the discipline of the educated. So Wallace (1966) suggested that advanced societies also contain religious forms which come from earlier social progress. Elite intellectual groups advance much more quickly than the mass, he claims.

### 3 (c) ii. The Difference between Eastern Religions and Christianity

These views of social and religious evolution beg the question of whether Christianity has great and little traditions itself. It is different from

eastern religions: it is a minority activity. So passive majority implicit religion (Chapter 4) is considered as an outside activity: within the Church if there is a little tradition it refers to active belief in the churches as opposed to the more philosophical intellectual theology.

3 (d). Division Between Belief Types in Institutional Christianity

3 (d) 1. Introduction

This section presents the viewpoint (consistent with arguments so far given) that English Christianity has great and little traditions.

3 (d) 1i. The Unintelligible Theologian

Using the words of the biography by H.P. Lidden, Don Cupitt recalls Pusey's reaction to the preaching in a local Lutheran parish church in Göttingen near to the college in which Pusey studied:

The preacher of the day was a Rationalist, and was engaged in showing - but in the language only the educated would understand - the general untenableness of some portion of the Gospel history. In doing this he had occasion, of course, constantly to mention the Holy Name of Jesus. The church was full of country-people or simple townfolk, and each time Our Lord's name was mentioned they bowed their heads reverently: "evidently making each mention of our Saviour the occasion of an act of devotion to Him" [Pusey's words]. Of the drift to the sermon to which they were listening they had no idea; to them it was an edifying account of the frequent mention of our Saviours name. (Cupitt, 1984, p. 91)

Don Cupitt himself comments on the biography that:

The story is no doubt amusing for the way it describes the earnest liberal preacher, going far above his congregation's heads and wrestling on their behalf with difficulties that have never occurred to them. (p. 91)

This existed in Britain. Mark Rutherford (a semi-fictional person) was told by his college President how he should otherwise defend the atonement:

What I had urged might perhaps have possessed some interest for cultivated people; in fact, he had himself urged pretty much the same thing many years ago, when a young man, in a sermon he had preached at the Union meeting; but I must recollect that in all probability my sphere of influence would lie upon humble hearers, perhaps in an agricultural village or a small town, and that he did not think people of this sort would understand me if I talked over their heads as I had done the day before. (Rutherford, 1969, pp. 22-23)

### 3 (d) iii. Further Perceptions of Division in Christianity

John Hick in his aptly named The Second Christianity suggests that today Christianity is fundamentally divided into two parts.

Radical Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and, say, Presbyterians have in many ways more in common with each other than with the conservatives in their respective churches; while conservative Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Anglicans have more in common with each other than their respective radical brethren. (Hick, 1983, p. 10)

This can reflect the idea that intellectual religion is the progressive great tradition whilst the 'little people' in the churches want their faith to be cosy. Hick on the one hand accepts the existence of traditional theology but also dismisses it as not serious and complex enough for today:

Although very many intelligent and responsible Christians for whom I have the greatest respect see the classic structure and proportions of theology that we have inherited from the time of St. Augustine as being permanently valid and as of the essence of the Christian faith, I am quite unable to share that view. (Hick, 1983, p. 10)

There is a powerful stream of authentic religious devotion within the conservative evangelical world which seems to require a

simplistic conceptuality, and which is upset or confused by theological and political experimentation... (p. 74)

David Edwards (1973) sees a division between open and closed psychologies. James Barr (1980, 1981) argues against fundamentalism. Adrian Hastings claims that once the educated faith and the faith of those in the pew related to each other, but this is not always the case now. (Hastings, 1987, pp. 662-663). Andrew Walker, not a liberal, sees the great divide today as being between liberals and those loyal to the faith (Walker in Moss, 1986, pp. 202-217). This summarises these viewpoints:

...a degree of polarisation certainly exists and can be observed in most churches today. In the face of contemporary challenges, some believers instinctively seek to consolidate their base of revealed truths and stay close to traditional formulations. Others take the contest further afield than has ever been ventured before, and allow contemporary thought-forms and experiences to impose such drastically new interpretations on traditional formulations that their surprised fellow-Christians may feel justified in asking whether they still believe in a God at all. This kind of tension is, in our view, a sign of vitality in the Church. (Doctrine Commission, 1987, p. 10)

Incompatibility is a sign of vitality! A typical orthodox liberal statement will try to hold both sides together and such is the nature of leadership.

### 3 (e). Conclusion

The argument runs that Christianity is divided and that the academic element represents the progressive great tradition over the little tradition of the churches. But a claim can be made for Christianity that the 'little' element effectively constrains the great element and it is necessary therefore to look at such arguments against the dichotomy.

#### 4. Against Great and Little Traditions

##### 4 (a). Introduction

There are initial questions to cover like linear religious development and whether Eastern religions themselves have great and little traditions. This argument points to a consideration of the origins and structural nature of a religion, which is considered with respect to Christianity.

##### 4 (b). Problems with the Evolutionary Perspective

The idea of the superiority of liberal religion loses on two fronts. On the linear view such Christianity is superseded by secularisation (see Chapter 4) and might be regarded as self-destructive.

Alternatively, with still a Darwinian based view of life, we are finding what the Victorians feared: modernity. The Hegelian base is attacked by relativism. No longer is the West so self-assured; no longer is Christianity part of the progress of evolution and intellectual superiority. Rather we are left with pluralism and its denial of anything being ultimate or superior.

##### 4 (c). The Eastern Religionists' Viewpoint

###### 4 (c) i. Introduction

In any case the Great and little traditions dichotomy is challenged within Eastern religions on the grounds of diversity and complementarity.

###### 4 (c) ii. Hinduism

Simon Weightman accepts that the dichotomy between religion and superstition is not now so blatantly stated but sees the the replacement dualism as unhelpful:



The writings, beliefs and practices of the Brahmins were understood by early observers in contact with the everyday realities of Hinduism to represent the true 'orthodoxy' and they were thus obliged to relegate much of what they found to the status of folklore and superstition. More recently, ethnographic and anthropological research has gone a long way towards removing this misleading polarization and has partly succeeded in integrating both aspects into a single totality.

This process has itself generated further dualities, however, such as 'The Great' and 'The Little Tradition' which may in the long run prove to be equally unhelpful. (Weightman, Hinduism, pp. 191-236, in Hinnells, 1984, p. 193)

He is effectively saying that the Brahmins add to the religion like other elements do; it is no 'greater' than any other aspect. It might be added that Hinduism is the religion of pollution and purity, and that rituals exist to create purity sometimes involving the pure Brahmin priests. If looked at from a great and little tradition perspective, it is difficult to decide whether the villagers perform the little tradition of the great tradition or if the latter originated from the former. In any case, what underlies these rituals is unity in diversity, not division. (See, Sharma, The Problem of Village Hinduism: Fragmentation and Integration pp. 51-73, in Foy, 1978, p. 72)

#### 4 (c) iii. Chinese Religions

Weber stressed division in terms of Chinese religion, but Saso wants the stress to be on harmony with certainly no 'great' superiority:

The three teachings, Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian, act as three servants to the faith and needs of the masses, complementing the social system. Confucius regulates the rites of passage and moral behaviour in public life. Taoism regulates the festivals celebrated in village and urban society, and heals the sick. Buddhism brings a sense of compassion to the present life and salvation in the afterlife, providing funeral rituals for the deceased and refuge from the cares of the world for the weary. But the Chinese commonly say that 'the three religions all revert to a common source' (*San-chiao kwei-i*), meaning in modern times that in fact the functionaries

or priests of the three religions are dependent on the beliefs and needs of the common people of China, and attain meaning and livelihood as servants of the people. Religion is therefore a celebration by and for the people. (Saso, Chinese Religions, pp. 344-364, in Hinnells, 1984, p. 344-5)

This general view is supported in Richard Wilhelm's Lectures on the I Ching (1980) where complementarity is the main emphasis of the relationship between the religions. For example:

All of Chinese thinking- Confucianism, Taoism, as well as Buddhism- contains the idea that in the course of life, man will shape harmoniously those psychic and physical predispositions that he received as capital assets by unifying them and giving them form from within a centre. (Eber, trans., Wilhelm, 1980)

As a result, historically and holistically speaking:

...such generalizations, which create a false dichotomy between the philosophical and the religious, the Confucian and the Taoist, are purely academic, i.e. simple heuristic devices to to explain the richness of the Chinese religious/ cultural heritage. In practice the Confucian statesman, the Taoist poet and master of ceremonies for popular household ritual were often the same person. Like two sides of the same precious coin, Confucian social ethics and Taoist communion with nature formed the core of the Chinese religious spirit. (Saso in Hinnells, 1984, p. 347)

The Chinese were aware of differences within the religions (Werblowsky, 1976, p. 112) but 'great and little traditions' and implications is misleading.

#### 4 (c) iv. Conclusion: Eastern Diversity

Clearly the structure and purposes of a religious system is all important. Now institutional Christianity, a structure offering a 'common' tradition to all (Pagels, 1980, p. 23, also pp. 104-5), must be similarly considered.

4 (d). Democratic Christianity

4 (d) 1. Introduction

The claim is that Christianity, popular in origin and with a doctrinal base creates an equality which mitigates against great and little traditions.

4 (d) ii. Supernaturalism and Eudaemonism

In some contrast to his view previously quoted, Don Cupitt illustrates how the basis of Christianity mitigates against division.

Two-levelled religion may be accused of being too indulgent towards superstition, too complacent in its assumption that the religion of the common people will always be a kind of necessary illusion, and too easily used to legitimate a caste society. On the other hand it does have a certain resilience. When it meets philosophical criticism it can freely admit the naivety of popular religion. The real truth is in the higher teachings alone.

Christianity, however, is very reluctant to defend itself in this way by yielding its outworks and retreating to the higher ground. On the contrary, it has always regarded its outworks of eudaemonism and supernaturalism as essential to it. It has been a highly theologized version of popular religion, and has a radical democratic strain in it which demands the same faith be professed by every believer. (Cupitt, 1982, p. 146)

4 (d) iii. Origins of Christianity

The view is that popular belief influenced the work of theologians:

...the theologian of the early Church was by no means Hilaire Belloc's 'remote and ineffectual don'. He was a pastor, writing for people who were all worshipping Christians, not university professors. Among the pressures playing upon early Christian thought as it developed was the piety of a multitude of Christians. The main factor, for instance, in developing the doctrine of the full divinity of Christ was the practice of worshipping and praying to Christ in the contemporary Church. The main reason why theologians (perhaps a little against the grain) had to take account of the Holy Spirit was because contemporary Christians experienced him. (Hanson and Hanson, 1980, p. 173)

This is backed by the Doctrine Commission report We Believe in God:

We have seen that the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early church, though so often and necessarily described in terms of theological controversy and the activity of Councils, has its roots firmly in Christian experiences of God through liturgy and personal prayer. The technical trinitarian formularies that were eventually agreed in the fourth and fifth centuries grew in part out of that experience. (Doctrine Commission, 1987, p. 118)

But this only accounts for the origins of theology. The formulation of doctrine was to stop heresy.

Nevertheless they [the trinitarian formularies] were primarily intended as defences against theological alternatives that were deemed misleading... (Doctrine Commission, 1987, p. 118)

In viewing inherited Christianity as a faith which does not have the elitism of Gnosticism, Pagels sees its essential structure as a leadership creation:

To become truly *Catholic* - universal - the church rejected all forms of elitism, attempting to include as many as possible within its embrace. In the process, its leaders created a clear and simple framework, consisting of doctrine, ritual and political structure, that has proven to be an amazingly effective system of organisation. (Pagels, 1980, pp. 104-105)

#### 4 (d) iv. Minimalism and St. Paul

There is another source of structural unity: if the Resurrection is not true then Christians are the most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15, v. 13-19). The point is that the miracle of the Resurrection guarantees the Incarnation and revelation. Having these elements gives Christianity an equalitarian doctrinal streak; to disbelieve them is to radically change the faith. (5)

This should marginalise the heterodox liberals, but the dogmatic also reject minimalism. Therefore, whilst the structure is given, it is unclear which of its sectors of belief and authority are the more influential today.

5. The Arguments So Far: Divided or Equalitarian and Democratic?

One perception is that Christianity is an equalitarian religion of popular belief to which theologians have responded. The other is that there is a structural division between modern educated and church belief with the former in the driving seat. Given the inconclusive nature of the argument so far, which is more accurate depends on the present day relationship between belief and authority types in leadership, academic and church sectors.

6. Conflicts of Authority in the Anglican and Baptist Churches

6 (a). Introduction

This section analyses the relationship by looking at controversy in the Anglican and Baptist Churches, the winners and the losers.

6 (b). The Content of the Controversies

6 (b) 1. The Bennett and Durham Controversies and Media Reaction

Dr. Gareth Bennett was the author of the traditionally anonymous preface to Crockford's Clerical Directory (1987). In it the Oxford historian and Anglo-Catholic clergyman criticised the authority of the General Synod for its "incompetent" and "unrepresentative" House of Laity and the liberal nature of the House of Bishops, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie for weaknesses (although he had written some of his speeches) and claimed that Runcie and others appoint their own kind into the leadership. Bennett extended similar criticism to world Anglican institutions.

Bennett denied he was the author, which burdened him, and with the media reaction against the Archbishop he took his own life on Monday 7th December 1987. This restoked the fires begun in earnest with the appointment of David Jenkins as the Bishop of Durham.

David Jenkins was not an extreme liberal. He even opposed John Robinson's Tillichian emphasis (Jenkins, 1965) stressing the reality of God as God with traditional language. However, using myth, he did not depend on the truth of credal details such as the Empty Tomb and indeed even saw the Virgin Birth as a barrier between God acting alongside men. But Jenkin's verbose style meant that few in the laity were quite sure what he was saying. Many were clearer that God had himself spoken by a magical bolt of lightning hitting York Minster three days (a biblical number) after his consecration ceremony on 9th July 1984.

In the case of Robinson's Honest to God, Gill (1977) and Towler (1984) suspect that few people read or understood the book but media attention and its iconoclastic style made all the difference. Public response in the letters to John Robinson usually did not refer directly to the book. Media reaction was equally important with David Jenkins: the Daily Mail (6) turned the original Credo interview (Channel Four, 29th April 1984) into a story about controversy from a bishop, denial of fundamental teachings, "certain calls" for his resignation and upsetting churchgoers. In fact the Bishop designate of Durham was interviewed to provide standard orthodox academic comment about modern theology. The subject was not about what people might these days believe (as with Robinson), but about a band of radicals within the mainstream churches some of whom had been interviewed on film.

In many ways David Jenkins is a public figure manufactured by the curious processes of news selection adopted by the media today. Journalists found him good material with which to work. From their point of view there had been a vacancy for a controversial prelate at the time and David Jenkins ability to produce the 'quotable quote' made him an ideal candidate for the position. It is a perilous position as ultimately, in order to get a platform, a public figure has to relinquish control over his words. (Harrison, 1985, p. 175)

Today the media tends to follow 'man bites dog' values and focus on bishops as dressed up oddities. Theology is irrelevant nowadays, which is rather different from the nineteenth century:

Theological writing and controversy has little interest or prestige compared to its position in the nineteenth century. Even the controversy with eminent biologists led at first to an increased interest in religion, so that by the late nineteenth century theology was still the most popular reading-matter in England. By the mid-twentieth century, despite occasional flurries of interest, theology had lost its audience. The dominant modes of thought about man's nature and his place in the world are scientific and social-scientific. (Budd, 1973, p. 153)

In fact, the media uses Church affairs to propose a political message: the demand for conservative authority in public institutions. This motivates reaction from sympathisers within those institutions.

#### 6 (b) ii. The Baptist Controversy

Michael Taylor, until 1986 the Principal of the Northern Baptist College, was in a position of authority as regards the training of the denomination's ministers. In 1973 he gave a speech to its annual conference about the deity of Christ. Although faithful to the Chalcedonian Definition (that Christ is fully God and fully man) his method and effect was to emphasise the humanity of God on earth. The more usual Baptist heresy has been docetism.

Supposed heresy on the humanistic side is particularly painful for Baptists since their structure of independency and their history of dissent allowed many General Baptist congregations to move over to Unitarianism. Thus to lead on the humanity of Christ raises ancient sores. No action was taken against Michael Taylor, after all this was the current nature of ecumenically understood theology in the Universities and theological colleges.

6 (b) iii. Reaction in the Churches on the Ground

At that time the General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, Gordon Landreth, illustrated the reaction to Michael Taylor's speech within the Baptists, and he extended the point to the Methodist Church:

At the time of writing, the Baptist Union is particularly rent over a doctrinal controversy concerning an address over the Deity of Christ by the principal of a denominational college which appears in conflict with the foundation documents of the denomination. The lack of any 'disciplinary action' by the Baptist Union Council in a case which many members of the denomination regard as clear heresy is causing several ministers to leave the denomination and many others to consider what remedies are open to them. In the Methodist Church, the recently formed Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism is a body determined to maintain that cause within the structures of that denomination. (Landreth, Evangelical Co-operation, pp. 141-159, in King, 1973, pp. 147-148)

In the Church of England controversy "liberalism" was described as a "cancer" (the Rev. David Holloway's words) and demands grew for the bishop-designate to publicly accept doctrinal demands or for the consecration to be stopped. Such would have rubbed against the Anglican history of comprehension. Once this failed the traditionalists and conversionists demanded that no such bishop ever be appointed again (see Appendix 1, S.7, D.F). But there has been little change here. (7) So the complaints, including Bennett's, continued.



Whatever his impact outside (probably more limited than with John Robinson), David Jenkins' was resisted inside the churches because his comments directly affected the creeds and a basis for authority. One group set up in reaction was 'Action for Biblical witness to Our Nation', now increasingly influential. Liberalism, it is claimed, did not stop the membership drain before and now it can only create doubt amongst certainty and cause people to leave.

Perhaps the reaction against Jenkins and the "liberal ascendancy" as a whole was because, unlike Robinson's Honest to God (written at the onset of 'the permissive society'), the Bishop of Durham came to light after the turning point of Christian Believing (1976) and The Myth of God Incarnate (1977) and when there was a strong ideological Conservative government.

Whilst some really wanted liberal views out of the Church, others claimed that whilst a Church theologian might be liberal a bishop should not be because he is supposed to be a symbol of unity. (see Appendix 1, S.7, D.E)

In fact that the Churches have tackled the problem of unity by selecting orthodox liberals to relate to both dogmatic and experimental tendencies of belief. Jenkins' and indeed Taylor's mistake was that they led by their liberal rather than their orthodox side. Bureaucratic authority, aiming to hold an institution together, must express its static nature. Not doing this encourages the call for further doctrinal control.

6 (c). Liberals not in Authority

The Myth of God Incarnate was a late 1970's attempt to break new ground with radical heterodox liberal theology and came in between the Robinson and

Durham controversies. Whilst it generated some reaction it did not involve a bishop and the 'man bites dog' rule of sensation in the media. It took the far less radical theology of Bishop Jenkins to recreate a greater reaction.

Don Cupitt's series The Sea of Faith, shown twice on BBC 2, attempted to explain the more philosophical side of religious belief and developments in thought. Criticism I have heard from some ministers is not that it was outrageous (though he should not be in Holy Orders) but that he is an opportunist trying to make a name for himself. This is a different kind of criticism from a bishop who is 'found out' and in authority. According to Cupitt, reaction to the series varied between different people:

*Cupitt:* Obviously a lot of people wanted to put me right or sell me their own religion, and a lot of people argued their own particular points. A lot of people were interested and, in fact, overall audience reaction was very favourable - I think largely because the films were extremely well made by Peter Armstrong and his team.

*Dunn:* What about the Church reaction though, What was that?

*Cupitt:* It was mixed, I think. So far as I read the comments everybody liked the quality of the films. They gradually came to like the ideas less, perhaps, as the films unfolded. (8)

(John Dunn talking to Don Cupitt, Radio 2, May 22nd 1985)

Being in an 'ivory tower' and not in authority, the reaction in terms of controversy was not great. It would have been different had he been a bishop or the Principal of a theological college. (9)

#### 6 (d). Tackling the Problem of Authority

So since there has been a marked movement towards liberal views in theological circles there has been a church reaction against.

The pressure of the Durham Affair demanded that the conflict of theology and authority had to be tackled. The Anglican bishops undertook this task. The solution of The Nature of Christian Belief (1986) was to separate authority and theological exploration. On the one hand:

The Church has no short-cut private road to historical certainty. On any view of scriptural inspiration it is important for questions to be asked about historical statements, not merely about moral or spiritual matters, if each person's faith is to have a clear basis, and the mind is to play its part in the total response of the person to God. But once such enquiry is allowed, it has to be free. ...it is a sound principle that the Church should neither suppress free inquiry nor lend its authority to seal as established truth what can be at best only informed and legitimate speculation. (p. 16).

But as authority increases the demand for conformity rises. A bishop is to defend the breadth of the faith against "zealous but ill advised ministers" (p. 37) who suggest that one belief or expression only is authentic (meaning heterodox liberals like Cupitt). But beyond such "positive action":

...it needs to be pointed out that if the Church of England does not proceed against its ministers for heresy this comes not from indifference but from a conviction born of experience that such proceedings do more harm than good. (p. 37-8) (10)

The bishop with his greater authority may explore too, but personal opinion must be exposed as such should it conflict with doctrine.

A bishop may properly enter into questionings on matters of belief, both because as a man of integrity he will feel any force there is in such questionings, and also because as a leader part of his responsibility on behalf of the Church is to listen honestly to criticisms of its faith and life. But in all he says he must take care not to present variant beliefs as if they were the faith of the Church; and he must always make sure as he can that his hearers

understand what that faith is and the reasons for it. (House of Bishops, 1986, p. 36)

The content of the report illustrates the politics of theological conflict. But the main point is clear: authority and theology are to be separated.

6 (e). Conclusion

Orthodox liberalism as expressed by the Bishop of Durham and Principal Michael Taylor was unacceptable to ministers of more doctrinal persuasions and both men provoked great reaction. The instrumental demands of leadership were not met and that subsequently any 'highness' and church 'lowness' in this respect was rejected on the ground. (11)

7. Great and Little Traditions in the Context of English Christianity

7 (a). Introduction

The Taylor, Jenkins and Bennett controversies focusses the discussion on the function of leadership and the issue of great and little traditions.

7 (b). The Broking Function of Orthodox Liberalism between  
Belief Sectors

The issue behind the Durham Affair is whether academic theology should through leadership inform popular belief. Clearly the Bishop of Durham and his various supporters say yes. But even mild liberalism from someone in authority was met with strong opposition from below. Alistair Kee comments on the present situation:

It has been suggested that modern theology has become disconnected from the religious experience of Christian communities. This is true, but more importantly, it has thereby lost the unity of theory and

practice. It has assumed that truth can be defined, redefined and established, without the messiness of having to submit it to the test. It is not enough to produce a theology and then invite people to get on with believing it or even applying it. This is an example of what Marx called ideology. (Kee, The Modern Churchman, 1984, p. 12)

Orthodox liberals demand a sound refined basis to belief in the Church, using bureaucratic authority, but this method conflicts with that of others in the churches. For the traditionalists and conversionists, a double-speak theology is definitely not superior to their own when it comes to leadership over the churches and it is they who increasingly pay the piper and call the tune.

Traditionalists being defensive are in decline. Orthodox and heterodox liberals are, in general, made not recruited. In the associational churches it is the conversionists who recruit and they who write the agenda. Whilst the once "liberal ascendancy" can resist, they would be captains of a restless crew, and the oil tankers have their long term courses set. If there was a great tradition of theology and leadership which influenced the faith of the churches, the relationship is now predominantly the other way around.

## 7 (c) Recreating an Image of New Testament Christianity

### 7 (c) i. Introduction

The faith had popular origins and it would seem that this is predominant today, leaving a dilemma for theologians and Church leaders.

### 7 (c) ii. The World Picture

Christianity has become predominantly a 'black' Third World religion with its popular base, if not power its centres, shifted from Europe (once reflecting

great and little traditions). 'Southern Christianity', where academic theology (e.g., liberation theology) responds to the needs of often charismatic communities of faith rather than its own agenda, could well change the international nature of the faith in decades to come.

7 (c) iii. English Christianity

Certain theologians and Church leaders, the Bishop of Durham being one, have called for a liberation theology for Britain not unlike the model that has emerged in Southern Christianity. Such a theology would be heavily political and based around the poverty that a number of people experience. But here there is a further incentive: such a theology could be an attempt to unite academic theology and the community.

The problem is that those who feel poverty in Britain are not churchgoers. Liberation theology would have to be imposed onto the churches who would question its content and demand that social concerns should be wrapped up in conversionist concerns where the 'real' liberation takes place, especially given its bias against the wider culture. Furthermore, church originated theologies in Britain might well be anti-academic in method, basically demanding the clean up of what are regarded as sinful practices in a sinful culture, like with the campaigns of ABWON.

Liberation theology will not reunite British churches and the leadership. Rather, the associational in-group nature of the churches is likely to succeed over the leadership (see Appendix 1, S.7, D.F). After outlining Joyce Thurman's M.A. thesis, New Wineskins: A Study of the House Church Movement, Professor Hollenweger repeats part of her summary (p. 165 of the thesis):

The institutional structures of the denominations were built to serve the mass of society, not to cater for an exclusive grouping. ...[However], the future of Christianity will lie with those deeply committed to a sectarian faith who will survive through de-Christianization processes. (Hollenweger, The Expository Times, 1980, p. 47)

He suggests it is an overstatement as regards the future of British Christianity. Instead there must be an organisation to give the mass...

...a general religious framework. The question, however, is whether a church which tries to fulfil this general stabilising function in society, can at the same time cater for the small groupings who are searching for more in Christianity than a general orientation. (p. 47)

The structure of Christianity gives those "searching for more" influential power. The orthodox liberals thus face the problem of the heterodox that, if they wish to stay communalist with the educational arena then, like the heterodox, they may become as the Advaita Vedanta is to popular Hinduism:

The more philosophical Advaita Vedanta...is not the most characteristic form, since its treatment of divine personality as a lower level accomodation to the devotee, and its preference for a higher level impersonal absolute, beyond all human description, are very different from the devotional religion of the Indian villages, and indeed from the most popular Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita. (Hebblethwaite, 1980, p. 151)

On the other hand the orthodox liberals could become more orthodox, more full of double-speak theology and the leadership distanced from the wider community. But the Bishop of Durham has revealed their hand, and it may be too late. The future of the Church (in the context of the tension between broad Church and liberal independency) is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

Summary and Church Futures

1. Introduction

The preceding chapters have developed a 'new denominational' approach to mainstream Christianity. It is intended to effectively replace the Church/denomination/sect approach in sociology.

The chapters are summarised and further research is considered. Then the potential futures of the Church using Russell's The Clerical Profession (1984) (which involves more than one profession) and the findings of this thesis are analysed.

2. Summary of Chapters

2 (a). Part I: Introducing the Mainstream Church

The opening preamble to Chapter 1, Issues and Literature Survey, indicated the Christian desire for unity but the reality of division, once bitterly affecting the whole of society. Today its divisions matter less to the population but they still renew themselves and there is a tension between liberalism in the mainstream and independency. The sociology of religion with its own concepts has not tackled change thoroughly. In this thesis a mixture of theology and sociology and a variety of research approaches, involving my own personal interest, have been used to understand change in the mainstream Church today. An explanation of terminology, a literature survey emphasising key texts and an introduction to the chapters completed the chapter.



Chapter 2, The Decline of the Church/Denomination/Sect Continuum, introduced ideal types and typologies as the basis of analysis throughout the thesis. The Church/denomination/sect continuum had lost much of its descriptive value, and a new continuum was needed. A survey of denominations from an historical approach showed new possibilities in this area.

2 (b). Part II: The Faith Inside and Outside the Church

Chapter 3, Belief Typologies, initially used typologies developed by Robert Towler to give a basis for analysing academic and non-academic literature. This survey took account of the effect of the institution of the Church on belief. The discovered typologies of traditionalism (at least one in each denomination), conversionism (fundamentalist, charismatic and evangelical), orthodox liberalism (christocentric-theism) and heterodox liberalism (theism, exemplarism, critical spirituality and gnosticism) were matched alongside discussions with three ministers of religion.

Chapter 4, The Religious Cultural Environment, looked at secularisation theories and found them to be contradictory and confusing. Using survey evidence and arguments relating to churchgoing in Britain, its basic solution was to separate the decline in churchgoing from the alleged decline in religion. With urbanisation the churches had won against pagan based belief; but when they declined implicit religion was left behind. Religious values from the Church may have been infused into society, but religion always existed and still does in individuals, meaning giving groups and the culture. So it is that the religious cultural environment is such that occasional religious observances in the churches take place on a different basis from Christian salvation.

Peter Rudge (1968) developed authority typologies which were adapted in Chapter 5, Authority, Belief, Religious Culture and New Denominationalism. Then they were attached to the belief typologies of Chapter 3 and related to the religious cultural environment as analysed within Chapter 4. Various strengths of collectivities were produced (only one of which showed loyalty to present denominations), and so whilst new denominationalism is active the present inertia towards structural change was also demonstrated.

2 (c). Part III: Church Stratification

An analytical research carried out into youth fellowships of two churches, one conversionist Anglican and the other with a mixture of influences in the leadership, was the subject of Chapter 6, Two Case Studies of Dominant Trends of New Denominationalism within Churches. In both churches more doctrine won over less doctrine, and those who might have responded to more liberal views were given the option of emotion backed fundamentalism or nothing. This 'rigging' was true for both young people and adults.

Chapter 7, The Tensions between Distributed Belief and Authority Types, found that conversionism and traditionalism was the agenda for the churches; on the other hand academic religion is both heterodox and orthodox liberal. Whilst there may be assumptions of great and little traditions in the leadership, there is increasing pressure for the academic and leadership side to either fall into line with the churches or become isolated.

2 (d). Part IV: The Future

The thesis is summarised in Chapter 8, Summary and Church Futures, with suggestions for further research. The potential futures of the Church based

on the new collectivities is considered and then, given the findings of Chapters 5 and 7, the most likely scenario for the future is suggested.

### 3. Creating Ideal Types from New Denominational Christianity

#### 3 (a). Introduction

Chapter two included a table as a continuum of the characteristics of the Church/denomination/sect ideal types. This chapter includes a table of new denominational ideal types.

#### 3 (b). From Categories to Ideal Types

In terms of Fallding's analysis (1968), this thesis so far has dealt with understanding Christianity on the basis of more *empirical* typologies. But there is the final step of producing ideal types. (1)

The Church/denomination/sect typologies have lost specific descriptive strength (see Chapter 2). The real dynamic in Christianity cuts across those typologies. They continue to be *generally* used, however, although another problem appears with labelling (e.g., using 'church' and 'sect' for Bahá'ism in Berger, 1954). Labels have to be both specifically rooted (language best describes by use of comparative labels) but also be generally applicable.

The essentials of Christianity are: an outward attacking conversionism, a conservationist traditionalism, a managerial leadership at the centre and a diverse group at the margins of the body. These essentials might be found in other bodies and so some rooted but general ideal type sub-labels might be used. Here 'militants', 'traditionalists', 'norm-managers' and 'critics' use politically and religiously rooted but generally applicable labels.

3 (c). The Continuum of New Denominational Christianity

3 (c) 1. Summary of Characteristics

The table below shows the ideal type titles and specific characteristics of the Church which might be adaptable to other ideological organisations (general titles given in brackets). This is *not* a linear continuum: beginning at heterodox liberalism and moving through orthodox liberalism the continuum moves either to traditionalism or conversionism. To show the continuum a diagram, The Mainstream Triangle, is provided in Appendix 3.

HETERODOX LIBERAL (CRITICS)	ORTHODOX LIBERAL (NORM MANAGERS)	TRADITIONALIST (TRADITIONALISTS)	CONVERSIONIST (MILITANTS)
Dogmatic belief largely denied or flexible belief.	Dogmatic belief, rigidly constituted but flexibly applied.	Dogmatic belief rigidly constituted and applied.	Dogmatic belief rigidly constituted and applied.
Decentralised approach to management; systemic authority and human relations authority.	Pragmatic management of Church to maintain system; bureaucratic authority.	Sacred hierarchy or inherited; traditional authority.	Influential individuals; charismatic authority.
Strongly positive relation with society and intellectuals' position.	Positive relation to society with thin barrier between it and implicit religion.	Negative and defensive stance to society.	Negative and attacking stance to society.
Fixed or flexible worship.	Consensus worship.	Fixed inherited worship.	Flexible immediate worship.
Future based.	Present basis.	Looks backwards.	Future based.
Almost totally academic (in mainstream).	Mainly academic, some existing churches.	Existing churches.	Renewed and new churches.
Gain from existing religionists; losers of faith.	Promotion and theology gains; changers of views.	Death and disinterest.	New converts; moderation and losers of faith.

### 3 (c) 11. Changes from the Church/Denomination/Sect Ideal Types

Different typologies share characteristics, although usually for different reasons. In some cases liberal characteristics are closer to those of the Church ideal type (close to population; flexible with dogma) but in others this is true of traditionalism (rigid sacramental system; hierarchy); traditionalism has some characteristics of the old sect ideal type (negative defensive stance to society) whilst it differs greatly from conversionism which is closest to it (and indeed is the singular system in sects).

The similarities and differences are accounted for in two ways. First, all typologies are now associational: the Church used to be fused into society but now even heterodox liberalism is associational. Secondly conversionism and both liberalisms have caused a redistribution of characteristics.

### 3 (d). Conclusion

The empirical types readily transfer to ideal types, and characteristics can be listed and shown diagrammatically (Appendix 3).

## 4. Further Research

### 4 (a). Introduction

The methodology and findings of the chapters and the recreation of holistic ideal types suggest further research techniques and projects.

### 4 (b). Alternative Research Techniques

Belief in churches can alternatively be listed and analysed using a variety of means like analysing sermons and using questionnaires on those who listen to them and take part in groups. In considering belief outside the churches

general questionnaires are seen as most convenient, but interviewing a small number of non-church people about their deeper beliefs and why they use the rites of passage would fill a gap in research.

Participant observation is always a difficult research technique. My approach was to be open to those I was researching. An alternative is to convince everyone of the genuineness of participation, and when sufficient material is gathered to disappear. I consider this unethical. Pure observation can be carried out but this will create even more nervousness on the part of the observed. A further alternative is to interview participants in confidence and not to take any part in group sessions.

#### 4 (c). New Research Projects

A number of Church and non-Church studies arise from this research.

Research needs to be carried out in churches with dedicated liberal ministers to see how he influences his church. It would be interesting to see how the simple understanding of the Creeds and conversionism constrained him.

Other approaches to the whole subject of this thesis includes a study of the campaigning groups opposing the leadership and what support they receive. There can be a sociological study of ecumenism and the reasons for failure. There is also the specific histories of denominations and change within.

There should be follow up research on the same basis of this thesis as the mainstream changes and tension builds between the different authority and belief types.

Instead of focussing on liberal independency and the broader Churches, a research project might similarly look at conversionism in the mainstream and outside. An alternative approach is to concentrate on independency (like Unitarianism) with only some reference to the present mainstream.

It would be interesting to see how adaptable are the ideal types (critics, norm managers, traditionalists and militants) within other religions (Judaism, Hinduism, etc.) and ideological organisations (Conservative, Democrat and Labour parties, etc.) and to see whether there is tension within a mainstream and strains towards independency.

## 5. The Churches of the Future

### 5 (a). Introduction

The final part of the thesis is an imaginative look at the future of the Churches based on actual tensions and trends within today's Church. The analysis begins with the ministry but later covers a wider area.

### 5 (b). Russell's Three Futures of the Church

#### 5 (b) 1. The Dysfunctions

Anthony Russell's The Clerical Profession (1984) outlines seven dysfunctions of this profession (pp. 292-296). Clergymen are marginal to the community as they process the rites of passage and fewer look after the churches, they are elitist within a populist culture, they are associated with restrictive practices within the professions, they draw their models of leadership not from comparable voluntary leisure associations but industrial management and the armed forces, and their professional image - which is expensive and static - encourages lay passivity and inflexibility.

These criticisms of the Anglican clergy (though they relate to others), and those established problems of patronage and decline in numbers (tackled in Paul, 1964; Tiller, 1983), lead Russel to propose three futures for the Church's ministry (pp. 297-305), adapted below for the whole Church.

5 (b) ii. The Church of the Traditionalist Future

This declining Church operates as an anchor of stability in a changing world. It is conservationist and defensive in style and theology. The Church is sacramentalist in its Catholic forms with reserved activities restricted to the ordained ministry; Protestant bodies also retain traditional roles.

5 (b) iii. The Church of the Adaptationist Future

Adaptationists tackle the problem of resources and increase the relevance of the Church in modern society without major internal changes. This means an increase in the number of non-stipendary ministers and a greater role for the laity; but ordained ministers preserve their unique Eucharist role. Other roles felt to be essential to the character of the Church are maintained.

The problem is that for traditionalists the adaptationists are too prepared to change whilst they are not prepared to change enough for the reformists.

5 (b) iv. The Church of the Reformist Future

This is committed to being *in* the world (though not to pander to implicit religion). Its basis is not the parish and the circuit, but the cell and the network. There is a serving ordained ministry but an active laity carry out all roles including the Eucharist. The Tiller Report suggested a diocesan task force network helping local lay or ordained cell leaders.



5 (b) v. Assessment

There are parallels between these futures and new denominationalism. The Church of the traditional future fits in with traditionalism, the Church of the adaptationist future can be related to orthodox liberalism and the Church of the reformist future can be roughly equated with heterodox liberalism. But the models should be changed to better represent heterodox liberalism and one added to include conversionism.

5 (c). Four Potential New Denominational Futures

5 (c) 1. Introduction

These Church futures are derived from categories of new denominationalism.

5 (c) ii. The Churches of the Fixed Future

These Churches are like the traditional model above. They are inflexible to change even at high cost to the future. It is *Christ in defence of the rump* as in Chapter 5 in terms of theology and authority, very preservationist in terms of denominational inheritance and likely to 'invent' traditions to emphasise inheritance (Hobsbawm and Ranger eds., 1983, pp. 1-2). There is the psychological fear of giving even a little bit. Brandon in The Cathedral (1922) pleaded against the possible appointment of a modernist priest to Pybus St. Anthony and in favour of a traditionalist:

This man [Mr. Wistons] is breaking in upon the cherished beliefs of our Church. Give him a little and he will take everything. We must all stand firm upon true and Christian ground that the Church has given us, or where shall we be?

...I must say something for Mr. Forsyth. He is young; he knows this place and loves it; he cares for and will preserve its most ancient traditions. (Walpole, 1922, p. 529)

Brandon would have had no fears in the 'fixed Church' because it does not give an inch. It is therefore the Church of compulsion, of power and of the pre-defined roles of participants.

Models of this Church already exist. The Orthodox Churches enshrine tradition and theology is constrained by authority, more successfully than in Roman Catholicism. Another example is continuing Primitive Methodism.

5 (c) 111. The Church of the Functional Future

This Church is similar to the adaptationist model above. Its reasons for reform are mainly pragmatic. It has a team of ongoing committees producing reports about problems which may then be tackled. Under-used churches are closed and fewer worship centres are operated, the ministry is redeployed, financial savings are made, efficient means of outreach are investigated and forms of worship are streamlined within varied listed forms.

The 'functional Church' and its broad but not everlasting range of beliefs shows interest in the 'big' theological issues (although probably irrelevant outside the institution) and these enter into its communications system. Consensus is the basis of all decision making in the network of churches (for nothing is completely local), aided by an influential bureaucracy.

There exists a maintained positive career ladder. Promotion is given to the people who show either administrative or intellectual skills. There is no special commitment to an episcopal or non-episcopal system: experts and advisors on committees are much the same whatever the system adopted.

The Church hopes to relate to the religious cultural environment and provide some of its needs, but in a 'serving' role it is interested in more general issues and hopes to influence political decision makers.

5 (c) iv. The Church of the Dynamic Future

This Church attempts to recreate the atmosphere of early Church, again using 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), but this time of New Testament practices. It uses the modern pop culture as well. Models exist in the House Churches and Pentecostalism. It opposes and attacks the religious cultural environment to gain converts.

It develops a fluid network of approved leaders and interpreters with great emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit. Its structure has an elite of male apostles (who may be called bishops!) with men and women underneath in positions of monitored leadership. It is not a democracy but is mainly lay, with an emphasis on functions. They are organised into teams with tasks in order to produce results. The structure is fellowship orientated. They grow into churches which are then split into fellowships which grow into churches. The leadership links these together into a network. This allows both individual inspiration and control to take place at the same time.

The dynamic Church appeals to a young person's sense of dynamism, gives a setting to forget the misery of the world and creates a purpose for living, provides a place of entertainment and also helps find a marriage partner.

It caters best for the remaining church market but is unsuitable for the rites of passage of non-church implicit religion. That has to be done by

other Churches inheriting capital from the past. It has a rising share of a declining market and cannot grow forever. However, satellite religion remains part of its potential, and if the British are lazy and receptive it could change the face of religion from fellowships and churches to living rooms and finance.

5 (c) v. The Church of the Radical Future

The 'radical Church' is torn between the systemic type of authority and the human relations type (Chapter 5). This section looks at the radical Church in its purest form, in human relations authority, and its contradictions will show the practical benefits to be gained from systemic authority.

Examples of the radical Church of human relations authority include the humanist Ethical Church, the creedless Unitarian Church (though recognising the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Universalism, Socinianism and Humanism as its inheritances) and the Friends who regard themselves as part of the Christian and Universalist traditions. Freedom of belief exists according to conscience: this is a prerequisite of the radical Church.

The danger of such a Church is a nebulous quality: it carries the risk that it seems to be about very little at all. It is difficult to promote group rather than individual religiousness and this mitigates against attracting new members except in a churchgoing culture.

Mark Rutherford faced the prospect of the radical Church with some fear:

My first thought was towards Unitarianism but when I came to cast up the sum total of what I was assured, it seemed so ridiculously

small that I was afraid. The occupation of a merely miscellaneous lecturer had always seemed to me very poor. I could not get up Sunday after Sunday and retail to people little scraps suggested by what I might have been studying during the week... The position of a minister who has a gospel to proclaim; who can go out and tell men what they are to do to be saved, was intelligible; but not so the position of a man who had no such gospel. What reason for continuance as a preacher could I claim? Why should people hear me rather than read books? (Rutherford, 1969, pp. 83-84)

A similar view is expressed in Told by an Idiot (1965) by Rose Macaulay where the Ethical Church is described by rationalist critic Maurice as:

"...A mere sop thrown to the religious instinct by people who don't like to starve it altogether. A morbid absurdity. A house without foundations. If they simply mean, as they appear to, that they think they ought to be good, why meet in South Place and sing about it? (Macaulay, 1965, p. 50)

The radical Church is full of conflicts. The systemic Christian denies that to which he associates himself, but at least he is radical in stance as well as content; the human relations Christian however can be quite conservative in stance. For example, Christian Unitarians today, whilst liberal in respect of the mainstream, contrast themselves with Humanists and are conservative minded, although they fundamentally lack an authority base for any success.

An avoidance of ritualism leads to nebulosity in symbolism. A reversal requires either diverse internal rituals or an excessive importation of symbols from other sources removed from their totality of meaning.

No intellectual theology can ever make a claim on anyone and so little is done. The radical criticises intellectualist jargon because what can be said should be said simply. Also, it is difficult to critically assess viewpoints

when all are allowed. Thus the radical Church is in fact *unattractive* to the intellectually religious.

In a Church with a set faith and especially a liturgy shifts the focus from the minister towards the faith. The radical Church loses this balance and ministers paid a stipend with freedom of the pulpit gain great influence in expressing their views. The radical Church can be quite clericalised.

At the same time, if he or she expresses a different perspective to that of the church then conformist pressure can be applied. Congregational demands can work against pure liberalism.

In the broad Church mainstream theology can cause ministers to be more radical than congregations. But in the radical Church it can cause a tendency towards ministerial conservatism. In any case 'ordained' ministers have no exclusive role and have no ability to create one over the membership which itself is very weakly defined.

The radical Church cannot totally avoid creed substitutes. It has to somehow declare what it believes. This in fact recreates the systemic problem where individuals (like Unitarian atheists) will be in conflict with stated goals and purposes. But even more so the radical Church is intended to say what it means and mean what it says, leaving its members in a dilemma.

The radical Church claims universalist tendencies, but a practical problem is to claim this *against* every other body. Therefore it becomes more sectarian and inward looking, painting others black to look white itself.

The greatest danger for the radical Church is that it simply becomes not very radical at all. Its claim to diversity does not easily attract people so it tends to hold the few together and becomes internal to itself, producing an inertia from which there seems no escape. Radicals are 'dissenters from' (2), and when separated they can stop being critical. Howard Hague, a lay Unitarian states in his A Personal View of Unitarianism:

It seems clear to me that we are no longer the radical movement we were once seen to be, though to some extent I think this is because other Churches have caught up with us, rather than we have retreated. Indeed, as Arthur Long pointed out in his 1978 Essex Hall Lecture (Long, 1978), recent theological history is in many ways a vindication of liberalism. But where does that leave us today? As a denomination I fear we are too cosy, that somehow we have lost the challenging edge we once had. Have we nothing left to contribute theologically? Must we leave liberal pronouncements now to Anglican academics and bishops? (Hague, 1987, p. 7)

To escape the problem of meaninglessness, the Church might look into history. The danger is that religion is seen as something of the past and then the Church seems not to have much future.

Thus there is security in being attached to a conservative structure but denying almost all of it, like a parasitic existence. The Creeds are used as symbolic historical statements from the past, giving identification and the feeling that religious activity is about something corporate. Symbolic patterns are retained, although major reinterpretation takes place (yet it is difficult to change offensive or meaningless words which continue to mean something for the more orthodox). Radicalism remains not only in content but in stance, and intellectual theology still functions. The ministry is also pre-defined by ontological myths, and retains a sense of status. The nature

of radical thought allows a universalist ethic of some kind to be present, without the sectarianism that grows within a separatist body.

Yet this systemic position is clearly contradictory however practical. Papa, the religion hopper (3) in Told by an Idiot shows something of the value and problem of liberal independency:

God knew, he had been aesthetically happier joining in the Roman mass... or chanting the Anglican liturgy in the little fourteenth century church in Hampshire... but never had he been so utterly honest, so stripped of the bare bone of all complacency, humbug and self-deception, as now. Or so, anyhow, he believed, but who shall read the human heart? (Macaulay, 1965, p. 39)

The radical Church has better prospects alongside dogmatic Churches but is handicapped by its diversity, weak theology and the non-churchgoing culture.

#### 5 (d). Which Future?

Here, in "the final twist of the plot", the broad Church/independency *dilemma* seems like a rebirth of the notion of Church and sect! But as long as rival tendencies are together in existing Churches and denominations then there is a 'broad Church', and 'independency' involves the current *dynamic* and therefore predicament about the advantages or otherwise of separation.

For the conversionists and traditionalists independency is attractive. They carry their ideology with them and practice it in pure form. But the orthodox liberals work best in situations of reciprocity of brokering between other belief and authority systems and the heterodox liberals as 'dissenters from' seek definitions of what they relate to from outside themselves.



Inertia to change (Chapter 5) must not be forgotten, but the question is how, using new denominational analysis, new Churches may come about.

Controversies arise from time to time with traditionalists which can only be solved by defeat or victory, and if they are defeated it means secession. The breaking away of many Catholics from the Church of England could be the initial spark to set in motion a New Reformation.

Some conversionists facing both sets of liberals may break out to form new Churches with new structures but, given the analysis of Chapter 7, it is more likely that they would grow in numbers against the liberals, change the Churches towards the dynamic model and then merge them together to form a dynamic Church. That is the point of their renewal.

They [the theologians of charismatic prayer groups] are inclined to say 'Since we have become charismatics we understand our own (Catholic, Reformed, Anglican, Lutheran) tradition better; there is no need for a critical review of the pneumatological position of our church; there is, however, a need to prove that we are very faithful adherents of our denomination; charismatic spirituality does not change any of our tunes, but it changes the rhythm and sometimes the key; it does not change our churches, but it lights them up; it does not change our ministry, but makes it more credible; it does not change our ecumenical commitment, but makes it more alive.

I doubt whether this is true or useful. If charismatic spirituality does not change our traditional denominationalism, what is the use of it? (Hollenweger, in Martin and Mullen, 1984, p. 42)

Conversionists could not have orthodox liberals effectively dragging down the activity of the Church. Many orthodox liberals would subscribe to the new norm but the loss of others and many heterodox liberals would worry them. Remaining uncomfortable traditionalists may also leave.

At the same time theology could become more radical causing many heterodox liberals to be removed, to form (4) or join radical Churches (unless they change faith). The orthodox liberals' bureaucratic function of 'honest broking' between other believers would be in ruins as they would effectively be at the edge of the Church. They too might have to go their own way towards a functional Church.

Indeed, the possibility must be that there will be more small traditionalist Churches and that conversionists will come to take over most of the present day mainstream. At the same time many heterodox liberals will not be able to "cut the rope" and some arrangement for them working with orthodox liberals may have to be found, perhaps in a small functional Church based on some definitions (the unenforced Trinity or Creeds) and a diversity clause. For liberals, more than others, and as ever historically, the independency option is not always preferred to the concept of the broad Church.

Of course, structural inertia and perhaps goodwill could mean that none of this happens.

## 6. Conclusion

There is a range of alternative research techniques and new projects in this field and beyond. The 'broad Church' is a phrase often used for political parties, and its origin is clear. Liberalism in Christianity today poses questions about cut off points, and the benefits or otherwise of staying attached to broad Churches. Realignment refocusses the independency/broad Church dilemma, and new denominational tendencies towards a New Reformation may cause various movements towards independency.

CONTENTS  
OF APPENDICES 1, 2 and 3: NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND JOURNALS

APPENDIX 1 Three Ministers of Religion Page 269

Introduction. . . . .	269
The Respondents. . . . .	269
Approach. . . . .	270
SUBJECT 1: GOD. . . . .	270
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (God, the Church and all men). . . . .	270
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1 (cause in the cosmos). . . . .	271
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (loving God and values). . . . .	271
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2 (the fringe of understanding). . . . .	272
Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2 (problems of intercession). . . . .	272
Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican (God can do anything). . . . .	273
SUBJECT 2: JESUS. . . . .	274
Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican (who one says Jesus is). . . . .	274
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1 (values and the Kingdom of God). . . . .	277
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (Jesus was human and wrong). . . . .	277
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2 (whole package). . . . .	278
Discussion E: Anglo-Catholic (historical claims necessarily true). . . . .	278
SUBJECT 3: THE RESURRECTION. . . . .	279
Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican (drama of true narratives). . . . .	279
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-2 (debate and doubts). . . . .	283
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-2 (Paul and potential pity). . . . .	285
Discussion D: Anglo-Catholic (the necessity of facts). . . . .	285
SUBJECT 4: THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND THE CREEDS. . . . .	286
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (the creeds and facts). . . . .	286
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1 (Virgin Birth need not be fact). . . . .	289
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (without all the package). . . . .	289
Discussion D: Conversionist Anglican (limited biblical critics). . . . .	290
SUBJECT 5: THE BIBLE AS A SOURCE OF AUTHORITY. . . . .	291
Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican (God-given factual accounts). . . . .	291
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (fulfilment of messianic prophecies). . . . .	294
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-2 (Mark closer to history). . . . .	295
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2 (Paul rather than Luke). . . . .	295
SUBJECT 6: SOME ISSUES OF PEOPLES' AFFILIATIONS. . . . .	296
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (Church and residual religion). . . . .	296
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (Responding to the secular). . . . .	296
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (young people and services). . . . .	296
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-1 (old people and old buildings). . . . .	297
Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-1 (negative image of ministers). . . . .	297
Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican (Hull not a Christian city). . . . .	298
Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican (origins of the Renewal). . . . .	299
SUBJECT 7: HOW EACH SEES OTHER PARTS OF THE CHURCH. . . . .	300
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (tongues a trivial gift). . . . .	300
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (Moral Majority is perfectly proper). . . . .	301
Discussion C: Anglo-Catholic (liberals off the map of belief). . . . .	301
Discussion D: Conversionist Anglican (Roman Catholic ills). . . . .	302
Discussion E: Conversionist Anglican (about Jenkins and Cupitt). . . . .	303

Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican (no expulsions of liberals).	306
Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican (liberal theology difficult).	306
Discussion H: Liberal Methodist-1 (traditionalists and Wesley).	307
Discussion I: Liberal Methodist-2 (unattractive fundamentalism).	307
<b>SUBJECT 8: SALVATION AND THE CHURCH.</b>	<b>308</b>
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (salvation in the Trinity).	308
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (Catholic Church differences).	308
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (tolerant community).	309
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2 (saving own soul is selfish).	309
Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2 (overcoming negative existence).	309
Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican (heaven is being with God).	310
<b>SUBJECT 9: FEMINISM AND THE CHURCH.</b>	<b>310</b>
Discussion A: Liberal Methodist-2 (Jesus and male dominance).	310
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (females as ministers not priests).	312
Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican (women cannot be in charge).	312
<b>SUBJECT 10: ECUMENISM AND OTHER DENOMINATIONS.</b>	<b>313</b>
Discussion A: Liberal Methodist-1 (prejudice free attempt).	313
Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic (Methodist ministers in the laity).	314
Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican (E.A. and the Renewal).	315
<b>SUBJECT 11: ATTITUDES TO OTHER FAITHS.</b>	<b>315</b>
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (sub-Christian religions).	315
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-2 (Hindus accept Christians).	316
Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1 (Jesus's life not better).	316
Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2 (difference in the evidence).	316
Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2 (Christianity and culture).	318
Discussion F: Liberal Methodist-2 (Unitarian values from Jesus).	319
Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican (converts from Islam killed).	319
Discussion H: Conversionist Anglican (Islam God of non-failure).	320
Discussion I: Conversionist Anglican (Gandhi not in heaven).	322
Discussion J: Conversionist Anglican (Hindu Christless eternity).	323
<b>SUBJECT 12: SECULARISATION.</b>	<b>323</b>
Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic (secular spitting and jeering).	323
Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1 (secular frees from prejudice).	324
Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican (secular slows the Renewal).	324
Concluding Comments.	325

**APPENDIX 2 Later Details about St. Heimdall's Church Page 328**

Comments from Anne's Father, then a Church Warden.	328
Anne's Information After 1985.	328

**APPENDIX 3 The Mainstream Triangle Page 330**

NOTES Page 331, Chapters 1) 331; 2) 332; 3) 332; 4) 334; 5) 335; 6) 336; 7) 337; 8) 338

BIBLIOGRAPHY Page 339; JOURNALS Page 352.

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## APPENDIX ONE

### THREE MINISTERS OF RELIGION

#### Three Different Types of Reply Illustrate the Nature of the Emerging Denominations

##### Introduction.

This is a comprehensive edited transcription of four discussions with three ministers of religion. The aim of the layout is to offer comparison between the different religious positions held by the ministers. This appendix also serves as theological background to the thesis.

##### The Respondents.

The first discussion took place on 26th March 1985 with an Anglo-Catholic. He is in his 40's and trained in the 1960's at St. Stephen's House in Oxford. He has two M.A.'s and was considering taking a third one in contemporary politics. He once thought of "going to Smith Square" (the Conservative Party headquarters) and would have done so had he not become a priest.

Two discussions were carried out with a liberal Methodist minister (labelled as 1 and 2 below) on January 22nd and May 13th 1986. The second tackled in greater depth the issue of the Resurrection (and some further subjects). In between discussions he went on retreat where he expressed doubts about the existence of God. Having studied architecture and learnt the guitar he went to Taizé in search of a religious vocation. However, the idea of ordained ministry grew so he went very quickly through the lay preacher stage in order to train for the ministry. He is in his thirties and trained in the

1970's at Wesley House, Cambridge, where the promising and intelligent ordinands are sent. He had a B.Sc. and an M.A..

The final discussion was carried out on September 11th 1986 with an evangelical. He became a Christian in 1971 and was in the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Christians until the rejection of foreign mission work and a chance meeting took him to Oak Hill Anglican Theological College in 1980. So he became an Anglican ordained minister. He was 37.

#### Approach.

The discussions were without a predetermined structure. Cassette tapes were then written up. The ministers saw and commented on the transcripts and then an edited version. Each subject involves text extracted from the discussions; each discussion is a stream of dialogue. Q indicates my contributions (only included as necessary) and A is for each identified minister.

#### SUBJECT 1: GOD.

*I asked if God is contained within the Church. His reply intended to make the relationship between God, Christ and the Church clear.*

#### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic.

A) God is not contained within the Church. God is contained within Himself. The Church is the explicit instrument of His will. That is why it is called the Body of Christ, of course: Christ being God and the Word, the most perfect expression of God to mankind. The Spirit of God is contained within every human being; that is why St. John says, "This is the light that lighteth every man who cometh into the world," not just some of them. So

every person in so far as they comprehend good, seek to do good and seek to follow their conscience has the movement of God within him. That, of course does not mean everyone is saved; that's not a Universalist attitude. It's merely to identify the movement of God in all men.

Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1

Q) God is a Humpty-Dumpty word, it means what you want it to mean: nothing more and nothing less. Each tradition has its own meaning.

A) But the reality is unchanging.

Q) Is it? I don't think it is. Each tradition develops it's own concept of God. I'm sure the God of Christians today has nothing to do with the God of Jewish-Christians. Which reality are you going to pick? The Indian one verges on pantheism and the Christian one goes from very narrow to panentheism.

A) I believe there is a cause at the heart of the cosmos. It finds definitive expression in Jesus. I'm not saying that reality does not find expression in Buddhism, Hinduism or whatever. I mean my saying Jesus is determinative is speaking very differently from a fellow Christian for whom Jesus is also determinative. And we are all approaching this in a very subjective way and we are all, you know, probably wrong on most of what we saw. But my faith rests on Jesus who reveals for me all that God is which is: a) purposeful, b) a loving being and c) self giving (the Cross).

Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

A) In the end I just believe. Yes, I do believe in the reality of God. The

love that unites us in life is not unbroken and that love is the heart of everything. Jesus said the most important thing in life is to love God and he more or less said that loving God and loving our neighbour is tantamount to the same thing. In the end what matters at the heart of it is the values by which we live. Jesus said "There are many who'll say 'Lord Lord'" and he'll push them away but there are others who have been totally oblivious to him who he'll welcome. That approach suggests that in the end ethics and the values we live by are really what matters most.

#### Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2

A) When I talk about Jesus being a man... Once you begin to talk about God... Well, what do we mean by God? I don't find the two natures Christology (God becoming man, God and man within one sort of God-man) at all helpful. The way I approach it that in a human life God was revealed, or Jesus, as someone said, was God's action. When you say things like that, again you're on the fringe of understanding.

#### Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2

Q) (*A comparison with Buddhism*) In Christianity if you are actually praying you pray to a God. Now, presumably that God can listen. Well, that's nonsense to me so I fall down at the first fence.

A) No. Yeah. Well, that's a bit crude isn't it? You're picturing God like 'the old man in the sky'.

Q) A Unitarian minister I know says one's thought of God should be a little further removed than one removed from 'the old man in the sky'. When you



pray you have intercession and you are then talking to God. It doesn't matter whether it is 'the old man in the sky' or something else.

A) Yes.

Q) You expect with intercession some kind of relationship with another reality. I don't see how you get around that.

A) Yes, well that is at the heart of prayer. That is what is true. That's right. It's about 'relationship with'...God; the reality of God.

#### Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican

*Here we touched on God in the context of the debate about the Virgin Birth.*

A) [I] believe in a God who can do anything, who is the Creator of the world. I'm not an evolutionist, I believe God created; how long it took I don't know. He did it, though time's another thing. That's another thought altogether. And I believe in a God who could [therefore] quite easily, with permission (and that is the God I know), fertilise an egg in that young girl [Mary]. ...Now, I believe that because I have a picture of God which is big: I have a picture of God who can do anything, a God who is personal, who has created us in his in his image; there is something about us human beings in the image and likeness of God (we've mucked it up, we've screwed it up quite a bit, but there's something about it) and He loves us and he wants us to be with him. Part of his plan was the very fact that he would come to this earth as a human being.

## SUBJECT 2: JESUS.

*Reference to God involves reference to Jesus. It naturally works the other way around too but involves more historical argument.*

### Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican

Q) If you look at the Bible you can come up with a picture of a rabbinical teacher, Jesus of Nazareth or Rabbi Jesus (if you like), who believes that the end of the world is about to occur and that the Kingdom of God, this new reality, something unheard of in one sense in its realities, is about to come. His mission, his short mission, in collecting the twelve disciples (the twelve tribes of Israel), is to announce the coming of this Kingdom and to be a sort of inaugurator of this Kingdom - and it didn't happen.

A) I would say that it did! I mean Jesus said it is coming and it has come. It depends what you mean by the Kingdom of God. At the time the Jews were looking for the Messiah, but they wanted their Messiah. They were looking for a Davidic Messiah who'd come along and smash up the Romans. That's in fact, probably, what even some of the disciples were looking for in Jesus. It might have been why at first Simon Zealotes was there, the Zealot. That might have been all part of it and I think that they were looking for the Messiah to be somebody to come along to be King of Israel and to defeat the Romans, to kick them out.

Q) But they might even have been moving for the more gentle Jesus-type Messiah as well, it's not necessarily so that they were looking for a warrior.

A) They wanted a leader. Whether he was going to be the one to smash them all about, they were looking to Jesus to be the leader, the Davidic King who would lead the nation of Israel back into total control of the promised land. And I don't think they really understood the nature of the Kingdom of God until the Day of Pentecost. I think today in fact that the Kingdom of God needs to be worked out. I mean kingship: the Kingdom of God to me is about rule and it's about rule of individuals and their lives. He said that the Kingdom of God has come and if that's the case it can only be in a personal nature because the Kingdom would be ruled still by the Romans and was.

Q) But he said two things. He said both that it's come and it's coming.

A) It's coming. Yeah.

Q) Wasn't he trying to say that there was an immediacy about this? He's a prophetic messianic figure, he exists in messianic times, he follows on from and is followed by other Jewish teachers, and he's saying, "Look, this is so immediate you can feel it"; but he is also saying, in all this poetic language (it will come out of the skies etc.) that you get in the Gospels, that it is coming. Now that clearly didn't happen. What we're getting instead, rather than a general resurrection which was expected by the Pharisees and that viewpoint (which Jesus demoted but was part of his thinking), is a change of that into "the Resurrection of Jesus" which was originally, to the disciples after his death, a sign that the resurrection was coming along.

A) Well yes, yeah. Who do you say Jesus is? That is the crux, that is the centre. It's the centre of Christianity and I think it is the central problem

with the diversity within the Christian faith and in actual fact I would probably hesitate to say whether people are Christians unless they see Jesus... I suppose this is where I'd be toughest in calling people a Christian: how they see Christ. For instance I don't think that Jehovahs Witnesses are Christians because they do not believe that Jesus is divine - is God, I should say. They would say he is a God. How they work that out I'm not sure. But to me, as an evangelical Christian, Jesus is God in human form, and that is absolutely fundamental and central. When that is taken and accepted then everything else stems from it. I think Christology comes first; an understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done then leads on to very many other branches of theology.

Q) But there are those who say, within the mainstream, that he is more man than God in the sense that fundamentally what is important is that he is 'one of us', and then they go on to construct (or reconstruct) Christian doctrine according to, I don't know, broader, different, sideways, philosophical notions. But what's important is that one gets a sense that God is, they say, within creation and that here is a man - a man - who emphasises God working through history. Now, clearly what you're saying is something much more pinpointing. Do you agree with that?

A) Definitely. I think that in the last two thousand years ever since Christ walked this earth there's been controversy, there's been debate about who Jesus was: whether he was a man, whether he was God, whether he was God-man, whether he was man-God, how much he was man, how much he was God. The problem has been there right from the beginning, and the Arius controversy, I think, has come back again. That's present day thinking. The

emphasis of the man side has overtaken the God-ward side of Christ and I think that's where we have been going wrong in the last fifty or so years. Personally I see him as 100% God and 100% man.

#### Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1

*I had put the same sort of argument to the Liberal Methodist.*

Q) What Jesus said didn't happen and so the original belief is forever relativised. Apparently it's going to come but we keep waiting. Is this kind of belief dispensible?

A) No. Yes and no! Jesus lived by hope of the Kingdom of God which I live by. The values, if you like, of the Kingdom of God (love, justice, compassion, forgiveness and peace) point me to what is of ultimate significance and God's purpose in Creation. That's where my hope comes from and so I want to talk about the Kingdom of God.

#### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

A) Jesus is a human being within whom his life God identifies. Jesus said the Kingdom of God is among you wherever you love, seek justice and seek to obey God. His vision is fuelled by messianic expectations that the Kingdom was suddenly to come. I agree that was mistaken, just as if Jesus was asked if the Earth was flat or not. He was a human being of his own time.

Q) What is his uniqueness then? ...Is he a God in man's clothing? Is that what you're saying?

A) [God reveals himself in human beings,] ...in Gandhi and Martin Luther King [but] Jesus's uniqueness comes for me in what he said, how he lived and how he died. There is an integrity which commands...

Q) Can't other people have that integrity?

A) Yes, and that's what we all hope for, to have that integrity. But Jesus's was that..*[stops]*. I mean, I'm really again on that knife edge that I'm speaking to you about.

#### Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2

A) Isn't it the whole package? It's the whole experience of Jesus and the peoples' experience of his style of life, his teaching, the course of his life, the way it ended and the experience of the disciples that it was an on-going and continuous event. People talk about the Jesus event and in a sense it was the whole thing that becomes sort of determinative.

#### Discussion E: Anglo-Catholic

*With the Anglo-Catholic my views were similar to those of the Methodist minister. So he is involved in a different debate:*

Q) The ministry of Jesus does not depend upon his Virgin Birth, if ever there was one; it doesn't depend necessarily upon a physical Resurrection in a sense that the Church may have understood this according to the mythological years that we have been through. What really matters to the Church is that Jesus is the definer of God because of his service to man, the meaning that he shows through life, through the cut and thrust of the horrors around us,

that he actually stands against that; and indeed one of the results of his standing against that first of all is that the system killed him and secondly that the apostles later on took up his cause, and this indeed continued through and into the Church...

A) ...The Christian religion is not based upon the fact that a man did extraordinary service and the system killed him; the Christian religion is based upon the fact that God became a human being and took upon himself all that that means, and redeemed our human nature in sacrifice. The Christian religion is based on historical facts or it is based on nothing at all. If the historical facts, which vindicate claims of Jesus about himself and the claims that the Church has made about him are not true then there is no Christian religion.

### SUBJECT 3: THE RESURRECTION.

#### Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican

Q) Don't you think the Resurrection was something due to first of all bereavement, then the expectation of a Kingdom to come? When people have visions today they normally think of their loved ones in heaven. Presumably in those days when the language was different (it was material, it was about resurrection and so on) they would think it more in terms of the person of the visions with them. Don't you think that the Resurrection of Jesus was a case of visions and that these visions were of a nature that transformed the followers into renewing their expectation of this coming Kingdom?

A) Nope! Nice and simple, innit! I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ; I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of humans; I believe that we are

destined to die and then face judgement. We will, each and every one of us, have to stand before God in our resurrection body. What happens after that I'm not sure. I don't know what hell is like: all I know is that it's separation from God and it's not going to be very nice (whether it's a pit or fire or Gehenna, or what, I don't know). But I believe in the Resurrection - definitely. You see, once again, you either believe what the narratives say or it's a load of old codswallop. You see, that's how I first became a Christian: I read St. John's Gospel and I looked at the very first verse about Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And a bit further on, "The Word took flesh and dwelt amongst men". Now that, you see, hit me. I saw it was either true or it's all a load of codswallop. And exactly the same with the Resurrection: it either happened or it's all a load of rubbish. The evidence for me is overwhelming that it was true, actually true. The very fact that there was no body ever [produced]. That's just one [proof]. The authorities definately would have produced the body if they possibly could.

Q) Don't you think that in Mark where it says that "the women were told not to tell anybody" it indicates it's a text. It's not about facts: it's not that they were told not to tell anybody, but that "Mark", the writer of Mark, had written into the text this particular passage so that it indicates a later developing tradition which is the Empty Tomb.

A) No, I don't think so, I don't think it's a later.... No, don't think so [pause]. I don't think it's a later... I mean Paul, was it Paul?.. Paul talks about five hundred people seeing Jesus alive.



Q) Yes, he's picking up the tradition isn't he of...

A) Yeah, you see, he could be refuted easily and could be called a liar. These people were still alive, they said. I mean he wouldn't have said that unless it was true, otherwise quite easily he could have been called a liar and his whole ministry would have fallen flat on it's face! Hallucination? There's no way. I mean that's one of the things that people say, that it was hallucination. I don't believe that. Five hundred people? Very very difficult to hallucinate over that over a period of time.

Q) That writing which is about twenty five years later (Corinthians, isn't it?), he's not sort of saying "I have met these five hundred people". He's really sort of... You see the thing is that the early Christian community were living "the Resurrection life" and they were involved in ecstasy experiences. So one would expect five hundred people. I mean it's not something that's unusual. It doesn't strike me as unusual because of the sort of language and the experience and the ecstasy that was in the early Christian community.

A) What you're saying is that they were duped, they were confused, got it wrong.

Q) No, I'm not saying they were duped at all or indeed that there is any dishonesty about it. What I'm saying is that people live within particular cultures and see things through particular pairs of glasses, as we do today. I mean with Paul it sticks up like a sore thumb: Paul has got this whole language of "the body" and of resurrection, and here he is confronted with

his torments and his vision of Jesus as the Living Lord and he's having to talk in terms of a new body, in terms of a spirit, so his language is all over the place. ...Now he never mentions the Empty Tomb as such but of course he talks about a body because that's all he can talk about, it's the whole Jewish way. He's having to work out his language. So it's not a case that they are duped, any of these people (whether they are the Jews or the later Gentiles), it's that they are having to think in their own terms - like the Greeks did when it got out there. ...I mean there's obviously a point about what you're saying, that it's either true or it's a load of rubbish, but I don't think you can apply that, do you, to the people themselves. What limits would you place on this with the people themselves at that time, do you think there has to be an event that they must pinpoint?

A) Yes. I think very clearly from the narrative that something dramatic happened to change the whole lot. There they were after the Crucifixion. They were a cowering load of shivering wrecks thinking that "Oh crumbs, it's our turn next; we're going to get stuffed on that cross", and then you have Peter, big mouth Peter the fisherman, standing up in front of three thousand people declaring that Jesus Christ has come to this earth, he's died and rose again. Something dynamic happened, and that was Pentecost. It took off from there: there was a dynamic change. If it was built on a lie I cannot see that these people would be willing to die for a lie. Something dynamic happened. They knew the Resurrection, they saw Jesus (they met with him, they talked with him) after he rose again and they actually saw him go. The Ascension: O.K., I mean a lot of people find that very very difficult (the idea of him floating up into heaven) and his coming back the same way even harder. I don't fully understand that, I don't know how it happened. I can understand

why he did it. Up until then he'd been coming backwards and forwards sort of appearing to them over a period of forty days, talking to them, continuing their education, if you like, explaining what was going to happen a bit more, preparing them for the task, and then he said: "Right! Now I'm really going, this is the last time," and he did because he went slowly (just gently disappeared out of sight), and they knew. They knew. And you've got the angels, of course. Some people say: "Oh, a load of rubbish, no angels", but I believe in angels. And then at Pentecost: that was the firing-up. Jesus foretold that, "Go and wait in Jerusalem, I will be with you always". And he was as the Holy Spirit. That's why we believe in the Trinity. I believe in the Trinity - Father, God and Holy Spirit, all one: one and the same.

#### Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-2

*I gave the same argument about visions, Paul and the language problem to the Methodist. I read out the view of Paul Badham, an Anglican priest (Moss, ed., 1986, pp. 130-132), that just as people see visions today (which for him indicates there is life after death) so did Jesus's followers after his death.*

A) In my understanding resurrection certainly hadn't been historically part of the Jewish belief and scriptures but was becoming an issue in an apocalyptic environment.

Q) Didn't the Pharisees believe in the resurrection?...

A) And the Sadducees didn't. Yes, it was a debate on resurrection. ...The culture wasn't one that would encourage people to believe that their loved ones who had died were living with them and that they would have an

apparition of them. They may have had a belief that on the last day they would be raised. The Resurrection experience broke new ground in that those first disciples had an experience (if you want to call it a vision or whatever it was) that Jesus was not just simply sleeping or waiting to be raised on the last day but that he had been raised. He's the first and he is decisive...

Q) ...Today people will see an apparition and then say heaven whereas the Jews would say "obviously not". But nevertheless if you combine that with the expectations of their day then that vision, the person "with them" (that very close experience), is translated into their own terms.

A) Before you just go on! The real question is how did a group of Jesus's followers in such a short space of time and with such courage and tenacity go out with this 'Good News' of a Living Lord? They had to work out all that that meant. Their experience must have been powerful to cope with the death of Jesus (which had been, as we read in the Gospels, of such a devastating effect) and transform them. Over the next couple of hundred years they came to the full grown faith and all that surrounded Jesus. Now, when we talk about revelation and God's revelation it seems to me that God works in the ordinary and I want to see that. To speak and think of God popping his finger down here and there I don't find easy. I'm aware of what you're saying because this is something I wrestle with (particularly of Jesus and the possibilities that perhaps it was no more than a vision). You know, you have to face that with little substance. But, on the whole, I still feel that the experience was such a powerful one for those first followers and only that would have impelled the church into being and given it its dynamism.

*On the tomb - in contrast to Paul Badham - I read out Bruce Findlow's view, a Unitarian minister (1966, pp. 18-19), that the missing body allowed the resurrection belief to take root, and it could even take root in an Edinburgh "last week" if the same Jewish expectations existed.*

A) It's a bit muddled really. There are all sorts of things in there. It's using twentieth century situations like the mention there of Edinburgh. It's not valid. Preachers do it all the time but you can't persuade on the basis of our own situation something about a different culture. I would also say that a lot of this talk about kingship, sacrifice, renewal and the suffering servant came later as reflection.

A) And this tomb business! What was it? Some Christians are saying that the body was in the tomb and here's a Unitarian saying it had gone, but for different reasons.

#### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-2

*We were debating if Saul the persecutor had become zealous Paul, with his vision in torment of the Risen Christ:*

Q) You don't think that when he converted he tried to make up for his past? Don't you think he saw the light? He must have seen the error of his past ways. He comes across as such a mixed up character.

A) Yes, if you put it like that. In a way he was zealous as a Pharisee as one side of him so he'll be zealous as a Christian but also, as you say, to make amends.

Q) But that worries me concerning your last reading [in a service]: "If Christ be not raised your faith is in vain". This is a very black and white point from a very grey character. Why isn't life worth it if we are not raised (which is what you were saying)?

A) No, it isn't that life isn't worth it. He is saying, "Here we are preaching the Risen Jesus as the first fruits of those who will be raised on the last day; here we are perhaps being persecuted (or whatever). And if Jesus actually hasn't been raised then what's it all about? We're the most to be pitied; we'll be nothing."

#### Discussion D: Anglo-Catholic

A) Those who claim that they can somehow possess the significance and power of historical facts without it being necessary for those facts to have taken place in the first place seem to me to be somewhat flawed by logic. If the Bodily Resurrection of Our Lord, upon which the whole life of the Church had been founded, did not happen then there is no basis for our faith. As some one greater than I has said, "If the Resurrection is not true then we are, of all men, the most foolish". ...We can't say that it is tremendously important that I live my life in the knowledge that my grandmother died of cancer or whatever it might be when in fact she's still alive and living down the road. You can't possess the significance of something if it has not happened.

#### SUBJECT 4: THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND THE CREEDS.

##### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

A) Uniquely, He [God] acted once in the life, death, Resurrection, [and]

Ascension of Jesus Christ and in the coming of the Holy Ghost. What I am saying is that obviously God's revelation goes on but there are points of focus, in which the Creeds are major examples, where certain aspects of faith are summed up as far as we can see for the rest of time.

*I suggested that when I say the Creeds I don't say them literally.*

A) What do you mean when you don't say them literally? Do you mean when you say "...was conceived by the Holy Ghost born of the Virgin Mary" that Our Lady was not a virgin?

Q) Yes, I do.

A) That's not not saying them literally, that's just overturning the plain meaning of them. It's one of the arguments I've always had with people about the Virgin Birth. You've either a particular physical phenomenon or you've nothing at all. Either the woman was a virgin or she was not a virgin. Full stop.

Q) Well, there is. Let me try and explain it...

A) Well, I know exactly what you're going to say about the background and how it was a fulfillment and how saying she was a virgin just meant it was important. But that is not saying 'the Virgin Birth'. Either she was a virgin or she was not a virgin. If she was not a virgin then that should be cut out of the Creeds and it is a lie.

A) ...Yes, you're going to say something is significant while denying the reality of it. It's like saying "Oh, we'll keep the Virgin Birth in because it just indicates what it really means and this is important you see".

Q) Ah, but let me try and put it like this: There are some liberals who do believe in the Virgin Birth. Now, I'm not going to narrow down what people can and cannot believe.

A) But that is precisely what the Creeds were formulated specifically to do. This is why people of the liberal position are so ill at ease in the Church because, you see, the Church is geared and structured to denying certain propositions: heresies, wrong belief and absence of belief. What you are now saying is that they can be used precisely in the opposite way, to be a sort of portmanteau in which you can fill up according to your own fanciful notions about what may or may not have happened. It's not what the Creeds were about. They were not formulated for that purpose and cannot be used for that purpose.

*Then I go on to say that 'Almah' was changed to 'Parthenon' in the Old Testament by Greek Jews which meant young woman but came to mean virgin.*

Q) Therefore when I say "born of a virgin" I mean "young woman".

A) Oh no you don't because it was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Q) You don't distinguish, do you, the Church drawing up the Creeds and the life and ministry of Christ?



A) The Church is the extension of the Incarnation. It is the extension of the incarnate life of Christ. That's why it is called 'The Body of Christ' - the Church. When the whole Church comes to a mind about a matter it is as if Christ had proclaimed on the matter himself. That is why the Creeds of the undivided Church are of such crucial importance.

#### Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1

A) Christianity is historically a total system with creedal details. But historically we've been forgetting the human life Jesus lived and the making sense of it that produced all the package. Using critical scholarship of the Bible I would say the Virgin Birth is part of the reflection and not necessarily the historic truth. We can't honestly know. But to be honest that we don't know doesn't knock the scheme for me.

#### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

A) The datum of the first witnesses and the integrity of Jesus's life and death inspires me and calls me to follow. The 'package' leads me in the end to talk in terms of Son of God, Trinity and so on.

Q) Why tie yourself to the package? We've got a perfectly good range of secular words which we can use about Jesus (which you use yourself) like "values", "ideal", "charisma" and so on.

A) Probably what I am trying to do is live without a lot of the package aren't I?

Q) Yes, but you're going back to it though.

A) I don't see Jesus as the package! He's the centre and that's just my frame of reference.

Discussion D: Conversionist Anglican

*I made the point about the Old Testament translation of Almah to Parthenon.*

Q) It is said that the parent, or parents, of Jesus walked to Bethlehem to go to the census. But the problem is that Herod died in 4 B.C. and Quirinius came into office in 7 A.D. which is an eleven year gap. Jesus was born about 7 B.C., or there around, during the reign of Herod, so it's quite impossible for the parents to have walked to Bethlehem for the census because Quirinius who was mentioned in the Gospel wasn't around then. So the Virgin Birth is stuck within this whole area of legend and therefore, to my mind, becomes a piece of extreme speculation to suggest that there was a Virgin Birth. You get these liberals in the mainstream who will say that the Virgin Birth has a sort of poetic meaning: it means the Incarnation and the Incarnation means this man who indicates that God acts through history. But you get somebody perhaps like yourself who sees the Virgin Birth as an historic event, true and simple. How do you get around the problems of the biblical criticism?

A) We don't know everything. I mean biblical critics don't know everything and there is more information coming up all the time as to this. I agree there is a problem about dating. We've been trying to work out the date of Christ's birth for donkey's years and they still haven't really got it and we haven't got all the information as to exactly when Quirinius was, etc. etc.. So I agree that there is a bit of mystery about it. But the fundamental thing for me is it's either true or it's not. In other words, it either really happened,

there was a Virgin Birth (actually, we celebrated the Blessed Virgin Mary on Monday)... Either this young girl was spoken to by God and she said "Yeah, I'll do anything you like" (probably thirteen or fourteen, no older than that), and if you believe in a God like I do who can do anything (then he) could (therefore) quite easily, with permission (and that is the God I know) fertilise an egg in that young girl. We know that there can be spontaneous carthogenesis? But that only occurs with the female (I think the egg just splits for some reason, I don't know why, but it has to be the same sex which is female), but in this case it is not that, clearly not that. I believe that God fertilised that egg! ...it was a human foetus, a female, an egg, but God himself fertilised that egg. So he was the father and somehow he was there so it was 'God and man'.

Q) But is that not to say that this man is now 50% man and 50% God?

A) [laughs] Well, there's the debate. That's the thing. There's all sorts of things through history of people trying to grapple with it, like 'the reversible raincoat theory' and a sort of switching on and off: you know one minute he's God and next minute he's man. I believe that he was 100% man and 100% God. That's what the Creeds say and I can't sort of tear that to little pieces and quantify it in minute detail because it's a mystery and in the end it is part of faith. I believe it that my God can do anything and I can believe he did come as a human being Jesus so he was both man and God.

#### SUBJECT 5: THE BIBLE AS A SOURCE OF AUTHORITY.

##### Discussion A: Conversionist Anglican

Q) Now Oak Hill is an evangelical, fundamentalist college...

A) Wait a minute! No, it's not fundamentalist. What do you mean by fundamentalist for a start? That's the trouble when you start using terms. What do you mean by fundamentalist?

Q) Well, I don't mean every word of the Bible is inerrant; the Bible is strongly divinely inspired and one takes a Conservative theological view rather than the other theological view.

A) Ah, yes. Well, I wouldn't call that fundamentalist.

Q) What would you call fundamentalist?

A) Well, there's a brand of North American (what I would think more) fundamentalist who would say that every single word of the Bible is inerrant. I don't think Oak Hill would say that, not at all, and nor would I. I believe it is inerrant in its totality but there are scribal errors etc., mistakes and (not inaccuracies) human problems in it. I believe it is inspired.

A) Inspired means 'breathed out'. In other words God actually put into that what he wanted. I don't see God sort of stood over Moses dictating every single word, but I believe that God actually put into Moses' mind that which he wanted to be put in. But Moses had his own mind and he wrote the things that he felt and so did David, etc., etc., and they all did.

Q) But what about something say like Matthew writing the Sermon on the Mount so that it looks like a new Law for the Christians when in fact the

Sermon on the Mount is a compilation really of Jesus's rabbinical sayings? How do you regard that sort of biblical criticism? I mean you can start with that sort of thing and then you can start asking more fundamental questions about the nature of the New Testament, can't you?

A) Yes, well people do, but I believe the Gospels are accounts written by individuals from their particular point of view. Yes, I quite accept there might have been another source, "Q" (if you like to call it that). That's quite possible. Yeah, I reckon they wrote notes and then got down to actually writing something down. But I believe that what is written there actually happened. I don't think the Sermon on the Mount is just bits picked out from all rabbinical sayings and put there in the mouth of Jesus or that particular time and place; I believe he actually said it. Now they might be rabbinical sayings...

Q) I'm not saying he didn't say it, I'm saying he said it at different times and that the disciples would be the sort of people to remember these things fairly accurately as was the habit of the time.

A) Oh. Yeah, but if you're saying that that wasn't actually on the Mount then you're saying that they are sort of making things up, not keeping to the facts as such.

Q) I'm saying that there is a context which is the developing early Church. ...What Matthew was doing was really creating a new Law for the community whereas biblical criticism would say that these ethics which are in the Sermon on the Mount are interim and pointers towards the Kingdom of God

which Jesus believed was on its way. As the early Church developed and this Kingdom of God didn't actually arrive this was changed into a new Law for the Christian community. So I'm saying, for your reaction, that biblical criticism can go off in certain directions, and in this example I'm suggesting that writers indeed did not change the facts but developed a tradition and that's what one of their major functions was.

A) No. I know the theory that, and quite possibly true, that the different Gospels were written for different groups but nevertheless I would say that they were factual accounts of what happened and what was said. Now, once again, I would say that they were inspired: God used these human beings to put down and bring out what he wanted.

#### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

*Scripture also has its place for the Anglo-Catholic.*

Q) We don't necessarily need the absolutism of the myth. Now how do you relate the Jewish bit to the Christian bit?

A) With no difficulty whatever in the same way that Our Lord and the Church has done. Our Lord was the perfect fulfilment of the messianic prophecies. ...That's why it [the Church] keeps on quoting time and time again all the scriptures from the Old Testament to display to us that he [Christ] is fulfilling that expectation.

Q) So, do you take a literal view of the Scriptures then; the fact that these were prophecies written in the Old Testament?

A) You don't have to take a literal view of the whole Scripture to believe that the Jewish expectation of the Messiah was as Our Lord said it was. After all, so many of the messianic texts were quoted by Our Lord to vindicate what he was doing.

#### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-2

*Here the Bible is critically used as a way of seeking truth.*

Q) Don't you have the sneaking suspicion that Peter may have continued with his ideas of leadership [after Jesus's death]? I mean in Mark the disciples misunderstand Jesus and run away, but Mark is Roman and puts the disciples down and raises Jesus up in its bias.

A) Yes, but there are so many places where the disciples, and Peter especially (who was an important Church figure when the Gospels were written), are shown in a very bad light. That wouldn't be invented and looking at the other Gospels we see Mark portraying them in that light. If Mark is first then Matthew and Luke tone down anything that puts them in a bad light. Mark therefore is closer to history and so the disciples were left in a dishevelled state.

#### Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2

A) I wouldn't say there's a lot of evidence for those squabbles you're suggesting exist [about authority in the early Church]. I don't see any real evidence for Peter and James [squabbling]. There was controversy, reading between the lines, between Paul and Peter about whether you had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian. There was a real theological difference

there but I wouldn't say it was a squabble. The community didn't seem to be established in institutional terms as our Church is today.

Q) ...There is the point where Paul is converted. You didn't read the Acts one, you read the Paul one (which is fair enough).

A) Well, I read Paul because he is better speaking for himself than have Luke putting his emphases onto Paul.

#### SUBJECT 6: SOME ISSUES OF PEOPLE'S AFFILIATIONS.

##### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

A) [The Bishop of Durham affair and] a breakdown in the shared faith of the Church of England largely [reflects that] ...by our nature of things we are an Established Church, and unfortunately that too often leads to us being in the business of us giving a respectable veneer to people's residual Christianity, their natural religion and their pantheism.

##### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

A) The Church must deal with the world as it is, and if people for various reasons, whatever they might be, are moving away from religion or Christianity then of course one needs to examine that and think seriously about one's response. But that is not quite the same as saying that the world by moving away from the faith is in fact right, is in fact saying something valid about the faith or our presentation of it.

##### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

*The M.A.Y.C. President had suggested that big youth clubs in the 1960's were*



*often replaced by fellowships, but by staying out of church services young people eventually leave.*

A) Youths are in almost secular youth clubs to Bible fellowships and it's a problem of integration really. You're baptised into the family of the Church and the Church's responsibility is to allow you to grow, find a faith and contribute to the family. Although they've found a faith they've not found a place in the church, which is a gap of concern.

#### Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-1

Q) You have an older congregation committed to a church [building] you had to close.

A) The old church building wasn't used in winter because of heating expenses. It would take half a summer's collection to heat. But we had a new building next door fortunately. However it was difficult as people weren't ready to embrace the solution collectively and people were attached to the building.

#### Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-1

*The image of the minister is a problem in Britain:*

A) The Church is associated with negative values: "don't do this, don't do that" and it's middle class. But in America the Church has a macho image. We went to Springfield, Ohio, which was settled in 1799. Within weeks the hamlet had a circuit rider. So it's a pioneering spirit and "God Bless America", a belief that God opened up America.

A) So the image is of the preacher who braved the Indians. But in Britain the image is Dick Emery, Derek Nimmo. They are not men's men but bothered with church flowers. They've nothing to contribute to society and are almost irrelevant.

#### Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican

Q) Do you think Hull is no longer a Christian city.

A) It's not a Christian city, No! It depends what you mean by Christian, that's the key. You see, again, what do you mean by Christian? If you mean that we try to live by Christian morality you could say that, but you've only got to look around to see that in fact we are far from it with the crime rate and sexual watchamacallit all the time. If you're honest we're way off beam, even if you say that. But we say that a Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, because that's what it means; ...then you've got to look around the city and say "Well, how many are truly the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?". The survey in 1981 that David Attwood did for East Hull showed that only 1% of the population went to the Anglican Church and, as far as we know, probably another 1% of the population went to all the other denominational churches. So less than 2% of the population actually go to church. No way you can call East Hull a Christian city, particularly if you've got somewhere like Pakistan where 2.1% of the population go to church. ...Anyway 'Faith on Fire' is about the Church in Singapore where, through evangelical preaching and teaching (maybe signs and wonders as well, charismatic renewal), it has grown to something like 20% of the population. So we can say that Singapore is much more a Christian city than Hull.

Q) Well, what about somewhere like the United States where about 50% of people go to church?

A) About 40% isn't it? I think so, that's the figure I heard. Yeah, I wouldn't call that a Christian country either. Even that's a minority. It's like Britain in the Victorian times when it was the done thing without a true reality (I might be misaligning, they might not be quite the truth). I don't believe that there is a Christian country anywhere on the basis that I'm talking about, on a biblical definition of true followers of Jesus Christ. I mean there are more Christian countries.

#### Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican

*The Charismatic movement became important to him and is also seen as a way to renewal:*

A) I think that God is changing things, something is happening and has been for a long time. I think it started with the Pentecostal Movement actually, 1906 or before: Azusa Street and the Pentecostals coming into this country which really was the start-off of the Charismatic Movement...

Q) Yes, there are many Pentecostals aren't there. ...The origins of Pentecostalism as I understand it are in Black America.

A) Well, actually, from what I understand it started in Russia, believe it or not. Dema Shakarian came across as a Russian emigré into California. Isn't it Azusa Street in California? I think they were white Pentecostals at first, but the black Pentecostals really let rip - and great! I mean they were

superb in many ways: they had the childlike faith and they had the dynamism. But they didn't have the theology unfortunately and their understanding of what was going on was not what it ought to be and, of course, that put many people off. It is now (the neo-Pentecostal Movement which is Charismatic Renewal) much more theological and biblically based (soundly based). It has a theology now whereas it never had. And even Pentecostals are now theologically au-fait. And I think it is coming of age, it is now in every denomination and it seems to me that that is a renewal. That is going back to New Testament Christianity, in my view.

#### SUBJECT 7: HOW EACH SEES OTHER PARTS OF THE CHURCH.

##### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

Q) What do you reckon to speaking in tongues?

A) Well, I hope I take rather a Pauline attitude to it where he said that he would sooner say - I forget the figures exactly - ten words that could be understood by people than ten thousand that couldn't. So that's the attitude I would take to it. As he so rightly says, if people have this gift let them exercise it. It is such, in a sense, a trivial gift that I wouldn't particularly have much time for it myself. As again: St. Paul says the stranger coming in and hearing somebody talking in tongues just hears gibberish and is not edified, whereas if he comes in and hears someone speak sense about Our Lord then he is edified. So I think St. Paul had the right attitude to it.

Q) Do you accept that people who speak in tongues are guided, as they say, by the Holy Spirit?

A) Well, Michael Ramsey ...looked at it as a sort of bubbling up of, what shall we say, spiritual enthusiasm, as it were, which, I suppose, is a reasonable thing to do. I can't see really that it is important.

#### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

*I asked about the association of fundamentalism with right wing U.S. politics which sometimes comes over here.*

A) In some of its manifestations it's rather unattractive and in some of its campaigns it's rather laudable - for example they are very active against the abortion lobby and so on. So some of it is good and some of it is bad. Americans tend to be extremely naïve about most things anyway. ...But, on the other hand, some things (the moral majority campaigns) seem to be perfectly proper.

#### Discussion C: Anglo-Catholic

Q) ...The third group is the liberal group, not really Protestant or Catholic, perhaps it is somewhere in between and tends to define things according to the culture of the day, if I can put it like that.

A) I think until about twenty or thirty years ago there was perhaps a degree of mutual enrichment between what in old fashioned terms you would call Low Church and High Church Anglicans because there was agreement about most (but not all) of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith. There was, in a sense, a shared liturgy which was based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer with additions or subtractions of various kinds; but even though the appearance of the liturgy might be radically different between different

parishes it would still be possible for one person with a Low Church parish to go to an Anglo-Catholic parish (and vice versa) and still have at least some knowledge of the words and prayers (and so on) being used. As I say, within an agreement on the fundamentals of the Creeds and so on, although the emphases might differ drastically, there might be some cross-fertilisation with the Evangelical stress on personal salvation and the Catholic stress on the order of the Church, the sacraments and so on. But perhaps that was healthy. Now, of course, there has been a great breakdown in the shared faith of the Church and this is largely to do with the liberals as you describe them. I don't like you saying the liberals are somewhere in between, they are not even on the same map as Catholics and Evangelicals. They are of a different order of faith or lack of faith.

Bishop Jenkins is only the most conspicuous of these people. He's been touting these clapped out trendy 1960's views from indeed the sixties themselves when he was at Oxford, when I remember him more. ...The sort of heresies and lack of beliefs that he is now proclaiming up and down the land are nothing new, but what is disastrously new is the fact they have been taken into the hierarchy of the Church. This is a significant departure.

#### Discussion D: Conversionist Anglican

*He has questions about Roman Catholicism but respects Anglo-Catholicism.*

A) There are real Christians in the Roman Catholic Church, I have no doubt. They at least believe in the divinity of Christ. That for me is very very important. There are certain things about the Roman Catholic Church I do not like but then again there are things about many other denominations that I

do not like; there are many things about the Church of England I do not like. So what! There are probably many things about me that other people don't like and don't agree with. But then again, once again, I'm afraid, one of the things about the Roman Catholic Church does seem to be the over-emphasis on the Mass (you know, you have to go to Mass). It becomes almost a religion of works and it's as bad as the Jehovahs Witnesses if that's what they're relying on. Now, having said that, I still do believe that there are many Roman Catholics who are true believers. I find Mariology a bit difficult [laughs] to say the least. I've talked to many people and they (some) say they don't worship Mary but highly esteem her: well, yeah, right: so do I but I only worship one God.

Q) Many Anglo-Catholics worship Mary, don't they?

A) Well, Anglo-Catholics in the Anglican Church, once again, are different. They don't worship her, some would say they highly esteem her and in fact they pray that Mary will join in with their prayers (that's what they would say, likewise the Saints). Now I don't see that. I don't go along with that, but that's minor: they're still Christians, they'll still go to heaven, they'll still have a place with God. They're just different to me, that's all, but it's not how I see it.

#### Discussion E: Conversionist Anglican

Q) How do you think about somebody like the Bishop of Durham, then?

A) He's a good man. I think he has got a Christian faith of some degree. I don't agree with what he says.

Q) Is he, to use your terms, for heaven?

A) Well that I don't know, I wouldn't like to say. I mean I can't judge particularly somebody like him who says he is a Christian so I would find it very difficult. I've heard in fact that he's a lovely man - a spiritual man - and that's great, but in the end I don't know. It's his relationship with Jesus Christ that counts and that's between him and God. I don't agree with him and I suppose my hackles rise when I hear some of the things that he says; I think it is a great pity that he is saying them particularly when he is a bishop.

A) ...I suppose it's 'feelings of the heart'; it's Schleiermacher that's really influenced him and a lot of others. It's the faith inside that counts and the actual facts for them don't matter. Now I think they do.

Q) Well, Durham... would argue against Schleiermacher. ...What you're saying it seems to me is that a person who calls himself a Christian is further along the road than that person who won't, but, on the other hand, he's not as far along the road as a person who is actually believing in the doctrines as true. Is that what you are saying?

A) I suppose so, yes. Yes [pause]. Nearer, but still not there. But in the end I can't judge, I'm not to judge.

Q) Don Cupitt calls himself a Christian. Would you also say that he is...



A) No way. Don Cupitt is right outside. I mean he is virtually atheistic; he cannot call himself a Christian. I do not know how he has the affrontery to actually stay in Holy Orders.

Q) So you think it's not just a fact that you call yourself a Christian?

A) No. Oh no. I was only reading yesterday that in Matthew it says "You say they'll come to me and say 'Lord, Lord' but I'll tell you 'Go, I never knew you'". There are people who think that they are Christians and are not because they haven't got that relationship with Jesus. That to me is prime.

Q) Don't you think Don Cupitt has that relationship with Jesus?

A) Well, not if he is denying him, denying him all the way along the line; how can you have that relationship and then deny?

Q) What is he denying? I mean he's not denying the existence of Jesus, he's not denying the profundity of Jesus.

A) No. I must admit I don't know that much about Don Cupitt except that his talking about the non-existence, really, of God. If you've a non-existence of God than Jesus just becomes an ordinary man. So he might say... [pause] Well, there's more evidence for the historical existence of Jesus than there is of Nero or probably even William the Conquerer. So, if you're saying, you can't deny the existence of the person of Jesus...

Q) But I think what he would say is that Jesus is a sort of man of his time.

A) Oh yes he would, I'm sure he would. A lot of people say that. A lot of people have got all sorts of ideas: a failed revolutionary, a magician, a prophet...

#### Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican

Q) The Nature of Christian Belief leans over in the orthodox direction but accepts the liberal wing and also says there will be no exclusions. Nobody will now go for trial for bad teaching. Would you agree with exclusions or not?

A) I don't think so, you know. I don't think that would be good. People are in positions: I don't like Durham being in the position but he is there. What I would like to see is reform in the future so that somebody like him is not put in there again. The teaching and the worship etc. comes up from the grass roots because that's where its got to come from.

#### Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican

Q) What can be done about the problem [of the liberals]?

A) Prayer! At one time I used to think I'd really love to be able to get alongside liberals and to sort of try and convert them from their background, from their position [*a correction*]. The bits of study I've done I've found very difficult to think in the convoluted ways that they do. I mean, I'm right up the creek with a lot of it, I just can't take it all in. So I've given up that idea. I'll just stick to my simple faith. I mean I've done two years at university doing liberal stuff and I found it difficult.

#### Discussion H: Liberal Methodist-1

*The liberal Methodist also has those he finds difficult to understand, like traditionalists in Methodism.*

A) I don't pay much attention to them to be honest. There's the Methodist Revival Fellowship but the real one is 'The Voice of Methodism'. They talk about the Church like it was two hundred years ago. Looking at their adverts reminds me of prehistoric animals.

A) For a lot of Methodists he [John Wesley] is the be all and end all. I just happen to be a member of the Church which flowered through him 250 years ago. I'm aware his faith is different from what I have shared with you. He wasn't a fundamentalist: he believed in the centrality of Scripture but subjected it to reason. What was in Scripture had to make sense and match experience. On tradition he was aware of that and if it was a part of Church tradition then that was important.

A) Wesley was searching for assurance. I wouldn't say before 1738 he wasn't a Christian and afterwards he was. In early 1739 he wrote and dismayed all his friends saying he was no more a Christian now than before 1738. ...Probably people like me would stress the search for faith, the pilgrimage as being paramount; the evangelist the conversion after which nothing was quite the same; and the traditionalist the man in the frock coat [laughs].

#### Discussion I: Liberal Methodist-2

*Fundamentalist logic is clearly an undesirable thing to have:*

Q) Christ was not feminist enough even though he may have been in his time someone who was not anti-women.

A) What you're wanting to do is make me a fundamentalist. You want me to have a Jesus who gives all the answers in a historical situation two thousand years ago to contemporary life and unless Jesus does that you're saying...

### SUBJECT 8: SALVATION AND THE CHURCH.

#### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

Q) What do you have to do to be saved?

A) Salvation is the gift of God. It's not a sort of prize which is fenced about by the Church in order to make life difficult for those who want to attain it. I suppose the classic answer to your question is to receive baptism in the name of the Trinity and to seek to live out our faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

A) My own view would be that any body of Christians which did not have the Apostolic succession, the Catholic priesthood and the valid sacraments (which depend on these things) must be outside the Catholic Church. Whether or not people outside the Catholic Church, as one would define it in that way, are saved or not saved is not my place to say.

#### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

A) As you know the Roman Catholic Church was the Church to which the Creeds refer and anyone who is not in communion with Rome is outside the Church.

The Orthodox still take that [type of] view. But I do find both these positions very peculiar because even discounting anything to do with the Church of England I find it very difficult to say either the Orthodox or the Roman Catholic Church was not part of the true Catholic Church as they both have obviously orders of indisputable validity and they celebrate the sacraments and they hold the Catholic faith. So to claim that one or the other is not part of the true Catholic Church would be very difficult.

#### Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

A) When young the church I went to was tolerant and where the Sunday school attendant was keen in modern theology with a thinking approach to ones faith. The church stressed the serving nature of the Church's role. I've absorbed all that. For me Jesus and a loving, serving, tolerant community are one and the same.

#### Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2

A) I choose to follow the way of Jesus (his path of life, self giving, love and teaching) and it is decisive for me because I believe in that life God revealed what real human life was all about. That opens up my life to be lived in the manner of Jesus's life. It's not about saving my soul which is very selfish but caring for others and God's people in a selfless way.

#### Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2

A) The experience of the Resurrection of the first followers ...was an experience of the ongoing life of God in Jesus and the purposes of God that overcomes the negative in human existence.

### Discussion F: Conversionist Anglican

Q) How do you see God and heaven?

A) It's dimensional, I think. When I die I'm going to have a new body, it'll probably be a transdimensional body, I think. Looking at Jesus's Resurrection body, how he walked through walls, he was spiritual yet actual flesh and blood. He proved that by eating and drinking. He wasn't a ghost, if you like; he wasn't a spirit as in spirits that are conjured up at seances (they do actually happen, I believe; they are the wrong ones).

A) I see heaven as being with God forever, and part of it I think will be going around the universe seeing God's creation. I can't see that from the Bible, that's just a personal thing that's inside me; I just think that's possibly what it is about. And worship, enjoying worship, really enjoying worship: we don't know what it is about. I've been to a number of meetings where we really have worshipped and it's just a glimpse of what it might be in heaven. Yeah, it might be another dimension. We always say "up there" but what does that mean? It's out there or wherever in another dimension, I don't know.

### SUBJECT 9: FEMINISM AND THE CHURCH.

#### Discussion A: Liberal Methodist-2

*Daphne Hampson, of the University of St. Andrews, encourages women to leave Christianity because she claims it has male bias in its very make-up. "An increasing number of women would not want any man to be decisive for them" I read from Hampson in The Modern Churchman, 1985, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, p. 61.*

A) Let's just say to that my mother is decisive for me. Fundamentally decisive. But I don't think that in saying that I'm saying anything against men. The very hard line feminist approach is a 'reaction against' provoked by the anti-womens body in the Church.

A) What I'm saying is aren't Christian women finding in Christianity the arguments for womens liberation?

Q) I don't know! Is it not also true that the Bible and the whole approach of Christianity is riddled with male language? Some Christian feminists are saying let's change the language and meet in groups and others are saying it can't be done - the essentials which link the system together break down.

A) The thing is you can't eradicate the past. Jesus was a male figure and the Jewish society in which he lived was a male dominated society.

Q) Well, he can't be relevant to feminists can he because there is a necessity for a figure who actually sees that a lot of the problems of society are male problems. He never saw that did he?

A) In the same way he wasn't dealing with nuclear physics, Central America's problems or me living my life now in a very different situation. You could take that, couldn't you, ad finitum?

A) In his relationships with women (and how he spoke about divorce to protect the place of women) he could not be said to be an anti-female

figure. We obviously have a difficulty translating from Jesus's time to our own.

Q) I can't see the point in translating from Jesus's time to our own when for feminists there are feminist people more at hand. Even Gandhi said women are equal.

A) O.K.. So what we say, to follow your line of argument, is we need not worry about Jesus, we forget about our religion and it's everyone for themselves. There are no values [and no ultimate truths]...

#### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

A) If the Church of England is going to ordain women to what it calls "priests" [then] clearly what it is doing is not ordaining women priests but presumably ordering them as ministers or whatever it might be, and that is what it will be doing to the men who are ordained as well. So it will cease to ordain valid priests. Also priests who are in communion with the Church of England when they offer Mass will no longer offer Mass. Again, by reason of defective intention what they'll all be doing will be declared by what a woman is doing at the altar since all the Canons will be altered to accomodate women. ...The whole basis of the Church of England as being part of the Catholic and Apostolic Church as I understand it will collapse and one will have to seek one's spiritual home elsewhere.

#### Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican

*There was no direct conversation on the issues of women in the Church so I telephoned him. The basis of his thinking is the New Testament. The Church*



*has not really worked out what a priest is and ordination is an ambiguous term; the New Testament categories are deacons and presbyters and women are excluded from headship. He has no objection to women being deacons and taking a communion service but there are questions about women as priests. Women would be excluded from being bishops because of headship but bishops are only wider in basis than local presbyters and deacons and what matters is where there is the final say in a team. However he had not quite thought it out because women are capable, have authority and can show leadership.*

#### SUBJECT 10: ECUMENISM AND OTHER DENOMINATIONS

##### Discussion A: Liberal Methodist-1

Q) Ecumenism now. Is it due to the decline of the Church? Bryan Wilson says ministers are bureaucrats and being in touch with each other they promote ecumenism whilst congregations stay apart in their denominations.

A) No. Yeah. There's probably a bit of truth in it that when congregations shrink they'll discuss unity seriously [laughs]. There is a sense in which it is pursued in and of itself. ...But I think the true ecumenical spirit is a genuine search to be free of the prejudices recognising that so much has resulted from past misunderstandings.

A) I understand the first waves of enthusiasm for merging with the Church of England only began in the late sixties. But in the late sixties/early seventies (something like that) there was disappointment when it didn't happen. Although many disagreed violently the Methodist Church would have accepted it but the Anglican Church pulled away. Then the Covenant in the seventies gave new hope. It satisfied more Methodists too because it seemed

to allow for a greater acceptance of Methodist ministry and ways. It had its opponents but again we would have accepted it and in the early 1980's we voted to take episcopacy into our system. And again the Anglican Church dropped back.

Q) That's because it's got its traditionalists. The liberals and evangelicals would actually be in favour of it but the high Evangelicals...

A) And the Anglo-Catholics. They defeated it.

#### Discussion B: Anglo-Catholic

*Not suprisingly the Anglo-Catholic has a very different attitude.*

A) A Methodist minister is still a member of the laity. They regard it as such and his only difference is a difference of function. It's not a difference of power. The priest has the power to do things; the minister simply performs a different function within the laity.

Q) So when a minister in a Methodist Church delivers sacraments he doesn't. Or does he?

A) Well, he delivers sacraments in the sense that the Methodists understand them. They don't have the understanding of Holy Orders that a Catholic Church does. ...They cannot regard their blessed bread and wine as objectively the Body and Blood of Christ because it is written into their laws that they can chuck them away, or give them away afterwards.

### Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican

*I suggested to the Conversionist that there are emerging new denominations.*

A) I think there is a bigger difference between the liberal and the Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical wings. I think the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic are closer now than they have been for a long long time. I think you're right about the evangelical [in] different denominations [coming] together. In fact [there's] the Evangelical Alliance. You've heard of that? I don't think it will come into anything of itself, it will always be in the denominations, I think to sort of try and renew and reform the denominations. All denominations are are particular ways of worshipping...

A) There is another element now and it's the charismatic element. There's Charismatic Renewal which is sweeping through Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals. One area that it's not reaching and that's liberals and it's not at all suprising to me because they don't believe. That is bringing Roman Catholics together with all the other denominations in renewal. I find it fascinating. I think it's tremendous.

### SUBJECT 11: ATTITUDES TO OTHER FAITHS.

#### Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

A) Any system of religion which does not accept the finality of the revelation in Jesus Christ is obviously outside the scope of Christianity as indeed Islam is. So it is misguided as are all sub-Christian religions. Christianity is, after all, an exclusive religion to that extent. It is not an all-embracing irenic system of philosophy. It is making exclusive claims about a particular person who lived in an historical time and place. So the

claims are exclusive and we may exclude from the bounds of true religion all those who reject the exclusive claims such as Muslims.

Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-2

A) To say that the Christian religion has all truth is arrogance. It depends how you see revelation as well. That God has revealed himself in Jesus is something I believe but I'm also aware that so much in other religions is very similar to what the Christian faith has also grasped in Christ, and to deny the validity of their beliefs is also wrong. Hinduism is a very all embracing faith, isn't it? Hinduism would accept the Christian any day. Christianity is very exclusive; the Muslim faith is very exclusive. I'm just not a fundamentalist and I'm sort of very opened. I don't wish to be arrogant in terms of truth.

Discussion C: Liberal Methodist-1

Q) Why is that life [of Jesus] superior? Why is it better than Gandhi's or Buddha's? You can only argue from the viewpoint of details one would suppose.

A) I'm not saying his life is better. It's not as though I'd do that. It's just that his life speaks to me. Although I say Jesus is my way in there is behind it the whole concept of God that I relate him to, the Christian message that God was revealed in Christ.

Discussion D: Liberal Methodist-2

Q) There have been many Jesus's on the planet. One can do the same by having a vision of morality or indeed [there's] Gandhi...

A) Actually, I'm just reading Louis Fisher's biography of Gandhi. What you've said just struck me. I said well here's a great man, a great teacher, who captivated millions.

Q) Take "revelation of God in Jesus Christ". Maybe it is playing with words or perhaps there are no alternatives. But one may as well point to a Gandhi or other figures. He was murdered in the end and paid the price. Here is a pattern of life. Well.

A) I think the difference comes in the historical evidence. ...What was the experience people had of Jesus? The Gospels admittedly have a certain bias but show that when people encountered Jesus they felt encountered by God. That's not to say they believed Jesus was God because the Jew wouldn't think in that kind of concept. But they felt encountered by God and receiving God's love, forgiveness and acceptance (like Matthew and the woman taken in adultery). The centre of the message of Jesus was the gospel of forgiveness ("the right time for forgiveness is here"), the Good News and the possibilities that were opened up to those who were excluded from religions (Gandhi's untouchables, if you like). That was the experience that people had of Jesus, if you like - of salvation. They felt liberated. Now, you could say that's just Jesus making people feel at one with themselves and the universe. O.K., you know, what do we really mean by God? That's another huge area. But they felt encountered by God experiencing something full, meaningful and rich. Then there is the Cross and the way that came about. I said at the last interview that what is important for me is the disciples totally misunderstood and were dishevelled by the whole experience. Gandhi wasn't forsaken by his followers who regarded him as a failure. Jesus was.

### Discussion E: Liberal Methodist-2

A) I couldn't imagine myself in that [Buddhism]. Not that I've anything against Buddhism, it's just that I feel so firmly held within the Christian revelation (probably through upbringing more than anything). There is a level [in Christianity] which is not just cerebral (and I'm not just talking about "Have you met Jesus?" or "Let Jesus into your heart").

A) If you look at the Buddhist monks then look at the monks of Christianity. There is contemplation and mysticism which has been at the heart of the Christian faith. In a sense it is not anti-creedal but comes at it in a different way. ...A lady who we got very close to when in America last year said after the first Sunday I preached that because our friendship was so close we must have met before. She has a house group within the church and they believe in reincarnation. She asked me what I thought! "Er, I don't know what to say really!" (laughs). So, in a sense, Buddhism is within the Christian Church as well.

A) What I find interesting (and I'm not dogmatic in my views against other religions) is the way in which the Christian Church is perceived to be "wrong". People of our culture, who are not of an Indian culture, suddenly find in Hinduism and Buddhism (even the Muslim faith with Cat Stevens) the answer. In a sense aren't they just doing what so many people are doing in the fundamentalist groups which is just wanting to cling to something that will give [meaning] whereas I see my position probably recognising I've grown up in a Christian environment, and for me Jesus is someone I centre on and I'm trying to make sense of our modern world.

Q) Don't they do that as well?

A) Yes, probably so. Perhaps I'm being a bit unfair.

A) We are in a modern world and we are trying to make sense of religious customs, practices and beliefs that have come from ancient times. We've outgrown so much of all the religions (probably) yet all the religions are homing in on more than the material side of life.

#### Discussion F: Liberal Methodist-2

*I asked about Unitarianism.*

Q) The constitutional basis of Unitarianism is Freedom, Reason and Tolerance.

A) "Freedom, Reason, Tolerance". That all sounds good to me (laughs). And I would derive that from Jesus.

#### Discussion G: Conversionist Anglican

A) Islam is growing, certainly. Yes, and it saw the weakness of Christianity in this country and saw Great Britain as a target and they pour money in. They pour money in. And, of course, there are different sects of Islam as well. They had a Messiah not so long ago, one of the sects of Islam.

Q) ...Is that a problem for Christianity, the growth of Islam?

A) Could be.

Q) Not in this country, I was thinking of the world.

A) The world. Well, it's very difficult. I mean Christians find it very difficult in Islamic countries. When Muslims become Christians they get killed, no mucking about. So it's very difficult to have a Christian presence to grow; it's very difficult to have a Christian Church.

#### Discussion H: Conversionist Anglican

A) Muhammad was a mixture of all sorts, wasn't he? Islam is way off beam. Their God is very austere. Muhammadans would say their God is the God of love but where that love comes out is very difficult to see.

Q) It's a God of unity, isn't it?

A) Yeah. It's a God of power as well And non-failure: I mean that's one of the things they don't like about Jesus and that's why they say he didn't die; "In fact it was Judas who died on the Cross," they would say, and, "Jesus in fact was very successful and he went off to northern India and he had sixteen wives and lived to one hundred and twenty." Success, you see; they only go by success and that's one of the problems they have. That is total unreality and that is not the picture I see in the Old Testament or the New Testament at all. No, I mean Jesus is the one who sticks out a mile.

Q) Do you think failure, the experience of failure, is important?

A) Well, it depends what you mean by "failure". Apparant failure. I mean in human terms it might be failure. I mean the Cross for humans is failure very



often. The very fact that it was a sign of degradation and horror and the worst possible thing could ever happen. Romans despised the Cross. Yet, what is it: "the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men." Somehow God brings great glory from it. That seeming failure was in fact the great triumph.

Q) So you're saying that Islam won't even have seeming failure.

A) Doesn't like failure.

Q) Christianity, then, is better able to deal with failure. Is that what you are saying?

A) Yes, I would certainly say so. In fact one of the great things is that the Bible's honest about the doctrine of forgiveness and reconciliation. Look at David (that great figure in the Old Testament): the way he rose to be King, all the great things that he did, the stature, the position before God, and yet he failed! He mucked it up with Bathsheba, he probably had about six or seven other wives (he wasn't supposed to), he murdered and he lied, yet he confessed and he was reconciled with God! He failed yet was brought back, and even the great men in the Bible are failures; yet through, yeah, faith (because he's equated with having faith) he is right with God who will be with him forever. That's the great thing: even the worst, the failures. Jesus somehow went to the weak and the failed, he went to the lowest of the low, he reached out to them and he saved them.

Q) But somebody like Gandhi also went to the weak and the low...

A) Yes!

Q) ...and also was involved with failures. I suppose what I'm examining is boundaries and cut-off points. What you're saying it seems to me is that here in the package of Christianity we have "the Truth" and not only is this just "come about" but it was determined.

A) Yes, I think so.

#### Discussion I: Conversionist Anglican

A) How do I see Gandhi? I think he was a great man! Yes, he was a man of his era and of his religion, a lot to teach us. He wasn't a Christian so I would say that.... I don't believe that he is, if you like, in Heaven because he hasn't accepted Christ.

Q) But he thought a great deal of Jesus, didn't he, I mean he was such a substantial part of his thinking. He was a sort of Hindu, Humanist, Christian without the dogma, if you like.

A) Well, yeah. That's what Hindus do, don't they. They tend to amalgamate. It's like the Sikhs. No, not Sikhs is it...

Q) Well, the Sikhs pull together Islam and Hinduism.

A) Yes, they amalgamate everything. Yeah, O.K., yeah a good man but.

Q) So it matters then that Jesus is the Son of God, definitely?

A) Absolutely, absolutely. Oh yes.

Discussion J: Conversionist Anglican

*Hinduism featured in considering a religious vocation (which was rejected).*

A) It started with a call to missionary work. It was actually on the ship 'Doulos' when it was in London. I took a group from the Christian Union to it when it was on discipleship. One of the things that one of the men said that struck me was something like this: "There are six hundred million Hindus in India going to a Christless eternity. What are you going to do about it?" I started thinking from there about overseas missionary work and about going to Nepal as a P.E. teacher...

SUBJECT 12: SECULARISATION.

Discussion A: Anglo-Catholic

*In the context of discussing liberalism I asked if the Church should take secularisation aboard.*

A) I think we have taken it aboard, like taking an octopus out of the sea into a leaky little boat. That is not always the most sensible thing to do. I should have thought the more sensible thing to do was to get the hell out of it or retreat or attack, certainly not take it on board and allow it to consume you. The Church is in the business, one would hope, of transforming the world and it's values - not conforming itself to them.

A) The most powerful and effective presentation of the love of God was on Calvary. It wasn't the sort of particularly popular thing to do to be at the

foot of the Cross. It was just a tiny handful. Most of those who went by, or "secularised community" as you would call them nowadays, were spitting and jeering; and to try and suppose that by a few conjuring tricks of throwing out this doctrine and that doctrine, or saying that although we can recite (whereas it plainly means one thing, of course) we have our fingers crossed behind the back of our surplice and we have made the meaning quite different, I think it does no good to the Church and it isn't an example that Christ has given to us.

#### Discussion B: Liberal Methodist-1

A) When I was a teenager in high school I firmly believed in ecumenism before I even knew the word. We were all one, whether Methodist, Baptist or what. Maybe that's me but we should seek to break down barriers. That's the secular world that has helped free me from prejudice - I don't know!

#### Discussion C: Conversionist Anglican

*The charismatic movement is the key to growth but would have problems in "secular-scientific" Britain. I asked if he was a Michael Harper man:*

A) I've been very influenced by John Wimber.

Q) Oh yes, I know the name but don't know much about him.

A) 'Signs and Wonders', 'Seeing God at Work in a Dynamic Way'; Bishop David Pytches, Chorley Wood, stems from I guess the Old Fountain Trust; David Watson. That to me is dynamic. Paul Y. Cho in Korea, that's incredible what's happening out there.

Q) Is Korea then a model?

A) Well, that I'm not sure. Is that a model? The signs and wonders aspect, yes: the fact that they believe in God, they believe that God can do things. That's interesting, you see, I find that fascinating because they're a society which had no problems over the spiritual. We in the West, you see, we're secular-scientific: our world-view is that everything has to be explained by science (demons don't exist: that's all in the mind, that's psychology, science again; "Don't believe in miracles, it's all got to be explained by science") whereas in the East there is still very much a case of believing in Voodoo etc. etc.. So when Christianity came along, this Jesus fellow was healing people and then he says "You go and do likewise," and then they went and did likewise and things happened because they believed it.

Q) But it's going to be harder in this country because of the secular.

A) Yes, the secular-scientific world-view; it is harder. And because of the liberal aspect within the Church.

#### Concluding Comments.

For the Anglo-Catholic, the undivided Church is a continuation of Christ which makes the Creeds fundamental. Order is paramount, from the Trinity itself to the priest acting out the Mass. It follows that the details of the religion are soundly based and if not then it is all a lie. Other religions are sub-Christian. The Bible has its place in the scheme (with the Old Testament quoted by Christ and the Church) without need to be literalist. Ecumenism is based only on validity of faith. Liberals are not on the same

map of faith as Catholics and Evangelicals. Women have their place and things modern like secularisation and female ordination affecting the Church is to be opposed. Salvation, however, is a gift of God.

The Conversionist's starting point is the New Testament. God is "big" and such a God will produce a Bible inerrant in its totality. Thus Christianity is either true or a "load of codswallop". Jesus is fully God and fully man with God very definitely his parent. It's important to be a Christian to go to heaven: those like Gandhi will not get there. God is changing the Church today particularly through charismatic renewal. This is sweeping across the institutional denominations which are just styles of worship although secularisation and the liberals will make things harder. They are not involved because "they don't believe". Women are to be excluded from the functions of headship in the Church.

The Liberal's starting point is the life of Jesus. He in his action shows God in action. It is not clear what God means but the association is with good values. The Bible is open to critical scholarship in the search for truth and the Creeds really reflect the impact of Jesus. He tries to live without much of the package and the secular may have freed him of prejudice. Christianity does not have all the truth but much that is in other religions has been found in Christ. Other prophetic figures like Gandhi have moved millions. Although Jesus is not better than such a person the difference comes in the historical evidence. Ecumenism is very important but Anglo-Catholics have opposed it and traditionalist Methodists remind him of "prehistoric animals". The seeking of salvation is a selfish thing. Women find in Christianity the arguments for women's liberation.

The first two fully proclaim their accepted source of doctrine. The third is freer thinking but oscillates between a Jesus of revelation (the faith) and the one who rather inspires (his approach). Even his reference to the usual guarantee of the Crucifixion and Resurrection becomes a human story, when in fact only supernatural intervention can guarantee the uniqueness he seeks. However, it is because he plays the dogmatics game of the other two that he comes out by far the worst.

In this situation stands the sociological tension of Christianity in the wider world. Although the three interviewed are not necessarily typical of others, they make more sense understood from the new denominationalism analysis than from one based on Church, denomination and sect.

APPENDIX 2  
LATER DETAILS ABOUT ST. HEIMDALL'S CHURCH

Anne in a letter arrived 7th November 1986 (and since) and her father on March 27th 1987 told me about the fate of St. Heimdall's.

The letter stated that in 1984 there were troubles at St. Heimdall's and in January 1985 most of the congregation dispersed to Ashpool, Wiltshire Street and Muspell Anglican conversionist churches and also the Lowcarr Christian Fellowship House Church. The Rector closed the youth club.

Comments from Anne's Father, then a Church Warden

A curate who felt unsupported looked after St. Heimdall's. Few Anglicans but Free Church and conversionist people attended making the church insular. The new Rector then set about centralising the overall Parish.

The curate was writing a thesis and no one read the electricity meter until he left. The bill was between £700 and £900. To give a sign of needing help to the authorities the local church decided not to pay its bills. But the Risemere church paid them over their head and this created bad feeling.

The Rector went against the opinion of superiors (e.g. the bishop and a later Archbishop's investigation) that there should be decentralisation. Despite ministers living next door he did not allow them to serve one church each.

The next minister, Barry Finder, was effectively pushed out and moved to St. Freya's, Ashpool. He took some St. Heimdall's people and changed the church against the original congregation's wishes. Eventually he left the ministry and via another church returned to St. Heimdall's as a layman. (St. Freya's remains a notable renewed church).

The Rector wanted the church to look outwards to the local area but church members felt that it first had to have a strong base. He began to object to nominations to office from St. Heimdall's and this created friction. The church found itself without a committee and treasurer for one year. The Rector deemed unconstitutional a meeting of the wardens with the bishops. Further friction was created when he closed the 90 strong Sunday school, set up a morning service (but seemed to make communion conditional on the good behaviour of the church). Further dispute over appointments followed but when communions were stopped almost the whole congregation dispersed in January 1985. One or two remained until April. Anne's father continued to unlock the church but went to Muspell church outside of the parish.

The congregation included 70 adults but by 1987 it was perhaps no more than 12 adults and 3 children. St. Heimdall's exiles do still meet in Lowcarr but as a Muspell church prayer group (including some from the other churches).

Anne's Information After 1985

In Northern Ireland Anne attended the Church of Ireland but found it too high Church and outwardly unfriendly. Although she was in the Presbyterian Christian Union and helped out at one of their youth clubs she did not join their Church for political reasons.



She commented that as a teenager she did go to church out of free will but should not have been confirmed.

As there aren't too many young people around churches they tend to be pushed into confirmation when they are neither ready, willing or able to make the type of commitment that confirmation is.

Although out of term time she attended Muspell Anglican Church, when back living at Hull she hardly went to church at all (despite once thinking of going to Midgard Pentecostalist Church).

She reported about other people. Brian the leader died. From January 1985 Layla went to Muspell Anglican Church. She left home and Anne did not think she went to church. Later Anne heard that she had returned and was going to Midgard church. Heidi left home and stopped going to church. Doreen went to Muspell Anglican Church on occasions. Judith went to the Lowcarr Christian Fellowship. Anne discussed religion often with her friend Nora but she did not join the faith (despite another friend of Nora's doing so). All the males either stopped going to church or went to the Lowcarr Christian Fellowship (Gerald went there).

## Appendix 3

# The Mainstream Triangle

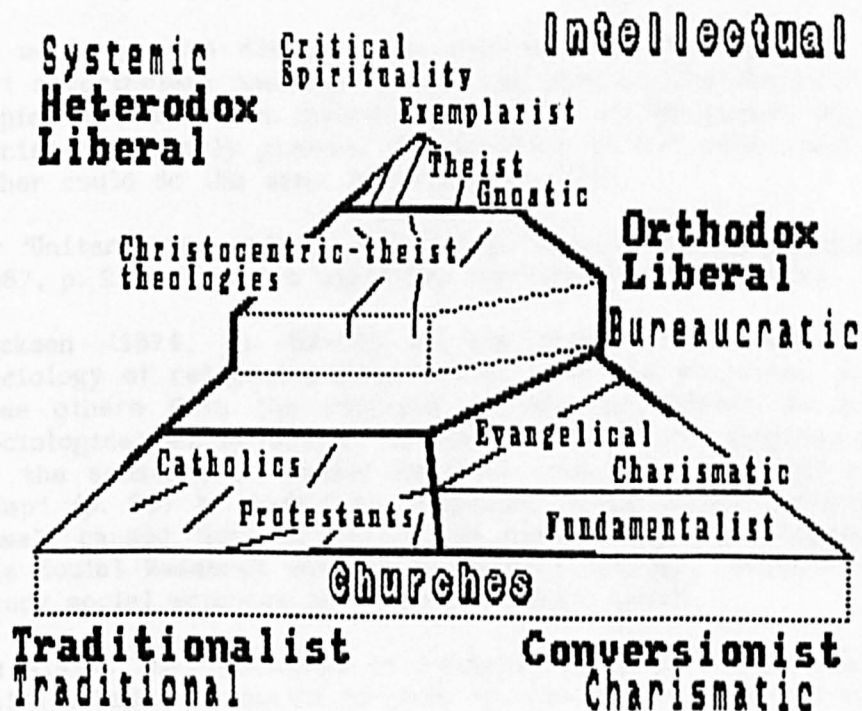
Figure 1 below shows the three dimensional Mainstream Triangle, a diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the new denominational constituent parts of the mainstream. The thick lines are the boundaries between the main sections of belief and authority, and thinner lines divide the sub-sections within them.

The diagram is only an approximation of the relative positions of the main sections and sub-sections.

The two main planes show the vertical arrangement of the intellectual and churches sections. All sections and

sub-sections other than orthodox liberalism meet with outside groups. Heterodox liberalism merges into Quaker, Unitarian and Ethical societies. Catholic traditionalism sits alongside Orthodoxy and Continuing Catholicism; Protestant traditionalism sits alongside continuing sects. Charismatic, House and Evangelical Churches merge with conversionism.

The labelling is mainly descriptive with different fonts and sizes for vertical arrangement, belief, authority, and sub-sections, showing all the mainstream positions summarised in Chapter 8 of the thesis as a diagrammatic continuum.



NOTES TO CHAPTERS ([ ] indicates text page of note)

Notes to Chapter 1

- (1). Support for the Bishop of Durham came from the Methodist Conference in 1985, not without opposition. [p. 15]
- (2). See Chapter 7 which refers to the Michael Taylor dispute in the same context of the controversy affecting the Bishop of Durham. [p. 15]
- (3). The Bishop of London also went to Tulsa, Oklahoma to act as bishop to a traditionalist priest and congregation deposed by the Episcopal Church. [p. 16]
- (4). Jackson, an English priest concerned with mission in industrial society, claims to have broadened away from a narrow religious sociology (1974, pp. 1-2). However, the quotation on page 21 of this casts doubt on this. Also see note 11). [p. 18]
- (5). Some members of the first fellowship group looked at the diaries and did not like what they saw. This happened before new teenagers joined when the second group came about. [p. 22]
- (6). I was not known to the Anglican group. However, one girl, the minister's daughter, had a friend in the Methodist group. [p. 22]
- (7). The story and consequences of this are explained in Chapter 6. [p. 23]
- (8). Although I did not use it, I should say that the BBC, John Dunn and Don Cupitt gratefully granted permission to use the recorded interview and Don Cupitt went to the trouble to read and punctuate it. [p. 23]
- (9). It would not be difficult to discover the locations of the churches but nevertheless basic protection is offered. The ministers were given copies of their own interviews and the wordprocessed Appendix 1. One minister correctly guessed the identity of the other, and expected the other could do the same in return. [p. 24]
- (10). My 'Unitarianism and our Relativist Culture' in The Inquirer (3 January 1987, p. 2) imported a Cupittian approach to Unitarianism. [p. 26]
- (11). Jackson (1974, pp. 52-53) in his criticism of unbelievers in the sociology of religion suggests that some are motivated by a desire to free others from the shackles of religion, others to bring superior sociological enlightenment to the practitioner of religion, and the third is the apostate or former believer who uses sociology as a "transit camp" (p. 53) to look back. However, in my case, theological material itself caused 'loss of faith' and others (e.g. Tony Coxon, Director of the Social Research Unit at University College, Cardiff) first believe, study social sciences and *then* lose their faith.

He states that sociology of religion fails to return the apostate to faith because it cannot do this (p. 53). If true then it equally should

not take them from faith! Then, why should sociologists of religion be believers? [p. 26]

- (12). The literature on authority continues on. Philip King's evangelical book Leadership Explosion (1987) refers to Rudge and outlines his categories (pp. 15-28) in order to understand leadership. [p. 35]

#### Notes to Chapter 2

- (1). 'Changes in reality' means the change in its *understanding*. [p. 42]
- (2). Troeltsch's 'mysticism' might be compared with heterodox liberalism in human relations authority whilst the creative tension between Church and sect to which Troeltsch speaks exists *within* the new ideal type of orthodox liberalism. See Chapters 3 and 5. [p. 43]
- (3). "Commitment" as in the table is broader than Martin's "conversion". Pure individualism as a sectarian form has been excluded. [p. 44]
- (4). Unitarianism, linked with Troeltsch's mysticism, was also regarded as a denomination. Its nineteenth century movement into Victorian Gothic architecture and upward mobility relates to Niebuhr's thinking. But the Church/denomination/sect scheme is not adequate because it includes the broadness of the Church, the tendencies of the denomination and the separateness of the sect. [p. 45]
- (5). Considering the Quakers as a sect breaks down on the grounds of liberality and to claim that this shows denominational tendencies (Isichei in Wilson ed., 1967, pp. 161-181) again shows the inadequacy of the Church/denomination/sect jargon. [p. 47]
- (6). By 'sect', Margaret Kane (1986) includes mainstream and other Churches which reject the world and attempt to save it; 'secular' means being in the world Bonhoeffer-style leaving little place for the Church, and 'Christendom' means the idea of the Church fused into society including its power structure. She looks for a more service type model. [p. 47]
- (7). See Seward, M. (1987), Evangelicals on the Move. [p. 48]
- (8). The Halévy thesis and Methodism are referred to in Chapter 4. [p. 49]
- (9). See Appendix 1, Subject 7, Discussion H, for the Methodist minister's view of Wesley and tradition. [p. 49]
- (10). Although fully trinitarian, the U.R.C. does not use the Creeds. [p. 50]
- (11). Harrison (1959), Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition discusses the relationship between bureaucracy and congregationalist type Churches in the context of an American Baptist Church. [p. 54]

#### Notes to Chapter 3

- (1). See Appendix 1, Subject 7, Discussion E for the same point made by the conversionist minister. [p. 57]

- (2). David Watson also wrote I Believe in the Church: The Revolutionary Potential of the Family of God (1978) in which he stated:

My intention is therefore to look at the church as it was designed to be, and as it can become when we have a living faith, not in the church, but in God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit (p.19)

So in this sense at least he does not believe in the Church. [p. 65]

- (3). Perhaps now liberals are becoming more inward. Heterodox liberals in particular seem to have become wholly intellectual with little sense of social mission. At the same time conversionists see the need for social action when converting, that unless they do the former then the latter (which is the most important) will be harder to achieve. [p. 66]
- (4). The bibliography shows material consulted. [p. 73]
- (5). See Chapter 7 about the distribution of belief and authority types and the workings of orthodox liberal leadership in this context. [p. 73]
- (6). For further information see Kenny, 1985, on Wittgenstein; Popper, 1986; and Kuhn, 1970. [p. 74]
- (7). In 1938 a liberal Commission had come to a consensus on doctrine. This proved impossible in the 1976 report and after its replacement the 1981 report still contained no agreed statement, although it did attempt to isolate radicals who went too far. The Commission, Don Cupitt states (1982, pp. 141-2) was Michael Foot ineffectually pleading to the Labour Party to rally round when an agreed doctrine appeared as far off there as in the Church of England.

A new leadership, isolation of the far left, left wing disarmament and right wing economics allowed the Labour Party to hold most factions together. To do the same the Church of England's House of Bishops The Nature of Christian Belief (1986) traded doctrinal theological conclusions with orthodox liberal methods. (see Chapter 7) [p. 76]

- (8). Frances Young became Head of Department of Theology there in 1986. She was a contributor to The Myth of God Incarnate and one who has not since entered into some kind of belief crisis. [p. 80]
- (9). See my review in Faith and Freedom, (Spring 1986) pp. 52-54. [p. 82]
- (10). The Archbishop of York, approved of Cupitt's 'negative way' (Habgood, 1983, pp. 69-72). [p. 86]
- (11). In a telephone call he said that the Quakers, for example, have really "given everything up" and, as for symbolism, in a response to a letter, he said that religion should be seen as art. [p. 87]
- (12). The four part Channel Four series The Gnostics, ending with a discussion in the fifth week (December 5th, 1987), suggested that gnosticism is diverse and recurring (also see Pagels, 1980). A Gnostic Church in California, Catholic in style but with freedom of belief and

headed by a female bishop, combines form and freedom in heterodoxy (see Chapter 8). [p. 89]

- (13). Popular belief inside and outside the churches is covered in more detail in Chapters 4 and 6. [p. 90]
- (14). The Catholic charismatic has a higher doctrine of the Church than the Protestant charismatic, but it is still in need of renewal. The Catholic charismatic is more sacramental in worship. [p. 99]
- (15). A United Reformed Church fundamentalist who lived near the conversionist Anglican and knew about our discussion said this very point, and said that not all such ministers think the same. [p. 100]

#### Notes to Chapter 4

- (1). Here Berger's terminology lets him down. Bultmann was not a "secular theologian". It is not therefore clear who so qualifies. [p. 103]
- (2). There are internal points of biblical criticism which call for explanation about writing techniques and influences. This can then move to overall theological relativity. [p. 104]
- (3). Holyoake's activities can be followed in Smith, The London Heretics (1967), particularly pp. 27-33. [p. 110]
- (4). The Falklands War memorial service showed a Church/State conflict where the state required a pro-British blessing but the Church provided a specifically Christian response. A humorous theological discussion on this is in Goulder and Hick, 1983, pp. 81-96. [p. 114]
- (5). The references and their dates are those as given by Shiner. [p. 115]
- (6). Commissioned by the Church of England for information concerning a York Diocese funded 'Urban Mission Project', the Survey of Church and People on Longhill Estate took place in periods between February and September 1986 when 397 were interviewed. The interviews took about half an hour each carried out by volunteers from churches (other than the one in the locality) and some students. There was a 52.1% response rate. I was deputy on the Steering Committee to Peter Forster, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Hull.

A pro-religious bias in the survey exists in the better response rate from women (46% in sample, 60% in the results) and indifference and refusals accompanied by anti-religious remarks for some secularists. The extent of the bias is, however, unknown.

An unpublished survey internal to the Anglican churches in parts of East Hull was carried out in 1981 by Attwood and Phillips (1981). It was based on publicity through sermons and voluntary responses within the congregations. A bias against working class attendance was discovered and, based on clergy estimates of congregations, about 1% of the population attended the Anglican churches. The conversionist Anglican minister in Appendix 1 refers to it (S.6, D.F)

The Longhill Survey adds to one useful published survey from the Independent Television Authority (1970), but in general there is a surprising shortage of good survey work. [p. 118]

- (7). The Anglo-Catholic sees folk belief as residual pantheism to which the Church of England gives respect (Appendix 1, S.6, D.A). [p. 126]
- (8). Before joining, I attended a Unitarian service taken by a member on Religion as Experience Plus about inspiration from nature, art and music. Afterwards I suggested to him that churches themselves need have no function: all that he had said could come from birdwatching, for example. He agreed. Birdwatching offers communal pursuit, care for ecology and even comparison of 'innocent birds' with humans.

Look Stranger (repeated September 7th 1987, BBC 2) looked at the activities of the English Civil War Society. One member, who played the part of a Puritan minister seeking out Popery, took his interest beyond that of a hobby to a "way of life". This Rochdale bus driver said, "That's it as far as this century goes." He lived alone and his home was converted to look like a seventeenth century house. He had opted out of present day society and surrounded himself with the symbolism of the past. That was his world of meaning and religion, comparable with committed members of an ornithologists club, science fiction societies and other symbolic pastimes. [p. 127]

- (9). This may sound pessimistic but the Dewsbury schools controversy was a perfect example of cultural nationalism.

Another example relating to cultural identity and the absence of popular pluralism is the controversy about homosexuality in the context of AIDS. Tony Higon and ABWON (Action for Biblical Witness to Our Nation) at the November 1987 General Synod of the Church of England could press his claim against homosexuality in the Anglican ministry and achieve popular newspaper headline support. [p. 129]

#### Notes to Chapter 5

- (1). See Appendix 1, Subject 8, Discussion B on the Anglo-Catholic's view of symbols and their continuing validity. [p. 134]
- (2). Internal groups form around viewpoints of authority. The Voice of Methodism has a different view of authority in its denomination than the Evangelical Alliance (which stretches across denominations), and the Modern Churchpeople's Union in the Anglican Church has a different view to Ecclesia. These each overlap with the more singular authority systems of the Evangelical Churches, Pentecostalism, the House Churches, Orthodox Catholicism and Unitarianism. [p. 138]
- (3). Bennett (Crockford's Directory, 1987, pp. 59-76) complained that the liberals appoint their own to high office (see Chapter 7). [p. 144]
- (4). The "Continuing SDP" is a name prior to the merger of the Alliance that David Owen himself used, which echoes continuing Churches. Such groups check that they stay pure from their near neighbour. [p. 144]

- (5). Chapter 8 discusses that it is for further research whether other faiths may have similar authority systems. [p. 147]
- (6). This is the reply to the Bryan Wilson position claiming that the dominant ethos is bureaucratic. In fact traditionalist opinion has a stronger bond of defensive unity able to exploit certain structures like the tricameral Synod in the Church of England. [p. 156]
- (7). Traditionalism could face severe decline with the ordination of women, allowing for greater ecumenism with Free Churches. [p. 156]
- (8). An example of friction in economics is a toll bridge costing ten pence to cross. The apple farmer is on the side where the apples sell for 35 pence a pound, but across the river they sell for 40 pence a pound. The farmer cannot sell for the better price and the customer on the other side cannot buy at the lower price because of the toll bridge. Existing structures prevent efficiency, as in the Church. [p. 156]

#### Notes to Chapter 6

- (1). Some information, for example the precise number of churches and clergy, is kept vague for reasons of basic anonymity. [p. 163]
- (2). From the Hull Daily Mail (in 1985: no specific date to give anonymity). Decentralisation was an option and there was talk of attaching St. Heimdall's to the Muspell church parish. Nothing happened after the Commission completed its work. [p. 164]
- (3). From the Hull Daily Mail (in 1983). [p. 164]
- (4). In 1980 Cary invited my friend and me to a football match and we followed him to the fellowship group. Later everyone became connected by relationship or one key friendship to the three families dominating the group, two of whom were major influences in the church. Marriages resulted and all but Cary left. Romantic distractions prevented Boris effectively teaching the group religion. It thus was different in structure to the replacement group in that their parents were not key families and only one relationship formed in this younger group which, as described in the text, broke up. [p. 168]
- (5). I was only invited to take a group once in 1980 when a leader was away. 'Calvanism and Economic Success' baffled them! [p. 172]
- (6). I was then developing terminology to categorise the two groups. 'Communist' meant a group motivated primarily for the value of its community; 'Evangelist' groups were more ideological. [p. 176]
- (7). The Bahá'ís once asked for joint prayer and were turned away. [p. 181]
- (8). Paul left as late as 1987. Anne told me (April 1987) this was because of his daughter's education. [p. 183]
- (9). See Merton and Lazarsfeld eds., Continuities in Social Research, Studies in the Scope and Method of 'The American Soldier', Glencoe,



Ill.: The Free Press, pp. 86-95 by Merton and Kitt, in Coser and Rosenberg Sociological Theory (1976) pp. 243-250. [192]

- (10). See the Methodist minister (Appendix 1, Subject 7, Discussion H) where his view of Wesley is different. [p. 195]
- (11). After the research period I gave Clive a book by Don Cupitt and Peter Armstrong on Jesus which impressed him (Cupitt, Armstrong, 1977). But it was only a temporary radicalization of his previous views. [p. 198]
- (12). This question led from the discussion about Darwinism. [p. 205]
- (13). I later found out that the visiting minister was an orthodox liberal who thought another John Robinson needed to come along. [p. 210]
- (14). Janet's father only went to church twice a year as "a way of life and morals". Her mother told her "nothing". Her brother "hated" churchgoing but he was going out with a Sunday School teacher. [p. 211]

#### Notes to Chapter 7

- (1). I have visited the mainly Anglican and Methodist The Queen's College, Birmingham, the mainly Free Church Federation at Luther King House, Manchester, and Manchester College, Oxford, which trains Unitarian ordinands. [p. 221]
- (2). All ministers have had to tackle liberal theology. See Appendix 1, S.7, D.G for the conversionist's experience. [p. 221]
- (3). See Bruce (1980), The Student Christian Movement and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship: A Sociological Study of Two Student Movements, a Ph.D, for further comparisons and contrasts between these two bodies. [p. 221]
- (4). I was in a rural Anglican Church before becoming Unitarian. [p. 222]
- (5). Paul's statement was well understood by the liberal Methodist minister (Appendix 1, S.3, D.C). [p. 236]
- (6). The Daily Mail was also involved in the Bennett affair. It sent a letter to the anonymous author through the Secretary General of the General Synod to invite him for a generous fee (to go to what he wished) to write an article to explain his position. The letter was found in his belongings and the newspaper duly reported this. [p. 238]
- (7). Richard Harries became Bishop of Oxford and the Downing Street 'second choice' Mark Santer (against social radical Suffragan Jim Thompson), a theologian from Cambridge and never a parish priest, became Bishop of Birmingham, to name but two orthodox liberals since appointed. [p. 240]
- (8). Cupitt with Peter Armstrong had been on television before with a series using the Bible called Who Was Jesus?. "Church reaction" means, I think, those higher in the structure. Those "selling their own religion" are ordinary active believers. [p. 242]

- (9). The writer of the anonymous preface in Crockford's Clerical Directory (1985/86) focussed on authority rather than theology when he stated:

Mr. Cupitt's continuation in the exercise of Holy Orders did not disturb many people, because any don has a licence to be eccentric and no liability to be taken as the spokesman of the Church...

Clearly Mr. Cupitt ought to have ceased to lead public worship as a priest...(p. 69) [p. 242]

- (10). The conversionist Anglican wanted no expulsions (Appendix 1, S.7, D.F). [p. 243]
- (11). The conversionist Anglican and the Anglo-Catholic (Appendix 1, Subject 7, Discussions C & F) rejected the highness and lowness aspect of great and little traditions too. [p. 244]

#### Notes to Chapter 8

- (1). J. W. N. Watkins (in Ryan, 1973, pp. 82-104) argues that the holistic ideal type "transpires to be something of a mouse" (ed. Ryan, 1973, p. 86) because it does not disclose causality. But it is not intended to and only needs to show the essentials of a system. [p. 251]

- (2). See John Habgood on 'dissenters from' (Habgood, 1983, p. 76) quoted in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 1. [p. 263]

- (3). Papa in Told by an Idiot had been an Anglican, a Roman Catholic, a Quaker, a Unitarian, a Positivist, a Baptist and was an Anglican again. As the novel opens he once more loses his faith, joins the Ethical Church, becomes a Roman Catholic again, a Theosophist, a Christian Scientist, a Higher Thinker and finally believes them all.

He is an important figure because he shows that sitting next to each other systemic authority and human relations authority create tension for individuals who move lock, stock and barrel between different religious packages because they doubt but need assurance. [p. 264]

- (4). The July 1988 'Sea of Faith' Conference, "for radical Christians", with Don Cupitt, Graham Shaw and Dennis Nineham, includes in its agenda:

Public response to the work of Don Cupitt and other radical theologians indicates that there are many people in the churches (including priests and ministers) who are interested in the project of a completely non-supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity as a community faith, a way of life and a spiritual path. But questions arise. Can the faith as it stands be interpreted along 'non-realist' lines, or must it be drastically reformed? Should radical Christians form a continuing organisation? Meanwhile, how are they to grow and function in the church as it is? (From the Details sheet)

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Word Count *The figures given on pages 11 and 268 are approximate.*