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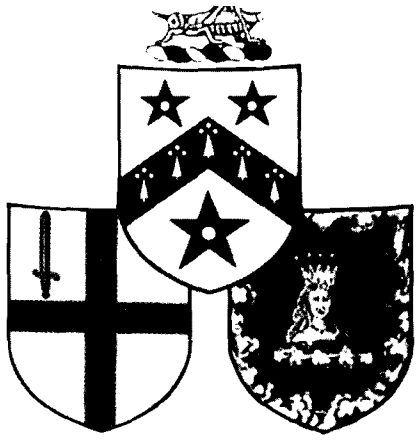

CHRISTIANITY AND RELIGION:

THE LAST 400 YEARS AND THE NEXT

A series of four lectures organised jointly with

SION COLLEGE

Monday 24 February 1997	SEX AND SAFETY: THE REAL CRISIS FOR RELIGIONS The Revd. Professor John Bowker Gresham Professor of Divinity
Monday 3 March 1997	THE BEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING? FUNDAMENTALISM, REVIVALISM AND THE FUTURE OF ENTHUSIASTIC RELIGION The Revd. Dr. Martyn Percy Christ's College, Cambridge
Monday 10 March 1997	ORDER AND ORGANISATION: THE FUTURE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND ESTABLISHED RELIGION Professor Richard Roberts, Lancaster University
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The Revd. Professor John Bowker

Sex and Safety: the Real Crisis Facing Religions.

In the year 1997, Gresham College celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of its foundation. For that reason, this series of lectures was given the overall title of 'The Last Four Hundred Years of Religion and the Next'. That title is clearly frivolous, because no one could review four hundred years in fifty minutes, and none of us knows what is going to happen in the next four minutes, let alone in the next four hundred years.

But it so happens that we are, at this moment, at a point of dramatic transition from one world to another - signalled sometimes by the word 'postmodernism' - and it is a transition which poses a real challenge to religions. I have called it 'a crisis'. The word *krisis* in Greek means 'judgement', but it also means 'a time of momentous change'. So the lectures in this series will be concentrating on this moment of transition, looking at this moment of *krisis* for religions and for Christianity in particular.

It would be wrong, of course, to suppose that religions have only recently come in crisis. But four hundred years ago, in 1597, the major crisis for religions was one of conflict between religions, or of conflict within religions. Consider what was happening in different parts of the world in that year. It was in 1597 that the Japanese warlord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, made his second and more serious invasion of Korea in order to secure a safe passage for his armies as they fulfilled his ambition to conquer China. But on that occasion, as also in an earlier attempt in 1592, it was the Buddhist soldier monks who were at the heart of Korean resistance: they could not stop the massacres and destruction, but as Buddhists, they made it clear how strong religions can be in resisting threat, even those committed to non-violence.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi died in 1598, and he was succeeded by Tokugawa Ieyasu. From him the great Tokugawa period in Japanese history, lasting nearly three hundred years, takes its name. Tokugawa was the third of the so-called 'three great ones', Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu himself, and these three certainly posed a huge crisis for religions in Japan. Toyotomi Hideyoshi had expelled foreign Christians from Japan in in 1587 with the words, "Japan is a country of the *kami*, and for the fathers to come here and preach a devilish law is evil.... Since such a thing is intolerable, I am resolved that they shall not stay on Japanese soil.... Within twenty days they must return to their own country." By 1630 a ferocious persecution had destroyed the newly-founded Christianity in Japan.

But it was not Christianity alone which was in trouble. Buddhism also lost the great role it had played during the medieval period. No longer were Buddhist officials given great honours; no longer did most ordinary people seek their welfare and salvation in the many Buddhist temples, scattered throughout the land. As Dumoulin, the great historian of Zen Buddhism, put it:

> "Blow by blow, Buddhism suffered painful losses and watched as its position of prominence slipped away.... Buddhism became primarily a

popular religion, without any claims of spiritual leadership or of significant influence among the educated classes."
[[H. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, N.York (Macmillan), 1990, p. 259).

This was a religious crisis indeed, and one which Takuan Soho, who lived through this period, recognised and negotiated in such a way that it was Zen Buddhism alone which retained its influence within the new order.

Come a little closer to Gresham's London. What of India in 1597? In 1597, the Mughal emperor Akbar was making his great drive to bring the south of India under his control. At first sight, this hardly seems a crisis for religions, because Akbar is famous for his attempt to bring all religions together into his Din-i-Ilahi, his new religious movement of harmony, and to that end he had established his 'Ibadat-khana, his House of Worship, where people of all religions met to seek common ground in common goodness between the different faiths.

In doing this, was he not simply extending and institutionalising the unifying vision of Guru Nanak who had died only 58 years earlier, and from whom the Sikh religion is derived? As the later tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, was to put this same vision:

"Hindus and Muslims are one.
The same Reality is the Creator and Preserver of all;
Allow no distinctions between them.
The monastery and the mosque are the same;
So are the Hindu worship and the Muslim prayer.
Humans are all one!"
[*Akal Ustat*]

Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh Guru, was Guru during the reign of Akbar, and he believed that the Sikh religion was exactly that synthesis which Akbar was seeking. When he gathered together the hymns of the Adi Granth, the Sikh Bible, he included hymns by Hindus and Muslims. Akbar was told that Arjan had gathered hymns attacking Islam and the emperor, so he asked to hear some of them; and when he did so, he was so delighted that he cancelled the local taxes.

This hardly seems a time of crisis for religions. And yet, of course, it was, because to some people this inclusive policy was threatening the distinctive truth of their own tradition. Of these people, the best-known is Ahmad Sirhindi, the leader of the Naqshbandiya Sufis. He had in fact begun his career at the court of Akbar, and that had convinced him that religious observance must start at the top: "The ruler is the soul, the people are the body: if the ruler goes astray, the people will surely follow." But he became certain that this ruler, Akbar, had gone far astray, and he led a vigorous campaign to restore Qur'an and Sunna to the court and to the people. Almost alone he contested and defeated an interpretation of Islam and of religious experience which was derived from ibn Arabi, and which had become widespread among Sufis. This was for sure a religious crisis of enormous consequence, and it runs right down to the present time: can Islam live at peace in plurality, or must it always be seeking, in the end, to become the controlling voice?

Think of Turkey and its unease about Ataturk; of Algeria; of Afghanistan; of Pakistan, and it becomes clear that the crisis of 1597 in India is with us still.

And what of Europe? What of that England in which Thomas Gresham was founding his College? To observe that the Spanish Armada had been defeated only nine years earlier will make it obvious how great the crisis was - not just the political crisis, but also that underlying crisis in Christendom of the Reformation. The England of Gresham's lifetime had swung, on the Statute Book, between Reform and Rome under Edward VI and Mary. Protestants and Catholics had been executing each other, given the chance, with equal determination. English sailors captured at sea were handed over to the Inquisition. 1597 was certainly a year of crisis in religion in Gresham's England.

But in 1597, the fifth book of Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* was published, that book of which Izaak Walton wrote, there is in it "such bowels of love, and such a commixture of that love with reason, as was never exceeded but in holy writ." Between the extremes of Rome on the one side and of Calvinist protestants on the other, he sought a middle ground on which we can live in peace and charity with each other. Hooker did not deny that some things are right and others wrong, and he knew that such things must be attended to - indeed, he made clear *how* they should be attended to. But what he resisted was the human tendency to convert what he called outspokenly "silly things" into matters of mutual hatred - and by that hatred into matters that may destroy the common good.

> "These controversies which have lately sprung up for complements, rites and ceremonies of church actions, are in truth for the greatest part such silly things, that very easiness doth make them hard to be disputed of in serious manner." [Richard Hooker, *The Works*...., Oxford, 1885, I, p. 417].

Hooker made a plea that we would always moderate our own opinion by a discernment of the common good:

> "Our wisdom ... must be such as doth not propose to itself το ιδιον, our own particular, the partial and immoderate desire whereof poisoneth wheresoever it taketh place; but the scope and mark which we are to aim at is το κοινον, the public and common good of all." [*op. cit.* p. 421].

Hooker's plea and the Anglican settlement were a very extraordinary achievement in this bitter and divided world, and one of which we, in this country, are still the beneficiaries. But they do not in any way diminsh the seriousness of the crisis in religion at the time when Thomas Gresham was founding his College.

What, then, is meant by adding the word 'real' to the title - a *real* crisis for religions? Were not the crises for Takuan, for Sirhindi and for Hooker real enough? Indeed they were. But they were all crises *within* religion, within a domain of shared assumptions. Takuan and Tokugawa, Sirhindi and Akbar, Hooker and Hacket - or for that matter Hooker and the Pope - were not in dispute about the power and purposes of religion. For sure, Takuan, as a Zen Buddhist, would have

been much in dispute with Sirhindi, had he ever met him, about the nature of Allah or of God, but in their respective traditions they were not questioning the worth of religion as they had come to know it, nor, in general, was the society around them. The function of religion, what it does for individuals and for society, was not in question.

Now it is. And that is why the crisis for religions now is of a different kind. It is of a different kind, because the functions which brought religion into being millennia ago, and which have sustained religion down to the present, have, at one focal, absolutely central point, become redundant: they are no longer needed as they were.

What is that point? The words 'sex and safety' point to the answer, but what do they mean? To answer that it is necessary to remember what, basically, religions are. When we think about religions, we are likely, in the first instance, to think about the great purposes of religion: "My religion," wrote Rumi, "Is to live through love":

> "O sudden Resurrection! O boundless, endless, compassion!
> Beyond the sanity of fools is a burning desert
> Where your sun is whirling in every atom; drag me there,
> Beloved, drag me there, let me roast in your perfection."

[A. Harvey, *Light Upon Light: Inspirations from Rumi*, Berkeley, North Atlantic Books, 1996].

So, yes, when we think of religions we think of such things as God and prayer, sacrifice and sin, mosque, church, temple and synagogue; we think about beliefs and practices which have a religious flavour to them. And these things are indeed paramount. But they are all on the surface; and manifestly not all religions share even those few things mentioned. Thus Jains and Buddhists do not believe that there is in reality that which Muslims refer to as Allah - or to put it more technically, they do not believe in God as the unproduced Producer of all that is, independent of this or any other universe which happens to exist.

Religions seem to be about the same sort of thing, but they are in fact extremely different from each other. Some claim that there is a common core in mysticism, or in the underlying behaviours in the brain, and it is indeed true that the gene-protein process which builds the brain and body builds them in such a way that we are prepared thereby for many characteristic behaviours: sexual, for example, or linguistic - or religious (see the article on 'Biogenetic structuralism' in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*; or my *Is God a Virus?Genes, Culture and Religion*, London, SPCK, 1995). Even so, the human competence for religion is put to very different uses in different religions.

So this means that if we want to understand what religions basically are, we have to start one stage further back. It is much the same if we ask the question, What are schools, and what are schools for? We could look on the surface at the national curriculum in England, and the equivalent in France, Germany and Japan; we can look at drama, music, lessons, buildings, holidays and terms. Much on the

surface will look the same, but in fact the differences will constitute in each case a different education system. But if we go one stage further back, we can see that schools everywhere do have something in common: they are systems organised to transmit information and insight from one generation to another.

So also are religions. If we go back behind the surface behaviours and beliefs, we can see at once that all religions are systems for the coding, protection and transmission of information which has achieved the highest possible value for human communities through the long process of human history. Religions are highly organised information processing systems. They may be much more than that, but that *at least* is what they are. Like schools, they are organisations to make sure that important information and insight gets passed on from one life to another, and above all, from one generation to another.

So the next question becomes inevitable: what information? There are two levels of information protected by religions: one level is so basic that at first sight it seems to have nothing much to do with religion; the second level contains all those things which we more usually call religious. The two kinds of information are not separate from each other, and in life they are closely connected. But it helps, at least initially, to look at them in turn.

The first level, the basic information protected by religions, is that which enables humans to survive and flourish. It is everything which has been endorsed by natural selection and evolution. How do humans survive and create the next generation? Not by accident but by organisation. The worth of a a particular form of organisation may be tested in many ways, not least by contingent accidents. But the embracing test is that of natural selection. It is natural selection, through the sifting process of evolution, that sets an impartial rule against the experiments of life, whether of animals or of birds or of human beings. Those which are best adapted to the conditions all around them survive long enough to replicate more of their genes into another generation; those which are ill-adapted may not survive at all. Looked at from this point of view, bodies have been thought of as gene-survival machines: a chicken is an egg's way of making another egg (Samuel Butler). The genes need protection in order to pass on what they are to the next generation: a chicken is the armoured car in which the treasure of the genes is delivered safely to the bank on the other side of town - delivered, that is, into the next generation.

The genes of a chicken are protected twice over, 'belt *and* braces'; in other words, they have two defensive boundaries: the first boundary is the cell inside which the genes are sitting, and the second is the skin: the skin is the second defensive boundary of the whole gene-replication process. And that is as true of any human being as it is of a chicken.

But humans have then built a third defensive system outside the boundary of the body: they have built what we call 'culture', so that things like armies, hospitals, traffic lights, schools and microwave meals all play their part in helping humans to survive and flourish. This means that culture is the third defensive skin

inside which the gene-replication process sits. So for humans, gene-replication is protected not just by belt and braces, but by a stout piece of string as well.

And what has this to do with religion? Everything, because religions are the earliest cultural systems, of which we have evidence, for the protection of gene-replication and the nurture of children. Obviously, our early ancestors knew nothing of how gene-replication works. But that is irrelevant to the evolutionary point. It is not understanding, but successful practice that is measured by survival. That is why religions have always been preoccupied with sex and food, creating food laws and systematic agriculture, and taking control of sexual behaviour, marriage and the status of women. It is this necessary connection between religion, sex and food which explains why the family is the basic unit of religious organisation, even in religions where celibacy is seen as a higher vocation. In almost all religions, the family is far more fundamental than church or temple, synagogue or mosque. In fact, one of the greatest of all religious inventions was the family.

On this basis, sociobiology (the study of the interaction of genes and culture which claims that culture can be best understood as a consequence of choices which have proved beneficial in protecting gene-replication) has argued that religions have had value, not because their beliefs might happen to be true (though sociobiologists generally assume that they are not), but because they have served the purposes of survival and selection.

There is much about sociobiology that is clearly wrong (see, for example, my *Is God a Virus? Genes, Culture and Religion*), but it is at least correct in observing that religions are highly organised protective systems. It does not mean that all religions are therefore the same simply because they are systems. Obviously not. There are many different styles of organisation, ranging from the strongly bounded and hierarchical (such as Vatican Catholicism) to the weakly bounded but with strong subsystems (such as Anglicanism). But this is the base line: religions are organised systems to secure and transmit the information which human communities have developed for the protection of gene-replication and the nurture of children.

One early and important reason for religious diversity lies in the fact that there are many different reproductive strategies even in the animal kingdom, let alone in the human. A recent book edited by Rasa, Vogel and Voland begins with these words in an introduction by Vogel:

> "All organisms are shaped by natural selection. Since natural selection operates through differential reproduction, this makes reproduction the key phenomenon of evolution. Hence all organisms compete for their own reproductive success which is, in general, the most effective means of maximising personal fitness." [A.E.Rasa, C.Vogel and E.Voland, *The Sociobiology of Sexual and Reproductive Strategies*, London (Chapman and Hall), 1989, p. xi].

Vogel then goes on to make the orthodox point:

> "Under certain conditions some individuals of socially living animals may postpone or even forego their own reproduction in order to maximize their

> inclusive fitness, for instance, by taking the role of 'helpers at the nest', i.e. helping closely related individuals to raise their offspring successfully. Thus, we may find highly sophisticated strategies of transferring as many replicator of 'own' genes to the next generation as possible. Of course animals generally do not consciously engage in strategic actions to pass on their genes, or at least we need not assume that they do. Natural selection, in principle, does favour any behaviour of animals which generates above average reproductive success, as though the actors were consciously seeking a specific goal or result, in this case maximum inclusive fitness."
> [*op. cit.* p. xi].

The book is entitled, *The Sociobiology of Sexual and Reproductive Strategies*, and the plural makes the point: there are many possible strategies for achieving the rewarded goal of reproduction, and in those strategies the interests of male and female are necessarily divergent, because of the long period committed on the part of women to gestation, birth and the nurture of the dependent infant. Females have a far longer and costlier commitment to the birth and nurture of the next generation than males. Of course it may be a rewarded strategy for males to protect their mates and the offspring, but on the other hand, it may be a rewarded strategy to take off and seek multiple mates. What is certainly true is that we have here a recipe, if not for the battle of the sexes, then certainly for competition between them. The competition of interests and strategies may result in compromise, but it may also result in such extreme measures as infanticide. Langur monkeys breed in harems, and since there are not enough harems to go round, and since in any case control of a harem is short-lived, male monkeys have limited chances of reproductive success. A paper by V. Sommer ['Infanticide among free-ranging langurs (*Presbytis entellus*) at Jodhpur (Rajasthan/India): recent observations and a reconsideration of hypotheses', *Primates*, XXVIII, pp. 163-97] argues that this behaviour is highly adaptive, given the selection pressures on males: if they kill the offspring of their predecessors, they will bring the mothers out of lactation and into estrus again without too much delay.

What are the best strategies for males and females in the human case? We cannot simply look at the many so-called strategies adopted by other organisms and use them as a template onto which human strategies are mapped as though they are the same. The difference is obvious: other organisms do not have strategies, humans do. As the sentence just quoted puts it: "Of course, animals generally do not consciously engage in strategic actions to pass on their genes". The so-called strategies are simply behaviours which have worked and have been rewarded in replication and survival. But humans do engage in conscious and shared strategies which lead to social consequences, in terms of regulation of mates, family hierarchy and control, group sanction and endorsement, and social recognition.

There is not only one way in which humans can cooperate in order to maximise the chances of reproductive success, and that is why we have so many different forms of family organisation. Since success includes the upbringing of the next generation, it is not surprising that marriage is the commonest strategy of all. But even then, marriage is not a single strategy: there are many different kinds of marriage. Marriage may be within a group or class or category (the TV series, 'Upstairs and Downstairs', made that extremely clear) - that is known as endogamy; or it may be outside a group,

and that is known as exogamy; it may be by way of exchange, so that daughters become valuable property, or it may be by capture, after a raid on a near-by village.

So the strategies are many. But within a social group, it has clearly been an advantage to have stability of expectation. People 'know where they are' and what is expected of them. The organisation of mating and of provision for the nurture of children has reduced conflict and maximised cooperation. There is no one way in which this has to be done. But in whatever way it *has* been done in human history (so far as we have evidence), religions have been the systems which have provided the codes, the sanctions and the endorsements of sexual behaviour, and they have provided also actions and explanations, in ritual and myth, which support the accepted strategy. Each religion tells a story, a great story, into which individuals donate their lives and play their part in turn. The great stories of religion, enacted as well as told, have given unity to a community or to a society.

Religions have thus stabilised social strategies, so that people, in general, agree on the right basic ways to behave, and religions have given these stable social strategies a continuity through the generations far beyond biology. It is religions which have supplied the maps of approved strategies for reproduction and sexual behaviour in any social group. In the end, the purpose of the religious stories, in the regulation of marriage, has been taken over entirely by secular governments, and this has led eventually to state control of marriage and birth. The attempts to achieve this in the Western world while at the same time inheriting from the Enlightenment a view that marriage is a private matter in which the state should only intervene minimally, has resulted in the confusion of the present scene.

None of this has been good news for women, if good news means having the same status as men in determining the outcomes of their own lives. The status of women has been tied in religions closely to the reproductive cycle, not just the reproductive cycle of the women themselves, but also of the crops and herds on which the group or family depends. Religions endorsed a necessary division of labour which is based on biology, and which therefore paid much attention to menstruation and the availability of women. The old way of stating this, that women stay at home and men go out to work is certainly wrong. Women do a great deal more in terms of work outside, above all in agriculture, foraging and preparation of food. What we find generally is that women are responsible for birth and the upbringing of children, at least in the early years, and for related activities in the preparation of food, both in the fields and in cooking. Twenty years ago, a photo appeared, in *South African Panorama*, of an African woman hoeing vegetables. At that date, the journal was trying to persuade the outside world that the separation of husbands and wives in the apartheid system was enjoyed by all. The caption read: "The women tend the vegetable gardens, not only because their menfolk are away working in nearby Pinetown and Durban, but also because it is an added form of exercise."

The men, meanwhile, either sat around in the village, or they related to a wider environment, in relations with neighbouring villages or eventually states, in hunting, in physical defence and aggression against the outsider, and in organising the local community; which means that men were far less important from an evolutionary point of view than women. Women indeed are *so* much more important that the male defence

of community included the organising and the control of access to women. The basic reason is obvious: you can always be sure, at least in a small community, who is the mother of a child, but without strong control you cannot be sure who is the father. It is a reason why polygyny (marrying more than one wife) is far more common than polyandry (marrying more than one husband). In the book *Voices of Islam* I ask a Muslim why polygamy is allowed to Muslim men but not to Muslim women. He replies:

> "The reason is quite simple: you want to know the father of the child. The mother is unmistakeably established in the whole act of procreation. The mother is known. It is the father who would otherwise be uncertain, if a woman married more than one husband."

[*Voices of Islam*, Oxford (One World), 1995, p. 132].

I then went on to ask him, "But supposing it were now possible to establish easily... the genetic paternity of any child, would that open up the possibility that a woman might marry more than one husband?" He answered: "Oh no, I am afraid that is going beyond our limits."

'Limits': the word for 'limits' in Arabic, and therefore in the Qur'an, is *hudud*, or in the singular *hadd*. It means a boundary or a limit set by God, and so it describes the laws laid down by God. Here, as an example, is the Quran on sex and fasting during the fast of Ramadan:

> "Permitted to you on the night of the fasts is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and you are their garments... So now lie with them and seek what God has prescribed for you, and eat and drink until the white thread [at first light] appears to you distinct from the black thread; then complete the fast till the night appears, and do not lie with them while you are in retreat in the mosques. Those are the limits of God [*tilka hududu'Llahi*]." [2.183].

And here is the Qur'an on divorce:

> "A divorce is allowed twice; after that, it is a matter of either holding together on equitable terms, or separating with kindness. It is not lawful to take back any of your gifts, except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits of God. If you fear that they would be unable to keep the limits of God, there is no blame on either of them if she gives something for her freedom. Those are the limits of God, so do not transgress them. If any do transgress the limits of God, those are the wrong-doers." [2.229].

Hudud: limits, in relation to both food and sex. Here at once, and in miniature, can be seen the powerful importance of religions as organised systems in the domain of gene replication and the nurture of children. Religions established the limits of life. They established the codes of behaviour, as well as the sanctions and endorsements to make them stick. And they have worked. The word of God, whether in Bible or Qur'an or Shruti or Adi Granth, is a very powerful sanction. For millennia, therefore, religions have been the social context in which individuals have lived their lives successfully, success being measured in terms of survival and replication.

Success is certainly not measured in terms of individual freedom; and you do not need to be a feminist to recognise that the strategies adopted by religions to protect gene-replication and the nurture of children have usually involved the protection of women and the control of their lives by men. This does not mean that women cannot have a very high status. Frequently the feminine is celebrated in religions as the source of power. Power means that the feminine is not only the obvious source of life and the gift of fertility: she is also the source of death. That is why in India, Mahadevi, the great Goddess, the feminine who becomes manifest in so many different guises (as, for example, Parvati, Kali and Durga) is life-giving in association with a male consort, like Shiva, but death-delivering or death-controlling on her own. Life *and* death are the pulse of the feminine, and that is why blood, not least in menstruation, is marked off as both gift and threat.

It is, therefore, wrong to think that in religions women have a subordinate status in all ways. In the home, certainly, the wife and mother is likely to be revered, and that reverence has been translated into worship in many parts of the world. It is equally wrong to think that all women everywhere are seeking to unite against this since they have nothing to lose but their chains. In fact, many women perceive these systems as working well for them also. That is why it is often women who are visible on the streets campaigning for the *status quo*, campaigning, for example, for the retention of the veil in Islam. Some married women see themselves now, as much as in the past, as having degrees of importance which in their own eyes exceed those of men. In *Worlds of Faith* Mrs Pancholi, a Hindu wife, told me very firmly, "Women are the transmitters of culture in Hindu tradition, and this role lies in the hands of women, and I don't think a man has time, or even the patience, to do that" [*Worlds of Faith: Religious Belief and Practice in Britain Today*, London (Ariel Books), 1983, p. 213].

This takes us back to the earlier claim that one of the most important early achievements of religion was the family: in the family, it is possible for women to be, paradoxically, both subordinate and paramount. Women are the transmitters, not simply of life, but also of culture. Where men became important was in building the *extended* family, because for this men actually had more time than women.

The extended family in its ordinary sense is important enough, but what religions created were even larger extended families which went far beyond even the kinship group of actual relatives. Religions supplied the metaphors and the rituals through which genetic strangers have been bonded together in a village or in a larger geographical area, and in this way a much larger group acts together and cooperates - even though that cooperation has meant the even greater subordination of slaves, shudras, household servants - 'Upstairs and Downstairs' again. In the end some religions have dreamed that the whole human race might be a single family, an *'umma* as Muslims would call it, a metaphorically extended family, in which, to quote the Christian version of a comparable theme, we are all members one of another (*Ephesians* 4.25).

Once the confidence of this larger family is established by its religious validation, then of course even such apparently disadvantageous behaviours as sexual variance can be harnessed - or prohibited: again, there are many different strategies.

Take celibacy as an example: this may serve the community, or it may be regarded as aberrant. Celibate Buddhist monks took up arms against Toyotomi Hideyoshi: they had less to lose; Muslims regard celibacy as a denial of the purposes of God in creation; yet eunuchs looking after harems were a diminished risk. Here, as always, religions produce a bewildering variety of different strategies. But within them all, the resulting religious control has produced high degrees of stability: it has produced moral codes, designations of who may mate with whom, including prohibited relationships, techniques and rituals for producing offspring, often of a desired gender, education, protection of women, assurance of paternity by restricting access to women, rules of inheritance and thus of continuity in society.

And eventually, almost all religions have made much, in different ways, of the natural distinction between sex and reproduction. Roman Catholicism, as we will see in a moment, is an exception. But in general, religions have made much of the distinction between sex and reproduction. Even before the relation between sexual acts and reproduction was better understood, the potential of sex for pleasure and for power was well-recognised.

This, in itself, reinforced the male control of women, because promiscuous or unlicensed sexual activity would clearly subvert that ordering of families in particular and of society in general which was rewarded in natural selection (that is, from the limited perspective of the participants, in continuity,). So whereas male sexual activity, outside the reproductive boundary of the family, *might* not be disruptive in terms of *reproduction*, it clearly would affect the stability of the family as the unit of selection; and in any case, female sexual activity of that kind would certainly be subversive because of the point already made about children. There is, therefore, a context of religious restriction in relation to sexuality which has been necessary or at least rewarded from the point of view of natural selection and evolution.

Within that context of restriction, the nature of sexuality and sexual feelings has evoked widely differing responses in religions, ranging on the one side from a fear of being enslaved to the passions (leading to a dualistic subordination of sexuality, as in Manichaeism or some versions of Christianity), to a delight, at the other extreme, in sexuality as a proper end in life, as among Hindus. For Hindus there are four *purusharthas*, four legitimate goals in life, and kama, which includes delight in sexual pleasure, is one of them.

The same is true elsewhere: almost anywhere where there has not been an inhibiting fear, the exploration of sexuality has been religiously important. In Eastern religions, in particular, the nature of sexual energy was explored in many directions. Since sexual arousal seems to make its own demands, what might be the consequence if that energy is brought under human control and directed to different ends? In China this lent itself to the quest for immortality and the gaining of strength, in India to the acquisition of power, in different kinds of *puja* or worship, and in tantra. This means that religions recognised early and widely that sex and reproduction are not synonymous: sexual engagement has purposes and pleasures far beyond the limited purpose of the transmission of life.

In Christianity, the issue of control and restriction led in a different direction. In so far as human sex transcends both reproduction and biological imperatives, it is no longer an end of that biological kind in itself. How, then, does it relate to the end of salvation and the vision of God? One answer is to say, Extremely well: the union of a man and a woman, transcending the union of male and female in a biological sense, has seemed religiously to be the nearest one can come on earth to the final union with God (for many examples, see my Gresham lectures Beyond Words: The Poetry of Presence). But another answer has been to say that sex is of lesser value than the final end of God, and is among those things that may have to be given up if the unqualified love of God is to flourish. This ascetic option gives the highest value to celibacy, chastity and virginity, and it became the dominant voice of the official Church, especially in the West. That means it became the voice of men, since only men have control and authority in the Church (since women, until recently, and still in Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, cannot be ordained). Thus the subordination of sex, and the attempt to make it in effect synonomous, either with sin or with reproduction, became, within Christianity, a particular strategy through which men kept control and gave to control a new meaning.

So to say that religions are concerned with sex and food is in fact to say, yes, certainly, they are concerned with the protection of gene-replication and the nurture of children, and they have done that very well. But it is to say also that they did it *so* well that they created the opportunity to do many other things also. And now, at last, we get to the second level of information which religions protect, and this brings us to the more obviously religious. The point is clear and simple: because religions worked at the first and basic level of protection, they created secure contexts. They created and became contexts of such security that people could live with each other in confidence. And because people were living in secure contexts, they were able to set out on tremendous journeys of exploration - explorations of themselves and of their environments. People were set free to explore their own nature and society, as well as the world around them. That is why, incidentally, the natural sciences, as we now know them, all began originally as part of this religious exploration. It is only very recently, in the last two or three hundred years, that religion and science have come apart.

These explorations of human possibility, and of the environments in which it is set, opened the way to the specifically religious. In the book *Is God a Virus?*, I have pointed out that where human possibility is concerned, the exploration has been primarily of the human body. It is therefore known, from Greek *soma* = 'body', as 'somatic exploration'. What is this body capable of experiencing? What is it capable of being and of becoming? In some religions, the emphasis has been on exploration inwards: they have sought and found truth within the body, in terms of enlightenment, peace, emptiness, shunyata, the Buddha-nature, kevala-jnana, and are therefore known as 'inversive systems'. The exploration of what Thoreau called "the private sea", the streams and oceans of our inner nature, has led to such religions as Jainism and Buddhism. In other religions, the emphasis has been on exploring the meaning and value of what has been discovered outside the body, and of the relationships into which people enter. It was this which culminated in communion, or even union, with God.

"Love is here like the blood in my veins and skin:
He has annihilated me and filled me only with Himself.

His fire has surged through all the atoms of my body.
Of 'me' only my name remains: the rest is Him."
[Harvey *op. cit.*, p.181].

This exploration of the value in relationship has produced religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These systems, in which value and meaning are found in relationship, are known as 'extraversive systems'. In both cases, it is a matter of emphasis: an inversive system is never unattentive to the world of relationships, while an extraversive system, emphasising the love of God and of one's neighbour, knows that God can be found within, in what St. Teresa called 'the interior castle'.

And now we can begin to see why the achievements of religion have been so vast. They are pretty well the whole of everything. Even apart from those final and supreme states of union with God or with the Buddha-nature, all the most enduring human values and achievements - in dance, art, music, dance, drama, agriculture, poetry, education, the natural sciences - all of them have their roots in these religious contexts of exploration. And as the consequences of somatic exploration in the past are transmitted in religious systems and are realised from one generation to another, so the characteristic practices of religions become apparent, in worship, meditation, sacrifice, prayer, yoga, zazen and much else. All of these are appropriations of past and tested achievements and experience, realised and extended from one generation to another.

What happens? For some people, everything. The power, the peace, the truth, the beauty, the goodness, the hope, the joy, these are so real and so unequivocal, not just for a few but for many, that all else in human life fades in comparison. Religion is no longer a matter of academic study or argument; it is a new world; and we can reach it only through the religious systems which tell us how to get there. People can discuss the Buddha-nature and can try to understand intellectually what it is. But the Buddha-nature as the whole universe, and as one's own appearance within it, is true in a transforming sense only to those who realise it by the ways so carefully preserved and transmitted in the Buddhist systems. People can argue about God, but God as source and goal of life is known only to those who receive him as gift, demand and invitation in the ways so carefully preserved in theistic systems.

The immense importance of all that has been achieved in religions reinforces the reason why religions are protective systems: they protect not only gene-replication, but also virtually everything else that has been indispensable for human life and flourishing. It is all far too important to be left to chance. It is everything from sex to salvation. It is, therefore, information which has to be organised if it is going to be saved and shared and transmitted. Religions are systems to do exactly that. And while we may think of this information primarily in terms of items which seem to us more obviously religious, in terms, let us say, of gurus or of God, in fact the fundamental information is at the first level, concerning sex, family and food: without that, at least in earlier times, the rest could never have got off the ground.

And now, at last, it becomes obvious what this focal crisis is that is threatening or challenging religions at the present time. It is that religions no longer seem, in many societies, necessary for the protection of gene-replication and the nurture of children. Think of what has happened through the last hundred years, at least in technological

and affluent societies: the rates of infant mortality have dropped, so that we no longer need the insurance of multiple births; techniques of contraception have been developed which reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy, as much outside marriage as within; smaller families and the better control of when children are conceived have contributed to the emancipation of women from the obligation to be available for reproduction. In many societies, that all-important function of religions, to protect and to enhance the probability of gene-replication has disappeared. We do not need religions as protective systems for this purpose. The pervasive control of religions in the fundamental domain of sex and food may have worked well for millennia - indeed, it has worked well, since otherwise none of us would be here. But it is now redundant, in the proper sense of redundancy - saying the same thing twice so that the message gets through: some people may still live in religious systems and follow the rules on sex and diet, but they also go to the doctor. Religion is no longer necessary to secure the goal of gene-replication.

What do religions do in this new circumstance? They do, of course, many different things, but one thing that some of them do is obvious: they carry on as usual; they deny their redundancy. That is what I mean by a real crisis facing religions. Because religions have become through time such highly organised and effective systems, in which sex and reproduction are integrated into a coherent system, it seems immensely threatening if sex is pulled out of the system. This can be seen most obviously in the Roman Catholic, or more accurately Vatican Catholic, insistence that the unitive and the procreative functions of sex cannot be divorced. *Humanae Vitae* insists that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" [*HV* 11], and "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil [*HV* 14, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2370].

This is based on an appeal to natural law and to the right of the Church to pronounce on such matters (#4). Natural law is not of course to be confused with that which happens naturally: "The natural law" says the Catholic Catechism, "expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie" [*CCC* #1954]. But then it is simply a matter of rhetoric to claim that the unitive and procreative functions, sex and reproduction, cannot be separated. In most religions they *are* separated, so it is simply not true that there is a natural moral discernment that they cannot be separated. In nature, in any case they *are* separated, even in the most obvious sense that the words 'sex' and 'reproduction' are not synonomous. Certainly all organisms have to reproduce if genetic survival is to be ensured, but they can do this by asexual as well as sexual means. Asexual reproduction of single-celled species, such as protists or blue-green algae, is comparatively simple: it involves duplication of chromosomes followed by a division. Sexual reproduction is vastly more complicated, and far more costly, as a behaviour.

So what are the evolutionary advantages of sexual reproduction? Part of the answer lies in the way it increases genetic diversity. But part of the answer lies in the fact that sexual activity serves more purposes naturally than reproduction alone. In fact, one of the major rewards of unitive sex being divorced from reproductive sex, and not just in the infertile periods, lies in the bonding and continued commitment of each to

other, above all of male to female, though it could equally be male to male or female to female. The protective advantages are obvious, especially for women: men do not simply seek to replicate their genes with the maximum number of partners. They remain committed to the investment in a single partner. To put it as simply as possible (and this is almost exactly the opposite of what *Humanae Vitae* maintains), there is, in the human case, far more to sex than reproduction.. It is essential and natural, in the human case, that not all sexual acts should be open to the transmission of life.

But the vacuity of the Vatican claims is not, of course, on its own the real issue. The real issue is whether it is necessary for religions to defend without change the system which has worked so well for so long, when circumstances have changed in a radically disjunctive way. If one part goes, is not the whole threatened, particularly in a system in which matters of faith and morals can be defined infallibly? Not that Vatican Catholicism is alone in this. Any religion which relies on inerrant revelation will be comparable. Thus in Islam, whatever is allowed or forbidden in the Qur'an is absolute. There is much in human life and behaviour that is, by the mercy of God, left open, but the Quran is not open to change or negotiation. From the Quran and from the example of the Prophet and his Companions, it is clear what the purpose and practice of marriage must be: the primary purpose of marriage is the service and worship (*'ibadah*) of Allah, and that is achieved by living together as God wills. Only then is the second purpose, the birth of children brought into context. What does God will? A quotation from Doi's summary, in his book, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (London, Ta Ha, 1984, p. 117), makes this clear:

> "The man, with his aggression, is charged with what is called the 'instrumental' functions: maintenance, protection, dealings with the outworldly matters and leadership within the family. The woman is entrusted with caring for and rearing the children, organising the home, and creating the loving atmosphere inside her matrimonial home.... Work or trade are not prohibited to woman in Shari'ah provided thay do it within the framework of modesty and with the permission of the husband; they are not recommended to undertake such activities unless there is a justification for them to go to work and should be without prejudice to their husband's rights."

This is an example of religion as a protective system, of the kind so well rewarded by natural selection. Can this change without calling the Quran in question? The crisis is the same. Of course the Vatican and Sunni Islam do not agree on all matters. In fact, in Islam contraception *is* permitted for valid reasons, and those reasons are listed: the most important are those which have to do with the health and well-being of the mother or of existing children. Where the Vatican and Islam *are* agreed is in defending the status of religion as the protective system in which alone sexual activity and gene-replication should occur, and must occur in the ways they say. It is this which creates so much tension in other religions as well: think of the tension in Israel between secular Jews and the near-monopoly of Orthodox Jews in these matters.

The real crisis for religions is, therefore, to know whether they need for their own survival to maintain the same systems of control over gene-replication that have served them so well for so long. Is it the only, inevitable policy for religions to reiterate their control of reproduction? But the disaster of doing that is obvious: gene-replication

no longer requires, in many parts of the world, the protection that religions used to supply, and sex and reproduction are increasingly being separated. For religions to insist that this is wrong is to drive a schism into the human community.

The schism may not immediately show, because religions, as a consequence of their explorations and discoveries, offer so much more than their aboriginal protection of gene-replication that many people will adhere to the religion in general and abandon its imperatives on sex and reproduction. But the incoherence, or for that matter the hypocrisy, is dangerous: it means that religions get identified with a recalcitrant defence of the indefensible, and that consequently the wisdom that they have acquired on other matters gets lost. Islam and the Vatican came into an unlikely alliance at Rio and Cairo on matters of world population. The effect of this was to make far more extreme the positions taken by others at the UN conference on women at Beijing, in 1995. It is not that the Vatican is alone in opposing an international right to abortion, or the use of abortion as a means of family planning, or the proposal that universal human rights are not universal, all of which came up at Beijing. But the Vatican made the opposition more difficult by insisting so unequivocally on a system of protection and control, in relation to sex and reproduction, which no longer serves its original purpose. It seemed to be suggesting that only those who agree that contraception is intrinsically evil have a moral right to speak. And then what happened? It was to women at the Beijing conference that Pope John Paul addressed his 'Letter to Women (July 10, 1995), in which, while he apologised for the objective wrongs done to women by "not just a few members of the Church", he then promptly went on to perpetuate them by insisting that the genius of women is of such a kind that it cannot be exercised in ministerial priesthood.

The tragedy of all this is that the wisdom and experience of religions on other matters gets lost. If they are no longer necessary for the protection of gene-replication, and yet they insist that they are, they risk becoming incredible on other matters as well. For in these last few pages, I have been talking about gene-replication alone: what about the nurture of children? What have religions learned here that might still be of value? And what of the other end of life? What of senesence, of growing old? Both of these, both nurture and aging, have evolutionary advantages, although they carry with them high costs.

Here, exactly as with the case of gene-replication, religions in the past have exploited the necessities and the advantages of evolutionary constraints, and they have made out of them something transcendently human. Religions have so much to teach us about the values of old age; they have even more to teach us about the value of death. They deal in so many vital ways with what Aristotle called εὐδαιμονια, human flourishing. Not least they realise the importance of the truly extended family, in the organisation of society. When Mrs Thatcher decided that society does not exist, she was about as far from religious truth and insight as it is possible to get. She said: "There is no such thing as Society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" [*Women's Own*, Oct. 31, 1987].

That is almost as foolish as the Pope saying that women cannot be ordained: where there are families, there already is society. How families relate to each other and constitute society has been differently achieved in different religions, but in all of them

there is a wisdom which has been tested and changed through the course of time. It is true that Edmund Leach contended, in 1967, that "far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents." Described in that way, religions might well agree with him: no one can doubt that the religious fact of families has led to disastrous outcomes, not least where daughters are concerned. But they have achieved other truths and values in relation to the family as well, and therefore they have other and better things to say.

But are they worth hearing? The real crisis for religions is that if they defend the system which is no longer needed for its original purpose, the protection of gene-replication, they will seem to be no longer needed for any of their other purposes, including the nurture of children, the attainment of wisdom, the values of age and the goals of life.

So the focal and real crisis for religions is simple to see, far less simple to solve. Religions are the systems which have controlled gene-replication and the nurture of children for many thousands of years. They have done this so well that they have also been the context in which the great discoveries and achievements of human enterprise have been secured and have been passed on as opportunity from one generation to another.

Most of this remains as true now as it has been in the past: the opportunities of religion, to create the greatest goodness and beauty in mind and spirit and behaviour, to find God by being found by God, to grasp the nettle - and to grasp one's neighbour - as being not other than oneself, none of this has disappeared. What has disappeared is the necessity for religions to guard and protect the process of gene-replication. And the more a religion identifies itself with that necessity and refuses to relinquish it, the more absurd it becomes. The more it insists that its old protection of reproductive activity belongs to the essence of its truth, the less people will care to listen to it on all those other matters - those opportunities for the transfiguration of human life.

That is what it means to say that religions, when they do this, drive a schism into the human community: they diminish our human possibility. Religions have acquired so much truth and so much wisdom through the course of time that they should be way out in front showing how to live in this new world in ways that seek what Hooker called "the common good". That must include in our time accepting and affirming with gratitude the emancipation of women, not from religion, but from the now unnecessary restrictions and protection which religions used to exist to provide.

Will they do so? An answer can only be given by those who write the catechisms and the handbooks of shari'a, the responsa and the applications of dharma. At the moment it looks as though it will not happen, and the human loss will be great:

"For I have seen the ways that lead away
Beyond the night, and on to endless day:
Will you, my friend, step with me, break this bread,
Or stay in safety, safe among the dead?"

The Revd. Dr. Martyn Percy

The Bearable Lightness of Being?
Fundamentalism, Revivalism and the Future of Enthusiastic Religion

There is an old joke about a fundamentalist Welsh pastor. Lost at sea and shipwrecked, he is eventually picked up by a rescue party a few years later. The party are impressed by his resourceful Robinson Crusoe existence in the meantime, but are puzzled by the fact that he has built two churches whilst on his desert island. When asked to explain this, he replies: 'Its simple - that's the one I go to, and the other is the one I don't.' The variant of this joke is to put two fundamentalist pastors together on a desert island: within a week, they have both founded their own churches. Fundamentalists and revivalists are dab hands at schism. As Garrison Keillor points out in *Lake Wobegon Days*, the problem is one of purity: 'we made sure that any who fellowshiped with us were straight on all the details of the faith...we referred to [others] as "so-called" [Christians]...but to ourselves, we were simply *The* Brethren, the last remnant of the true Church. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them," and [we] believed that was enough. We met in Uncle Al's and Aunty Flo's bare living room...'.[1]

To English ears, this may seem like the theatre of the absurd. But allow me to take you to the Lake District. Whilst studying as an ordinand, I undertook a two week placement in a well-known village, hoping to learn something about rural ministry in a busy tourist setting. Once upon a time, the place had supported two Brethren churches - 'Open' and 'Closed', the buildings being at opposite ends of the town. Now, there were no Brethren left: one was a carpet warehouse, and the other a Masonic Lodge.[2] The Anglican church was an unremarkable Victorian building. Yet with a population of only 1200, and in 1989, there were three 'House Churches'. One had been founded by a former youth worker attached to the Anglican church: he had fallen out with the vicar 10 years ago over guitars, spiritual gifts and the like. He left, taking the teenagers with him - they now rented the local library on Sundays. A few years later, having been joined by some adults, this church divided itself, this time on the issue of authority - a retired charismatic missionary was clearly better-suited to run the church than the ex-youth worker, but no-one could agree. Result: schism. Two years after that, a second schism developed, this time over the issue of health and wealth ('Prosperity Gospel'), hermeneutics, and again, authority and charisma.

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[1] Garrison Keillor, *Lake Wobegon Days*, New York, Viking Penguin, 1985, pp. 102ff.

[2] The Brethren arrived in Coniston from the West Country to help with the slate mining in the last century. Both churches were of a good size, but had ceased to function as such since the 1960's.

The combined numbers of these three House Churches was no more than 40 people; the Anglican electoral roll was around 160.[3]

Enthusiastic religion is no stranger to these shores. John Wesley, on one of his many preaching missions, was famously rebuked in 1750 by Bishop Butler in these words: 'God damn your enthusiasm, Sir - God damn it!'. Revivals upset religious principles; they turn the world upside down, emptying churches, but filling fields and conference centres with people. Contemporary fundamentalism and revivalism are both religions of enthusiasm: passion, power and vigour turns an ordinary idea into powerful ideology. Conversion, zeal and purity of belief guarantee that this form of religiosity is the very antithesis of the mellowness so beloved of liberalism. In a lecture of this brevity, there is not time to consider the definitions of fundamentalism and revivalism: I shall assume that we all have some thoughts and feeling for the parameters of that type of religious expression.[4] Instead, our main focus will be enthusiasm and being, their past, present and future, and relation to culture. The focus for this will be the fundamentalistic contemporary Charismatic Movement.

Phenomenologically speaking, this form of religion frequently dominates news headlines. The 'Toronto Blessing', now some three years old, was notorious for the zoological noises that accompanied the (pseudo?) pneuma-somatic experiences. Being 'slain in the Spirit' has become part of charismatic vocabulary. In the past, it would appear that similar occurrences in America and England have also been noted, although their phenomenological similarity is questionable.[5] Yet in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, the culture of revivalism was often seen as a lower-class or artisan rebellion against, or antidote to, over-rationalised religion or dead credal formulae. People were caught up by it in their hundreds of thousands.[6] Enthusiastic religion was a compensator for tightly-controlled middle-class values: the experiential was stressed over the cognitive, the Dionysian over the Apolloian. In Victorian England, as many have noted, enthusiastic, revivalistic religion was intentionally popular and

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[3] I was able to meet with all three House Church leaders. All had separated from their parent church 'because God told us to'. When I pointed out there was no New Testament precedent for separatism, they were unmoved. None of the groups had what could be called a doctrine of the church, or any foundational theology. The configuration of each group/church was: 'these are the people we agree and worship with' - at the moment.

[4] See Appendix.

[5] See my *Words, Wonders and Power: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism*, London, SPCK, 1996, pp. 172-173.

[6] For a brief survey, see *Christian History*, Issue 45, Vol. XIV, No. 1., 1994.

performative: it was led by feelings, not facts - it was a type of cathartic liberation for those who felt excluded by 'established' religion.[7] It could be erotically-charged, glitzy, tacky - even a little lewd. With the bourgeois, there has always been a mixture of fascination and distaste, a love-hate relationship.

It is probable that the number of Christians affected by Charismatic Renewal (revivalism) can be numbered in hundreds of millions.[8] Globally, there is almost no denomination that does not have a revivalist component. The growth of enthusiastic religion is quite simply, phenomenal. Yet there is a price for this. Instances of schism are high; David Martin has noted that Neo-Pentecostal churches in South America have partly mushroomed because they operate and franchise in the high streets like any other shop, competing for the 'commerce' of belief.[9] This looks impressive and engaging, but Lesslie Newbigin, echoing a Barthian point,[10] warns against judging quality of belief through quantity of adherents: 'the multiplication of cells unrelated to the body is what we call cancer.' This seems harsh, but the divisiveness of charismatic phenomena should not go unremarked. The cancerous analogy is also helpful in suggesting that whatever growth is produced, it frequently seems to lack any purpose other than further growth and enthusiastic intensity, a theme we shall return to later.

Revivals, of course, are no stranger to Christian history. Since the Reformation, there have been revivals of piety (17th century, Puritan), holiness and its sociality (early 18th century, Methodist) and catholic ritualism (19th century, the Oxford Movement), of 'speaking in tongues' (20th century, *glossolalia* in Pentecostalism), enthusiastic religion (late 19th century, Cane Ridge, Kentucky) and of Creation Spirituality (late 20th century, resonant with Celtic Christianity). There is almost no time in Christian history which cannot lay claim to its own revival. Each of these revivals, although different phenomenologically, shares a common 'genetic code'. This can be a complex agenda that at first sight looks simple. Yet it is far from that. So what are revivals, and why are they so often found breaking out in fundamentalistic churches?

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[7] See for example John Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion*, Cambridge, CUP, 1993.

[8] Estimates vary from 100 million to 400 million, which is between 5% and 20% of the world's Christian population, which is currently estimated at 2 billion. One billion are Roman Catholic.

[9] D. Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.

[10] L. Newbigin, 'On Being the Church for the World' in (Ed) G. Ecclestone, *The Parish Church?*, London, Grubb Institute/Mowbray, 1988. C.f. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1958, IV, ii., Chap. 15, p. 648: 'the true growth... of the community is intensive, not extensive...'.

First, they are all attempting to reach back to the past, to restore 'something' that is deemed to have been 'lost' by the church. Revivals seldom offer something that is entirely new: their credibility depends on it being shown that this was somehow part of the *original* Christian message. Second, revivals arise out of their own distinctive social and cultural genres. They are partly produced by and are reactions against their own society, and are therefore necessarily relevant. Third, revivals often occur during times of social upheaval. The end of an age, the passing of an era, or a particular calamity often produces religious fervour. In times of peace and security, a form of liberalism often thrives. But when, say, society moves *en masse* from an agrarian way of life to an urban one, revivalism can flourish.[11] Social uncertainty can make people flock to a rekindling of religious certainty, and the recovery of *communitas* in church that is being lost in the world. Last, they stress the experience of revival as a key to self-knowledge. Revivalism is not taught but 'caught': in conferences and churches, the necessity of personal experience is brought home to believers in worship, teaching and ministry.

Contemporary Charismatic Renewal has now been going for almost 50 years. Its main roots lie in Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism, and like all revivals, it seeks to exchange the perceived absence of God for a new sense of presence. Pentecostalism was an experiential response to modernity, in much the same way that fundamentalism was a sort of rational (or cognitive) response. Both movements began within a decade of each other, and were reactions against theological and moral liberalism, besides being drives towards embodying a form of religious clarity that could provide an alternative to the muddied waters of increasing pluralism and relativism. Both movements sired their own denominations, seminaries and schisms, as well as developing their own distinctive cultures. Both movements, although now global, were born in the USA, and as such, became the focus for racial tension and division in the years preceding World War II.

After that war, Charismatic Renewal began to emerge as a movement that was deeply syncretic. Modern revivalism was born out of a peculiar alliance. Lapsed fundamentalists were waking up to discover themselves as evangelicals, and those still in Pentecostalism were searching for new emphases on the immanent power of the Holy Spirit. The result was a new stress on revival,

Rational religion and the certainty it brought was valuable: but many people wanted more than this - they

[11] The Great Awakening of the 18th century might be such an example, but it is clearly only a partial explanation for the revivalism of the times.

wanted to *experience* something as well. Faith was not just thinking about God, but feeling him too. This is the *sui generis* of contemporary revivalism. Even those sympathetic to the movement agree that the drive for experience is a key to understanding revivalism. For example, Michael Harper notes that revivalism has had three distinct phases: emphasis on personal renewal (1950's & 60's - the 'Jesus People', and being personally 'born again'), corporate (1970's - denominations begin to accept and inculcate revivalism, but House Churches also begin), and lastly a global phase (1980's - revivalism spreads to the Third World, and then begins to feed-back). Similarly, Peter Hocken notes how this history has affected churches in Britain, bringing a combination of enrichment and challenge to existing denominations.[12]

The distinctive experiential and doctrinal particularities of contemporary revivalism tend to set it apart from classical Pentecostalism. Historically, Pentecostalism arose from a social history of racial oppression, African religion and theological tradition steeped in Wesleyan holiness movements. In contrast, Charismatic Renewal originated from a white, middle-class culture, that was looking beyond Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, for a powerful, tactile and therapeutic religion that addressed the needs of its clientele. Although revivalism is now global, there can be no disguising its bourgeois roots and aspirations.[13] The closer one looks, the more differences begin to emerge. For example, both Pentecostalism and revivalism stress 'Baptism in the Spirit' (a post-conversion experience of the Holy Spirit), but they do not agree on the necessity of *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues).[14] Yet there are many similarities to note. Both movements emphasise healing, enthusiasm, singing and new forms of worship, demonology and angelology, and maybe even health and wealth.[15] The actual occurrence of these emphases varies from culture to culture, which is generally still determined by factors such as class, race, location, denominational affiliation and the like. Perhaps the best model for understanding the linkage is to see charismatics, revivalists and Pentecostals as being part of the same

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[12] See M. Harper, 'Renewal in the Holy Spirit', in (Ed) R. Keeley, *Christianity: A World Faith*, Oxford, Lion, 1986, pp. 102ff, and P. Hocken, *Streams of Renewal: The Origins and Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain*, Exeter, Paternoster, 1986.

[13] For a fuller discussion, see my 'City on a Beach' in (Eds S. Hunt & T. Walters), *Neo-Pentecostalism at the End of the Century*, London, Macmillan, 1997.

[14] Contemporary revivalists, whilst not discouraging this gift, do not regard it as a critical core experience of being baptised in the Spirit.

[15] Harper, 1986, p.105.

extended family (modernist, enthusiastic-experiential religion), but belonging to different branches of the family tree.[16]

Enthusiasm and the Lightness of Being

In spite of the numbers of people involved in contemporary revivalism, there is very little that could be classed as 'charismatic theology'. Like Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism, revivalism has spawned its own seminaries, notable preachers and exponents; but a theologian of national or global significance has yet to emerge. Revivalists tend to appeal to the work of theologians who feed their theological outlook, without they themselves necessarily being paid-up revivalists.[17] There are some exceptions to this rule: historians of revivalism, such as Hollenweger or Hocken have written about charismatic thinking and praxis, but neither has constructed a charismatic theology. Gifted scholars such as Simon Tugwell or David Watson, who clearly can be identified as charismatic, have tended to produce popular 'testimony-teaching' type books, not serious works of scholarship that outline a theology. Indeed, in the recently published *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, there is no entry for 'Theology' at all.[18] Naturally, this does not mean there are no 'doctrines' in revivalism: ideas about the person and work of the Holy Spirit are critical to revivalist identity. However, beyond this, there is unlikely to be a developed Christology, soteriology, doctrine of the church and the like.[19]

This is a vital observation. Why is there so much schism in revivalism? Answer: there is no doctrine of the church, and no theological template for tolerating

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[16] See my *Words, Wonders and Power: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism*, London, SPCK, 1996, Chapter 1.

[17] The work of James Dunn is an obvious example here. See his *Baptism in the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians*, London, SCM, 1979. The works of George Eldon Ladd, James Kallas and Walter Wink are also highly esteemed by revivalists.

[18] *A Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Eds) S. Burgess, G. McGee & P. Alexander, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1988. This is a slightly misleading comment, since there are articles on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and leaders like Edward Irving (1792-1834), are exceptions to the rule. As is the recent volume by Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern*, Oxford, Regnum, 1996.

[19] Some branches of Pentecostalism abandoned the doctrine of Trinity, and became Oneness Pentecostals, believing that baptism in only the name of Jesus was necessary. Soteriological doctrines tend to be quite dualist (Jesus versus Satan), or 'borrowed' from 19th century Evangelical subsitutionary ideas.

plurality. (All that can be said to exist is a notion of gathered homogeneity, which emphasises size). Why is evangelism so poor, numerical growth usually coming from converting people who are already Christians? Answer: revivalism has no soteriology of its own. Why does revivalism apparently succeed so quickly where others have failed for so long before? Answer: there is no real Christology, creeds, sacramental or Trinitarian theology and praxis to burden believers with. Adherents are offered experience, not knowledge. 'Theology', if you can call it that, is done through the hormones and not in the head. Experience always precedes reflection. There is no charismatic exegesis of scripture, only eisegesis.

The observation that contemporary revivalism has no real systematic theology, as such, is not meant to be patronising. There are actually good reasons why this is the case. But let me say something about how revivalism attempts to compensate for the void. First and foremost, revivalism has a strong background in biblical fundamentalism. Whilst not everyone who would identify themselves as charismatic is a fundamentalist, most will be 'fundamentalistic'. That is to say, they will use the Bible in a literalistic, pre-critical fashion, hold their beliefs in a similar way to classic fundamentalists (i.e., intolerant of plurality and liberalism, prone to schism, monologue, etc), and yet be looking for spiritual power that is linked to, but beyond, a tightly defined biblical authority. As one author puts it, revivalism offers 'an eschatologically justified, power-added experiential enhancement'.[20] As one convert puts it: 'Salvation is wonderful, but there was just something missing. I wanted very earnestly to do God's will. I wanted to glorify him. I realised that there was a deeper depth where I could get into the Lord. I hungered and thirsted for this.'[21] Second, revivalism purports to be, at least in part, a movement that has distanced itself from theology. Harvey Cox sees revivalism as the major component in an 'experientialist' movement, that is tired of the arid, over-rational religion of modernity, that was split between liberals and conservatives. Revivalism is a self-conscious religion of experience and feeling, that deliberately pitches itself against too much 'thinking' about

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[20] For further discussion, see R. Spittler, 'Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists?', in K. Poewe (Ed), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1994, pp. 103ff. See also my 'Fundamentalism: A Problem for Phenomenology?' and 'Power and Fundamentalism' in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 10, nos. 1 & 3, 1995.

[21] A testimony quoted in James Hopewell's *Congregation: Stories and Structures*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1987, p.76.

God.[22] Cox is at least partly right in his observation: whenever and wherever I have attended a revivalist gathering, believers are often encouraged to desist from rationalising, to abandon critical faculties, and are instead to 'let God touch their heart'. Last, the absence of a theological, doctrinal or ecclesiological basis makes revivalists incredibly free in their reactions to and inculcation of contemporary culture. Indeed, social relevance is their trademark: they are not bogged down by centuries of tradition, nor do they have much of a past to justify or carry. Thus, they tend to use any theologians or aspect of Christian history selectively, to resource their beliefs,[23] but at the same time eschew a depth of participation in theological, ecclesiological, historical or sociological processes, for fear it will weigh them down. Revivalist religion is essentially a matter of the heart, and works best when it travels lightly.

There are some problems that arise directly out of these observations that relate to the question of charismatic theology. First, although some people claim revivalism is an ecumenical, uniting movement, it tends to be anything but this.[24] History shows that charismatics tend to be highly divisive: each new revival within revivalism brings fresh division and more schism. Contemporary revivalism has no history of uniting denominations, although it sometimes brings together federations of like-minded people. But that is not 'ecumenical', any more than the nation tuning in to *Songs of Praise* is an inter-faith event; it is simply evidence of homogeneity. The reason that ecumenism and unity is difficult to achieve in revivalism is because of the subjective, individualistic nature of the religion.[25] Second, and linked to this point, the worship of contemporary revivalism compounds the problem of persistent ecclesial fracture. Classic revival worship, such as under Wesley, Moody or Edwards, had a tendency to use hymns as didactic material. In the case of Wesley, his theology was actually taught in his hymns and sung by converts. The creeds, sacraments

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[22] H. Cox, *Fire From Heaven, Pentecostalism, Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*, New York, Addison-Wesley, 1994.

[23] See Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 1996, p. 172, etc.

[24] Harper makes this claim (1986), as do others. But if one examines the history of British Restorationism, or of John Wimber's Vineyard, all one sees is wave after wave of schism. Even when charismatic renewal occurs in historic denominations, it often involves division between those who regard themselves as 'real' Christians and those who are dubbed 'traditional' or unregenerate. If revivalism were ecumenical, it would presumably be in dialogue with partner churches on questions of unity, and be open to using the liturgies and practices of other churches. It seldom is.

[25] Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue has been going on for almost 20 years, but the level of contact is low.

and traditions of the church were caught up in 18th and 19th century rhythm: people were partly bound together by shared doctrines. Contemporary revivalism, in contrast, attempts no such thing. It does not supplement sacraments, but replaces them: it is in worship that you meet God, not bread, wine, word or creeds. Furthermore, the function of worship is not didactic but emotive: it is a vehicle to move people closer to God, to 'release' them, to stir the heart. Some songwriters see the contemporary songs as 'not about God, but to him', as the following examples show:

I will be yours, you will be mine
Together in eternity
Our hearts of love will entwined
Together in eternity, forever in eternity.

Lord we ask that You would come right now.
Jesus come and heal us now.
Spirit come and fill us now.
We love You, we love You,
We love You, yes we do.[26]

Consequently, most songs in contemporary revivalism are devoid of serious doctrinal content: they express feelings about or to God. This of course, is no basis for theological or ecclesial unity - it just creates a 'community of feeling' which is always open to the ravages of subjective individualism.[27] Third, the fundamentalistic roots of revivalism also guarantee ecclesial problems. In such communities, it is never the Bible that rules, but always the interpreter.[28] Consequently, some revivalist churches can look quite totalitarian. Even here, there is a theological account for the lack of ecclesial breadth. Although revivalists have done much to promote the Holy Spirit in recent years, there has been no move towards developing a Trinitarian doctrine that could give an ecclesial basis for openness, mutuality and plural forms of sociality. Ironically, the stress on experience in revivalism means that there is no 'coping stone' to

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[26] 'Eternity' by Brian Doerksen, 1994, from *Eternity: Intimate Songs of Praise and Worship*; 'Lord we ask' by Bill Dobrenen, 1982, from *Songs of the Vineyard*: both published by VMI, Anaheim, California. The second song has 'You' in upper case to emphasise that this is the personal name of God for the worshipper.

[27] See S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1978 for a different conception of 'community of feeling'. See also my 'Sweet Rapture: Sublimated Eroticism in Contemporary Charismatic Worship' in (Ed) J. Jobling, *Theology and the Body: Gender Text and Ideology*, Leominster Gracewing/Fowler Wright, forthcoming, and *Words, Wonders and Power*, 1996, Chapter 4.

[28] See K. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism*, London, SCM, 1989.

keep orthodox views together.[29] Schism occurs in revivalism precisely because one person of the Godhead is invariably promoted or ignored over another. There is never any agreement over the basis for ecclesial authority. It is nearly always driven by charisma, authority, power and emotion, and therefore always open to a charismatic counter-coup.

If the 'theology' of revivalism is poor, what exactly is it that keeps revivalism together? Indeed, how has the movement come to be so popular in late modernity and postmodernity? Part of the answer must lie in its 'lightness of being'. Despite the colourful, and at times complex world charismatics live in, there is not much to actually *learn*. But there is plenty to experience. To be charismatic is to belong to a charismatically led church, where the gifts (or charisms) of the Spirit are known and deployed. Revivalism offers healing and a sense of personal renewal to believers. Its theodicy can be dramatically dualist: Jesus versus the devil, Christians and angels versus demons. The worship alternates between being dynamic and 'punchy', to intimate and 'smoochy'. It is above all a questing faith, that sees itself as restoring the values of the Kingdom of God, prior to the return of Christ. Increasingly, it has a millennial edge to it.[30]

Others see it slightly differently. Knox's classic critique of revivalism saw its main function as one of evoking enthusiasm, which might help produce cathartic exchange (i.e., a sudden releasing of emotions might bring benefit), provided rationality was negotiated away. As he says,

> More generally characteristic of the ultrasupernaturalist is a distrust of human thought processes. In matters of abstract theology, the discipline of the intellect is replaced by a blind act of faith. In matters of practical deliberation, some sentiment of inner conviction, or some external 'sign' indicative of divine will, claims priority over common prudence.[31]

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[29] Ironically, it was Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who first suggested that the core of Christianity might not be doctrine, but 'the feeling of absolute dependence' (*The Christian Faith*, 1821). However, this prompted Schleiermacher to conclude that doctrines like the Trinity were necessary as a frame for unity, even if they only looked ornamental, like a coping stone.

[30] See for example the discussion of the 'Toronto Blessing' in Damian Thompson's *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium*, London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996, pp. 139ff. Thompson points out that the 'rupture' of this type of revival provides a 'shot in the arm' for revivalism, as it wanes slightly as it approaches the Millennium.

[31] R. Knox, *Enthusiasms*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1950, p. 585.

James Hopewell's narrative reading of revivalism suggests that charismatics are incurably romantic. Jesus is a hero, the devil a 'baddy'. The romantically-orientated Christian is dissatisfied with convention, and longs for adventures with God - and a happy ending. As one charismatic teacher puts it: 'the Gospel is a bit like *Cinderella* - we are all looking for our Prince Charming.'[32] Jean Jacques Suurmond sees revivalism as a balance between word and spirit in playful interaction.[33] This, he suggests, gives an account for the abundance, freedom and liberality (not liberalism) that revivalism can bring. Similarly, Daniel Hardy and David Ford liken Pentecostalism to what they term 'the Jazz factor'. This sort of religion is neither order or disorder - it is 'non-order', a form of free-flowing directional praise that is both social and transcendent.[34] In my own work, I have suggested that theologically and sociologically, following sociologists such as Meredith McGuire, the movement is best understood in terms of power and charisma, supplemented by distorted notions of love and intimacy that are 'mapped' on to God.[35]

There are dozens of ways in which one could interpret 'charismatic theology', such as it is: sociological, psychological, theological, phenomenological and so on. Some of these studies make important theological points. For example, David Martin, from a sociological perspective, has pointed out in a number of works that revivalism brings 'sacred space' to a mundane and over-crowded urban world. In a cosmos saturated by information, what revivalism offers is a sacralised moment where *feeling* can be recovered, and relationships reconstituted. He may well be right here, but as sociologists such as Steve Bruce and others point out, New Age religion provides the same: is revivalism just a Christian version?[36] So, given the absence of any agreed charismatic theology or a major charismatic theologian, it seems prudent to point out that revivalism is partly a symptom of the postmodern condition. It also suggests that if revivalism, is not a theological movement (or a movement with much theology), it must be another kind of animal. The question is, what?

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[32] Hopewell, *Congregation*, 1987, p.78. The reference to Cinderella comes from Carol Arnott of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship: 'Intimacy with Jesus', 05/07/96, taped talk, unpublished.

[33] See J. Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play*, London, SCM, 1995.

[34] D. Ford & D. Hardy, *Jubilate: Theology in Praise*, London, DLT, 1984.

[35] See M. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1988.

[36] See D. Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1994, and S. Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, Oxford, OUP, 1996.

Ideology, Theology and the Future of Religion

Christian revivalism touches people of all denominations. Yet revivalist are extremely diverse in their theological praxis. Roman Catholics who become charismatic often become more theologically dogmatic, more intensely sacramental, and more devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the other hand, if the same movement touches the Brethren or other Protestant groups, they usually abandon their former ecclesial habits, and go in search of the nearest House Church. No common theological reaction is produced by similar experiences. This is because the movement is founded not on doctrine, creeds, sacraments, or even necessarily the Bible: its main source of being (ontology) is experience and its interpretation.

This lecture is deliberately titled to resonate with Milan Kundera's classic novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*[37] I could have substituted 'lightness' for 'likeness', made more of contemporary revivalism's 'erotic' worship, and pressed the question of the searching for identity. Yet it seems to me that the novel and the charismatic movement share an unease over the issue of weight and lightness. Kundera, using Nietzsche and Parmenides, poses the question neatly: Is lightness positive, and weight negative?[38] Kundera suggests that the lightness of being is ultimately intolerable: we need the weight of being to experience the weight of glory. In contrast, I am suggesting that postmodern revivalism has found a form of faith that suggests the opposite: faith should be light and bearable for believers - this is both its darkness and its achievement. It therefore follows that lightness of being leads to lightness of glory: cheap grace, perhaps? Magic has replaced modernist concepts of myth, religion displaced reality: here is a faith that borders on fantasy. Revivalism, just like the characters in Kundera's novel, are still exploring the relationship between soul and body; words are still misunderstood - but the Great March has already been undertaken.

This may sound like an over-severe judgement, so allow me to qualify it further. A cultural analogy may be appropriate. Many within the charismatic movement claim the outpourings like the 'Toronto Blessing' are forms of 'instant mysticism'.[39] There is no need to live in a religious community any more, be celibate, spend hours in prayer, engage in the cycles of chanting and sacramental contemplation prior to numinous revelation. In the 'Toronto Blessing', you just turn up, plug in, let go...and experience: easy, convenient and instant. Undoubtedly many believe this is legitimate spirituality, but I am more inclined to

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[37] Translated from the Czech by Henry Heim: London, Faber & Faber, 1984.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[39] Private correspondence with a member of the Anglicans for Renewal Council.

see it as the 'McDonaldisation of mysticism'. In making the McDonald's link, I am suggesting that contemporary revivalism is a form of fast-food spirituality: popular, cheap, novel and culturally relevant.[40] But the downside of this equation is what organisations like McDonald's have done to the concepts of eating, food, fellowship and the like. Perhaps the 'Toronto Blessing' is the ultimate revivalist 'snack' - but would you want to live off instant 'food' like that for the rest of your life? Does that form of revivalism have serious and sustaining nutritional properties that provide for a balanced diet? I rather doubt it. One author, a radical contemplative nun, and commenting on popular piety, puts this much more sharply:

> 'Without great respect for learning and depth of research, religious communities move from theology to piety very quickly. Good will, good heart and a great love for God find expression somehow, whether with understanding, sound development and artistry or not. It is not that piety is not good. On the contrary. All the intellectual preparation in the world will not substitute for hours of prayer...It is simply that piety is not enough. Piety without theology, without study, without reflection, turns easily from the scriptural mandate to the therapeutic, to the magical, to the demonstration of the expressive without respect for spiritual consequences. More than one good idea has turned sour for the lack of substance. Piety makes me feel good; theology protects [us] from substituting solely personal reactions for cosmic insights.'[41]

For 'piety', read 'enthusiasm'. The author knows that for all the charisms in the world, intellectual gifts are needed to pursue problems to their causes. Depth of reflection, with real theological resourcing, is vital. There is no point in claiming healing still miracles happen today, unless you are prepared to probe why so many diseases are still with us, and then to challenge the real causes of illness, such as poverty, poor sanitation and ignorance. There is no point in a God who heals minor medical complaints in the M25 Bible Belt, but whose hands are tied when it comes to Bosnia or Burundi. Serious pain needs serious theology, and *real* help.

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[40] C.f. George Ritzer's polemical sociological work, *The McDonaldization of Society*, Thousand Oaks, Calif., Pine Forge Press, 1996. Ritzer points out that 'fast food culture' is riddled with ironies - such as having to queue for food. Interestingly, in the home of the 'Toronto Blessing', believers also have to queue for ministry, in spite of the claims over the immediate and available power of God.

[41] Joan Chittister OSB, *The Fire in the Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*, Leominster, Hereford, Gracewing/Fowler-Wright, 1996, p. 140.

In view of these remarks, I am rather inclined to see revivalism as an 'ideology' in a postmodern setting, that has a theological *gloss*.[42] Christian charismatic communities and churches are extremely diverse in their thinking and ecclesiology. So any attempt to suggest a core ideology that might be generic for the movement would be rightly treated with some suspicion. Indeed, 'ideology' itself has a career as a concept that is equally diverse, so one might be doubly cautious. Let me briefly clarify how the term 'ideology' might be understood to operate here. David McLellan sees ideology as a product of pluralism, or rather as a reaction to it. Following Habermas, McLellan sees ideology emerging as a legitimisation of powers that serves competing sectional interests in an increasingly fragmented world. As 'universal dogmas' disintegrate and traditional myths begin to lose their social currency, smaller ideologies are born to replace them. Therefore, in a postmodern world, it is appropriate to speak of a pluriverse of ideologies that all convey different types of vision and argue for different forms of 'normal' behaviour, even if that turns out to be 'alternative'.[43]

The postmodern context is important for understanding contemporary revivalism. Postmodernism believes in the fracturing of modernist metanarratives and their associated concepts of 'truth', which were largely achieved through assorted 'philosophies of suspicion'. The postmodern mind suspects modernist ideology and metanarratives of foolishness and oppression, but probably only replaces the former with smaller, more avowedly local ideologies. There is no sign yet that postmodernity can produce anything that is more liberating (or oppressive) than modernist ideology, especially since the liberating strategy seems to be mostly content with subjective, individualistic interpretation. In other words, there is no deep truth, only 'surface meaning'. Playfulness is also a theme of postmodernity. When I visited the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship recently, worshippers were invited to get 'soaked' in a 'spiritual car wash': pastors lined up to form a channel of soaking prayer, and as believers passed through the line, they were 'brushed and sprayed' with the anointing power of God. Hundreds passed through this 'spiritual car wash'.[44] Revivalists love *any* model of ministry that

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[42] Indeed, one leading charismatic proponent of the 'Toronto Blessing' wrote to me recently, suggesting that it might be a *bad* development if charismatic renewal acquired a theology of its own. (Private correspondence).

[43] See D. McLellan, *Ideology*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1995, pp.2-4, etc.

[44] See my *Catching the Fire: The Sociology of Exchange and Power in the Toronto Blessing*, Oxford, Latimer House, 1996/ University of Waterloo Press, Ontario, Canada, 1997 [Monograph].

delivers power and intimacy, no matter how playful or mechanistic'[45] In view of this, it is appropriate to suggest that contemporary revivalism should be seen as a post-modern movement, partly because it lacks a theology. What it has, in place of this, is a subliminal axial micro-ideology (based on distorted but popular concepts of divine love and power), grounded on the interpretation of experience, with various 'borrowed' theological components constantly being added or set aside. It is a *movement*, and as such, cannot afford to stand still.[46]

In terms of revivalism as an ideology rather than a theology, I have taken Habermas at face value here, although I am mindful of his critics. In speaking of an ideology, I mean a kind of 'social system'[47] that is regulative and transforming: it is a unity of language, science and ideas that provides a form of coherence. Revivalism has its own vibrant culture: books, tee-shirts, holidays, music and magazines - its a world of its own. In this respect, Habermas is close to Geertz, who sees ideology as a 'cultural system',[48] and again to McLellan who more systematically describes it as 'a system of signs and symbols in so far as they are implicated in an asymmetrical distribution of power and resources'.[49] What revivalism ultimately offers to adherents is a sense of 'romantic' love, new forms of religious empowerment, adventurous innovation that goes beyond 'tradition', and above all, the reconstitution of relationships. Like all ideologies, for some, it is liberating. For others, it is ultimately found to be dominating, and the initial, liberating force of the 'good news' is eventually lost to totalitarian structures and leadership. This phenomena is well-charted in British Restorationism.[50]

So what of the future for revivalism? Will the bubble eventually burst, or will it continue to accelerate in numerical growth? Some concluding remarks. First,

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[45] The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship is home to the 'Toronto Blessing'. For a discussion of 'mechanistic' tendencies in revivalism, see Hopewell, *Congregation*, 1987.

[46] For further discussion on the postmodern condition, see D. Lyon, *Postmodernity*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1995; S. Connor, *Postmodern Culture*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989; J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1984; and A. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995.

[47] See J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, London, Heinemann, 1978, p. 314.

[48] See C. Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System', in *Ideology and Discontent*, Ed. D. Apter, New York, Free Press, 1964, p.64.

[49] McLellan, *Ibid*, p.83.

[50] See A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (2nd Edition), London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1988.

without an adequate theology, the movement itself will continue to fragment at the same rate it grows.[51] There is already evidence to suggest that some in the movement are tired of a community that is mainly configured through feeling - but the search for a theology may prove illusive for a movement that essentially works by abrogating rationality.[52] Second, as Weber noted, the quality of charisma is subject to routinisation.[53] Movements that began by selling themselves as *not* being a new denomination, but a restoration of God's kingdom, still have to ponder how they organise themselves for the next century. Inevitably, habits and methods become fixed, worship becomes concretised or stylised, simply in order to maintain an identity. Sometimes they can become quite repressive: theocracies governed by Elders, that offer 'redemptive domination'. Third, the relentless appeal to (reified) power, such as miracles, looks increasingly suspect as time goes on. Some within revivalism have pointed out that for all the talk of healing, there is an 'amazing gap between the rhetoric and the reality'.[54] Furthermore, the types of illness and people claimed to be healed are often bourgeois and unremarkable, in stark contrast to Jesus' healings, who focussed on the poor and dispossessed, not the middle-class and one or two friends.[55] Perhaps revivalism, with its emphasis on power and intimacy, just creates a 'placebo effect' for people with certain conditions, which somehow makes them feel better. As one writer puts it, 'in the midst of all this [revivalism] we have barely touched the world' with all its problems and poverty.[56]

As we have already noted, Bishop Butler cursed the enthusiasm of the primitive Methodists. In view of what I have said, he might have been right to do so - but I'm not so sure in the final analysis. The resurgence of enthusiastic religion holds up a mirror to the church, and challenges the identity and claims of over-rational

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[51] See A. Walker, T. Smail & N. Wright, *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology*, London, SPCK, 1992.

[52] See A. Walker, 'From Revival to Restoration', *Social Compass: International Review of Socio-Religious Studies*, 1985, vol. 32: 'Take away the experience and there is no charismatic movement' (p. 263). See also D. Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical*, London, SPCK, 1995.

[53] See M. Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the world religions' in (Eds) H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York, OUP, 1946, p.295.

[54] See N. Wright, *Renewal*, no. 153, 1989, p.12 and N. Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millennium*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, p. 192.

[55] On Jesus' miracles as social justice for the poor and dispossessed, see my 'Christ the Healer: Modern Healing Movements and the Imperative of Praxis for the Poor', *Studies in World Christianity*, vol. 1, no. 2.

[56] N. Cuthbert, *Charismatics in Crisis*, Eastbourne, Kingsway, 1994, p. 14.

religion. All too frequently, the debate between the rationalists and the enthusiasts is conducted in polemical terms. The rhetoric is littered by the incautious use of labels such as 'dead' and 'alive', 'sane' and 'silly'. For example, fans of 'new wave' charismatic worship often accuse the Church of England of 'dying of good taste'. The rejoinder is obvious - it is better than dying of bad taste. It is true, in one sense, that the Church of England goes nowhere very much, and does this quite slowly, and over a long period of time. But is going nowhere very fast - arguably the speciality of some charismatics - really any better? Alan Bennett, in *Writing Home*, notes that 'an enthusiastic Anglican is a contradiction in terms'.[57] He is making a fair point with respect to Anglican identity, but this should not be the final word. A synthesis between rationality and enthusiasm is possible. As Archbishop Runcie once suggested, the ideal form of Anglicanism is a 'passionate coolness'.[58] In the end, both rationalists and enthusiasts need to heed the same warning, once echoed by Niebuhr and Bonhoeffer: 'woe to the church that succeeds in the world - it will have failed.'

The future for an enthusiastic Christian movement without a real theology is potentially troublesome. It has no way of preventing schism, lacks depth in discernment, colludes in social abrogation, and may well be a spent force in a new millennium.[59] Then again, a movement that stresses personal empowerment, intimacy and love, yet is 'doctrine-lite' (but still with all the fizz of New Wine), innovative and novel, may actually turn out to be a highly popular *credo* for a third millennium. Many mainstream denominations, for the moment at least, seem content to supplement their diets with the spice of enthusiastic, paranormal and esoteric religion. As one Anglican charismatic Vicar explained to me recently, they have not 'sold out' to the consuming fire of total revivalism - they have just been 'warmed in a gentle way'[60] - influenced, but not possessed. Passion and enthusiasm may be dish of the day, but it is not the only item on the menu. For a Western world that is increasingly privatised and individualistic, a postmodern, enthusiastically-driven religion may be the one that proves to be the most popular in the next millennium: yet that is no guarantee of ultimate longevity. Enthusiastic religion is a fashion full of fads, a populist, culturally-relative and relevant phenomena. We should learn to read the signs: the craze of today is usually tommorrow's footnote in the history of revivalism.

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[57] London, Faber and Faber, 1994.

[58] For a fuller discussion, see A. Hastings, *Robert Runcie*, London, Mowbray, 1991, p.160.

[59] For a fuller discussion, see my 'City on a Beach' in (Eds T. Walters & S. Hunt), *Neo-Pentecostalism at the End of the Century*, London, Macmillan, 1997.

[60] Private correspondence.

Appendix

Fundamentalism

As a term, 'fundamentalism' is arguably so broad and pejorative as to be almost useless. Nevertheless, in connection with religion, the word still carries weight as a signifier of attitude, temperament, doctrine and ideology. There is a great deal of literature on the subject from a variety of perspectives. James Barr, Martin Marty, Kathleen Boone, Nancy Ammermann, George Marsden and Ernest Sandeen are continuous contributors to debates about its origin, direction and ethos. Their critiques are broadly socio-theological, but extensive psychological and anthropologoical treatments are also available. Three quick introductions to the field are: *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Eds H. Kung & J. Moltmann, Concilium, 1992/3, SCM Press; 'Fundamentalism' in *The Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol 10, nos 1 & 3.; and 'Fundamentalism', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought*, Oxford, 1993. Other religious and theological dictionaries or encyclopaedias are also instructive.

History: In terms of Christianity, it is a recent movement, opposed to 'the mixed offerings of modernity'. It takes its name from *The Fundamentals*, a series of pamphlets issued in the USA between 1910 and 1915: a world conference on fundamentals was convened in Philadelphia in 1919, in reaction to liberally inclined theology. In part, this precipitated the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. Its spiritual roots lie in revivalism, holiness movements, nonconformity and an assortment of sectarian responses to the world. In terms of more recent history, 'fundamentalism' has matured into a more comprehensive (postmodern) response that fights on various fronts, often in a sophisticated way (e.g., TV, radio, political lobbying, etc). Similarly, Islamic fundamentalism fights against secularism, Western imperialism/colonialisation, social and economic injustice, nominal Islam, 'impure' Islam, Zionism/Israel and the Power of Non-Muslim world.

Character: Martin Marty sees Fundamentalism almost entirely as a matter of 'fighting'. He also notes how the 'mindset' is reliant on control and authority, echoing Boone, Barr, etc. 'Diamond structure': clarity, certainty, control & colour. How are we to define and explain such a complex movement? Five observations may be made:

1. 'Backward-looking legitimisation': inductive reasoning.
2. Dialectical - exists in opposition to something.

3. A tendency, a habit of the heart or mind.
4. Transdenominational, as well as sectarian. Disseminated.
5. 'Cultural-linguistic': believers offered a 'sacred canopy' under which to shelter from the threats of modernity, pluralism, etc. A complete 'world' that can be developed to take on other world-views.

In talking about fundamentalism, it is important to remember that although (allegedly) innerrant texts frequently play a part, other 'agents' may operate just as effectively as fundaments: a Pope or guru, a type of experience or even a moral code can all function just as programatically.

Revivalism

If fundamentalism can be seen as a reaction to modernity, then it might be reasonable to suppose that modern revivalism, sometimes called charismatic renewal or neo-pentecostalism, is a reaction to postmodernity. That is to say, experience has become the ground of ecclesial being. There are a number of accessible treatments on revivalism: Meredith McGuire, Andrew Walker, and David Martin are amongst the best.

History: Christian revivals have existed since the genesis of Christianity. Primarily, they are a communal experience, centred on a sense of recovering of some (lost?) aspect of pneumatology, or they are 'holiness-driven'. However, in the study of revivals, it is usually prudent to distinguish between pre and post-Finney (i.e., his handbook of 1835). Prior to the nineteenth century, revivals seem to have occurred 'naturally', even though they were nearly always complimented by (or produced by?) massive social upheaval, such as agrarian collapse leading to urbanisation, the context for Wesley, Edwards, etc. Post-Finney revivals were more obviously 'engineered': tent crusades, rallies and conferences, leading up to the 'hi-tech' sophistication of the 'Toronto Blessing'. The history of institutional revivalism in the West is transatlantic. Studies on 'Faith/Rhema Movements', the House Church Movement, and charismatic renewal are becoming numerous.

The exception to this historical description is of course Pentecostalism. Beginning with the 'Azusa Street Revival' in L A, Pentecostalism became a denomination and a major force within global Christianity. Martin's treatment of Pentecostalism in South America (1990) charts the rapid rise of the movement there. Estimates of numbers run from 100 to 400 million globally, by the end of the century. The transdenominational character of the movement has given rise to movements as diverse as Spring Harvest and the Mother of God communities.

Character: As with fundamentalism, issues of control, clarity, certainty and colour are central. What revivalists are especially concerned with is the 'reification of divine power as a tangible sign that God is in their midst'. This could be prophecy, miracles of healing or speaking in tongues, or a 'signs and wonders' ministry. The reification is vital, since it is a counter power in a postmodern age. An instructive way of looking at revivalism that works sociologically, psychologically and theologically is to use the analogy of 'circuits' of power. Imagine a circuit diagram: the agent as 'infallible nodal point', a leader as 'switch/interpreter', the battery as source of power, a bulb as 'power concentrated for a particular task'. The power flows through the circuit inductively.

The future for revivalism looks increasingly fragmented as the millennium approaches. Sociological studies indicate that the volatile nature of charisma makes institutionalisation unpredictable (e.g., the shift between R1 and R2 churches). Equally, the attractiveness of the movement lies in its immediacy, and in the guarantee of access to power. Some groups are becoming 'communitarian' (popular in the 70's), others millennarian, sectarian, esoteric or libertarian The millennium itself will be an agent of change.

Biographical Note

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Professor Richard Roberts

Order and Organisation:
The Future of Institutional and Established Religion

Introduction

Futurology is a notoriously inexact science, and so an invitation to address the theme of the future of institutional and established religion under the rubric of order and organisation involves taking certain risks. A prophet would of course be permitted to venture such a risk; but as a practitioner of the interdisciplinary cluster named "religious studies", I am obliged in this instance to take up a far more pragmatic approach to a complex and many-sided problem. The terms of the undertaking: "order", "organisation", "institution" and "Establishment", are all patent of further detailed exploration into which we cannot enter here. Moreover, having never been an ordained minister of the Church by law established in England, and having for the most part lived and worked on the nothern peripheries of England and in Scotland, I do not intend to address the fraught, but to my mind rather marginal issue of the actual mechanics of Establishment. Neither have I, unlike the immediately preceding Gresham Divinity Lecturer Lecturer, Dr Martin Percy, pursued recent field research in English parish churches; my own Christian experience has been in Scotland and my research concerned with newly emergent types of religiosity, subsumable, perhaps, under the all-embracing term "nature religion"[1].

What I can perhaps offer is an account, albeit provocative, of what Christian churches in England, and not least the Church of England, are likely to become, given present societal developments and their translation and uncritical implementation as both policy and polity within the Church. I argue on the assumption that a critical interpretation of the societal collusions of institutional and established religion is a necessary corelate of its proper theological appraisal. Thus I shall maintain that the

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1 See Joanne Pearson, Richard Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (eds.) (forthcoming), *Nature Religion Today*.

marketisation[2] and general embourgeoisement of British society in late modernity and under postmodernising conditions provides general socio-cultural parameters and relevant anologies which in turn allow us to understand more fully the implications of the Church's assimilation of the managerial revolution. This is one important way of seeing how a religious tradition which originates in pre-modernity, undergoes critique and accommodation in modernity, may now operate in the "condition of postmodernity". On such a basis we could imagine a number of possible futures for institutional and established religion and these could imply different, even incommensurable patterns of order and organisation, which might nonetheless co-exist within the common framework provided by a shared funding base and by Establishment.

In their recent book, *Strategic Church Leadership*[3], Professors Robin Gill (Advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury) and Derek Burke (former Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia at Norwich) have moved the process of the managerial integration of the Church of England a step beyond the executive re-structuring proposed by the Turnbull Report, *Working as One Body*[4] towards the implementation of a system of quality audit and performance appraisal that invite, indeed will inevitably reproduce within the Church, patterns of human abuse characteristic of society at large. I contend that Gill and Burke's representation of the managerial modernisation of institutional and established religion as merely a value-free correction of inefficiency by the implementation of "accountability" is seriously misleading, and that the adaptation

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2 See special issue on *Ecclesiology and the Culture of Management, Modern Theology*, 9/4, October 1993.

3 Robin Gill and Derek Burke (1996), *Strategic Church Leadership*, London: SPCK.

4 *Working as One Body, The Report of the Archbishop's Commission on the Organisation*, London: Church House Publishing, 1995.

of the Church to the market model is not inherently unproblematic[5]. Unless such developments are matched by the enablement and entrenchment of a critical and emancipatory cultural practice, informed by an enhanced capacity to reflect not simply upon the processes through which Christian self-identity may evolve, but also upon the conditions of production of such a Gospel itself, then the religious professionals at the grass-roots of the Church will simply become the living tools of a top-down managerial hierarchy. Even worse, such a take-over may terminally damage the churches' capacity to perform in their own way vital *religious* tasks in the ever more controlled society in which we live. It is at this juncture, that of enhancing ecclesial reflexivity and integral cultural practices, where the Church theologian and the professional should exercise a role not so much, as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman might argue, as *legislators*, but as *interpreters*. If as, Gill and Burke propose, an outdated paradigm consisting in the crass Taylorite style of management imposed by governmental fiat upon the universities is simply transferred to the churches, then the consequences may well be dire. Given, however, that the perceived right of management to manage consciousness and identity is a fundamental characteristic of the late modernity in which we live, then even to raise the question as to whether a professional employee might have some sort of right to think and act - or even to possess retain personal identity - may well excite strident resistance on the part of those who seek to orchestrate and conduct the music of the soul of the nation.

So contextualised, institutional and established religion cannot be regarded as somehow miraculously exempt from the influence of cultural transformations in society at large. Above all, with a tradition which has valued its accommodatory Erastianism and a capacity to subsist in terms of a *via media* between conflicting theological and

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5 See my forthcoming article, "The Bishop as Manager? - Some Observations on the Turnbull Report", in Andrew Walker and Lawrence Osborne (ed.), Harmful Religion, London: Mowbrays.

societal alternatives (and a general avoidance of serious interrogative thought), we have grounds to anticipate that, all things being equal, a shallow pattern of accommodation will repeat itself. This brief critical analysis of the cultural politics of contemporary English and indeed British religion is intended as a quiet warning. A struggle for the future is now taking place; we still have time to pause and reflect. In taking up a critical attitude towards the theologically-legitimated managerial celebration of power in British institutional and established religion proposed by both *Working as One Body* and *Strategic Church Leadership*, I acknowledge the general influence of my teacher, the late Professor Donald MacKinnon, together with his life-long concern with the systemic abuse of ecclesiastical power which requires the unrelenting "kenosis of establishment"[6]. My paper is also inspired by the playright and President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, whose essay, "The Power of the Powerless" (1978), summarises with exemplary relevance a task which equally for theologian and for all people of goodwill. In reality we face, Havel argued:

> "The profound crisis of human identity brought on by living within a lie, a crisis which in turn makes such a life possible, certainly possesses a moral dimension

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6 I commented as follows some years ago on the prospects for Anglican ecclesiology in "Lord, Bondsman and Churchman: Integrity, Identity and Power in Anglicanism", in Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (eds.) (1989), *One Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark:

> ...if the Christian Gospel has to do with freedom, love or grace then it has to do with the affirmation of the other. Neither the traditional Anglican ecclesiology with which we began nor the sophisticated rethinking of authority and, as power, its unneurotic celebration in an Anglican Church of the future can, by any stretch of the intellectual imagination, be regarded as theologies of liberation" (p. 223).

> as well; it appears, among other things, as a deep moral crisis in society. A person who has been seduced by the consumer value system, whose identity is dissolved in an amalgam of the accoutrements of mass civilization, and who has no roots in the order of being, no sense of responsibility for anything higher than his or her own personal survival, is a *demoralized* person. The system depends on this demoralization, deepens it, is in fact a projection of it into society."[7]

What might it imply to be rooted in the order of being in today's Britain? What might it imply to retain a sense of responsibility to something higher than individual personal survival? Correspondingly, what should be the roots of institutional and established religion in a de-traditionalised, postmodern-tending, consumer society? We cannot assume that some hidden power will miraculously preserved an immaculate Church from collusion or seduction with the banalisation of life characteristic of mass consumer society; yet we can at least question such assimilation.

We can, moreover, ask how we might be *remoralized* after the demoralization that has, since 1979, stripped out all intrinsic virtues, ruthlessly converted use to exchange values, commodified history as heritage, recast human identities as mere life-style choice, drawn the management of crime and security into regimes of profitability, and subsumed individual and professional responsibility into the command-obedience relation of the Taylorite model of management in the vast array of newly-created low-trust environments where professionalism is subverted and destroyed.

If institutional and established religion is not simply to collude in a future New Erastianism, then its *order and organisation* are matters of some importance. Will, can, or, indeed, *should* institutional and established religion seek to avoid the reinforcement within the Church of a series of transformations in accordance with new

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7 Vaclav Havel, Jan Vladislav (ed.) (1987), "The Power of the Powerless", *Living in Truth*, London: Faber and Faber, p.62.

and infinitely seductive patterns of compliance? Even more radically, should it resist and challenge such aggregration?

The articulation of such questions might suggest an optimism that I do not share, not least because of my experience in universities. Regardless, I still think it worth trying to expose and expound some of the new cultural contradictions of conteporary religion in the interests of a more open future. What I thus propose is something of a "first theology" in an era in which the invisibility of structure of our own social construction is a condition of the obedient performativity characteristic of late modernity. Let us examine the imminent future of institutional and established religion as it moulds itself to *modern managerialism* under *postmodernising conditions*.

I Neo-Erastianism: a new Managerial Order in the Church

The recent Turnbull Report, *Working as One Body*, addressed the matter of senior executive control at, as it were board level in the Church of England. Now Professors Robin Gill (Advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury) and Derek Burke (former Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia at Norwich) have in their recent book, *Strategic Church Leadership*, move the process of integration a step further along the path towards the managerial normalisation of the Church.

Gill and Burke argue that:

> *If church leaders had looked to the modern university or business worlds during the same period of time, they might have seen how finances and strategy could have been managed more effectively and accountably in a similar period of change* (Gill and Burke, their emphasis, pp. 12-13).

Taking the recent experience of British universities as a worthy example, and the Book of Acts as their biblical mandate, Gill and Burke propose the revitalisation of the Church through SWOT analysis of the analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the owned mission statement and goal setting, strict

quantificatory accountability, a comprehensive Audit culture, and so on. The proposed mission statement for the churches (which closely follows the requirements of the Turnbull Report) runs as follows[8]:

> *The central aim of the churches in modern Britain is the communal worship of God in Christ through the Spirit, teaching and moulding as many lives and structures as deeply as possible through this worship* (Gill and Burke, p. 48).

Correspondingly, resource allocation should always be: "absolutely in line with agreed priorities; as fair as possible; open and accountable: there must be no secret pockets". The total organisation requires complete transparency and the elimination of interstices for the occurence of the unanticipated (and thus the unaccountable); consequently we migh well wonder whether there is going to be room in the managed Church for the still small voice of God's grace that baffles all quantification. In summary (and question-begging) terms, Gill and Burke argue on the basis of an unargued inclusiveness expressed through the use of collective personal pronouns that:

> What does strategic leadership mean? Quite simply it means taking the change that affects us all, and channelling it so that it takes us in the way we want to go (Gill and Burke, pp. 12-13).

Thus in more general terms,

> Strategic planning would treat the fostering of communal worship of God in Christ through the Spirit as the chief priority of the churches. The extent to which the churches lead more rather than fewer people to take part in such worship could clearly be monitored. Naturally it would be important to keep a careful qualitative sheck on this worship and particularly on the (sometimes fairly elusive) ways in which worship might teach and mould both individual lives and structures. After the sad events that surrounded the bold liturgical

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8 References to "the churches" rather than "the Church of England" are indicative of Gill and Burke's ambitions for *all* British churches.

experiement, the Nine O'Clock Service, at Sheffield, this point hardly needs to be stressed. Checks on outcomes - are the theme... (and) are an essential part of a strategic process. Accountability is both a theological and an ethical requirement (Gill and Burke, pp. 69-70).

Whilst we would not wish to deny the undoubted need for *appropriate* forms of accountability, such responsibility should be the result of properly informed negotiation and fully compatible with the inherent character of the task in hand. Such negotiation will require a renewed understanding of the nature of professional agency and the extension of human rights theory and practice into the sphere of psychological and spiritual identity[9]. Setting aside Gill and Burke's assumption that all parties are automatically included in and endorsing the process of managerialisation through the imputed and transgressive "we", let us look in a little more detail at the consequences of enforced change upon the formation of identity and the integrity of the individual. Gill and Burke argue that:

> The changing world calls for a new style of leadership - but one that is rather closer to that of Acts than is the consensus style of leadership which still predominates in British churches (Gill and Burke, pp. 74).

In classic Taylorian terms, Gill and Burke handed over imagination, thought, agency and control to management:

> On this new understanding, church leaders would be free to provide and foster vision - theological, moral and strategic - and to enable this vision to be realized by the whole church. It would be their job as strategic leaders to think,

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9 See R. H. Roberts study of the instrumental use of spiritual techniques in management training in "Power and Empowerment: New Age Managers and the Dialectics of Modernity/Postmodernity", in R. H. Roberts (ed.), Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 180-98.

plan prayerfully, to coax, to monitor, to help others to learn, and, above all, to identify and enhance opportunities for qualitative and quantitative growth and to be firm about subsidized projects projects that do not promote growth. Only by carefully monitoring outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, would they be able to do their job effectively (Gill and Burke, p. 86)[10].

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10 Taylor wrote that:

Under the old type of management, success depends almost entirely upon getting the 'initiative' of the workman, and it is indeed a rare case in which this initiative is really attained. Under scientific management the 'initiative' of the workmen (that is their hard work, their goodwill and their ingenuity) is obtained with absolute uniformity and to a greater extent than is possible under the old system; and in addition to this improvement on the part of the men, the managers assume new burdens, new duties and responsibilities never dreamed of in the past. The managers assume for instance, the burden of gathering together of the traditional knowledge which in the past has been possessed by the workman and then of classifying, tabulating and reducing this knowledge to rules, laws and formulae which are immensely helpful to the workman in doing their daily work. Frederick W. Taylor, 'The Principles of Scientific Management' in Scientific Management, Harper, 1947. (First published 1911.). In Victor H. Vroom and Edward L. Deci, Management and Motivation Selected Readings, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, 1992), p. 357. As Peter Drucker has recently observed, it only now that the full application of Taylor's ideas to intellectual production has become possible. Gill and Burke show that ther are yet further opportunities for their implementation in organised religion and the spiritual life.

According to Gill and Burke, it is necessary to move from consensus leadership and incremental budgeting to a strategic, vision-led and "owned" style. In justification they cite (very selectively) the management guru Peter Senge:

> The new view of leadership in learning organizations centers on subtler and more important task. In a learning organizations, leaders are designers, stewards and teachers. they are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models - that is they are responsible for learning[11].

This allusion is, however, misleading and merely decorative, for such emancipation and empowerment is not what has been imposed in the universities, nor is it what is in reality envisaged for the churches. The problem of managerial assimilation is rather more complex and problematic than Gill and Burke allow: both the older universities and institutional and established churches share many features in a common past, above all a pyramidal structure of control inherited from a pre-modern, medieval era which militates against the non-oppressive and non-transgressive implementation of the somewhat implausible discourse of employee "ownership" of the "vision" generated by management leaders.

Burke and Gill concede that for those who identify too closely with their roles as employees, the process of managing the change that they claim "we" all want may have catastrophic outcomes; but the future does not lie with such inflexible employees. The Book of Acts provides exemplary parameters as to the degree of resolution that genuinely effective management may require, hence the instructive charaxcter of the example of Ananias and Sapphira (they are both struck down dead for the concealment

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11 *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Company*, Century Business 1992, p. 340.

of fraud)[12]. This might in effect seem to imply that strategic leadership (i.e. effective managers) must feel empowered to press ahead with change regardless of personal consequences, for the end (performance and viability) justifies the means (an audit culture). Such a radicalisation and application of the managerial model is be curiously reminiscent of Lenin, who once famously observed that there can be no omelette without breaking eggs.

The Gill/Burke proposals in reality may go well beyond the experience of universities. Whilst certain academics may preserve an anchronistic yet still compelling sense of vocation (and consequent internalisation of professional identity) their number might well be limited; they may in large measure be readily induced to accept the shallow, mutable identity of mere "life-style choice" (Anthony Giddens). By contrast, the Church has traditionally assumed vocational motivation as the necessary condition of its ministry, so the "death" on the level of priesthood of a relatively autonomous professional (and inescapeably personal) identity may be more frequently required. Doubtless some Christian professionals may gain comfort from the scriptural precedent of Ananias and Sapphira in the Book of Acts which strangely legitimates Gill and Burke's radical approach to the promotion of change. The implications of this kind of approach to the control of organisations are noted with characteristic insight by the French cultural theorist, Jean Francois Lyotard:

> Whenever efficiency (that is, obtaining the desired effect) is derived from a "Say or do this, or else you'll never speak again," then we are in the realm of terror, and the social bond is destroyed[13].

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12 Acts 5, 1-11. No-one who had ever heard Donald MacKinnon expound the problematic character of this passage could possible regard the use of it as implying approval of a particular mode of Church management as anything other than dubious in the extreme.

13 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), *From Modernity to Postmodernism: An*

A complex, almost silent and largely unaccountable process of *constructive dismissal* may well take place in the churches, as is happening both in the universities and in other sectors of society where many thousands of experienced staff fade exhausted and disillusioned into premature retirement, deprived of making their mature contribution to the vital processes of education, care and socialisation in a demoralized nation. For the Church, the result could be the equivalent of the expulsion of the Non-Jurors, or even perhaps (as Lord Conrad Russell has argued as with regard to universities), a psychic disruption unmatched since the suppression of the monasteries.

The implementation of the customer-provider principle in churches as in the universities the elimination of the "...thoughtless use of subsidy" (Gill and Burke, p. 17), and the setting in place of the "owned", enforceable mission statement provide the framework for the introduction of a quantifiable audit culture(Gill and Burke, p. 43). This emphasis in the mission statement upon "teaching and moulding" implies a top-down mechanism for impressing worshippers; an image of the machine press stamping sheets of plain steel comes to mind. This is a mission statement that legitimates a power-play of performativity; yet in reality it implies a formal mechanistic approach that invites the enactment of the spiritual equivalent of cloning.

Such a system might be tolerable if it left the identity of the priest (or academic) to the soul and to God. Such a freedom is not envisaged; as with the imposition of "graduateness" in the universities, so in the churches consistency will require measurable attributes of similarity in both producer and product. "Total quality management" is a total and a totalising system: it requires the willed conformity of mind and soul. Thus, Gill and Burke advance their reform agenda:

> However difficult it is to write clear, unambiguous criteria for such professionals as university lecturers or parish priests, it does need to be done (Gill and Burke, p. 84).

Anthology, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 498).

Those familiar, like some of my students, with working at McDonalds, or who have experience with certain forms of health service training, and the newly arrived "graduateness"[14] will know that we are not simply talking about values, principles or an ethos, but about the conscious formulation of psycho-behavioural profiles, that is conformity to defined human templates which must be scrupulously reproduced through training enforced by imposition of comprehensive "Quality circles". This is a managerial vision of order, regularity and predictability to be gained by the psycho-behavioural equivalent of cloning. Thus as graduates will have to conform to a given disciplinary template marked according (as things now stand) to eight criteria (including psycho-motor skills), so, if (Gill and Burke are serious in their intent) priests should exhibit "priestness", and Christians "Christianness" in accordance with the relevant agreed templates. Quality audit will ensure that the quantity and "quality" of individuals so produced will be satisfactory and represent value for money. Whether, as has been the case in some universities, the Church will opt for the implementation of British Standard 5750 and ISO 9000 in the production of Christians units is not yet clear; yet again, consistency on Gill and Burke's part would require it. This might seem ludicrous, were it not for the proud implementation of British Standards and ISO's in some areas of higher education which provide the model for Gill and Burke's reform.

Any individual of genuine integrity will know that the performative appraisal of provider/customer relationships in health and education, never mind religion, *inevitably* creates a troubling tension in professionals who retain some sense of relative autonomy and a personal responsibility to their patients and clients. They will exist between the tactics required to increase productive "score" and the human integrity which requires

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14 In universities, "graduateness" (the objective, quantifiable correspondence of each graduate in any given discipline with a pre-determined eight category psycho-behavioural template) will ensure uniform "quality" in the value-added to unit outcomes (i.e. what used to be called "students").

that we treat human beings as sentient, thinking creatures, and as moral agents; in other words the latter implies that we should address human beings as ends in themselves, and not simply as means of self- or organisational maximisation. Thus one may encounter both the ruthless academic and the priest who are an expert scorers, paragons of performance, but who are not, in Havel's language *rooted in being*. On a more banal level, academics and priests can act like the policeman who rather than tackle serious crime will lurk at a tricky road junction and painlessly fill out a quota of charges and convictions.

Such visions of the present of the university and the intimated future of the Church are deeply questionable: there should be something better. At the very least, in the language of Emmanuel Levinas, human beings are to be encountered as *faces* and as the "Others" who demand our ultimate attention.

II Religion and the "postmodern condition"

What is proposed for the churches and the Church of England by Professor Gill and Burke may seem eccentric to those unacquainted with the rigours of the managerial revolution. For those who have undergone the reconfiguration of their identities opinions will vary as to the legitimacy of scheme outlined in *Strategic Church Leadership*. Interestingly, however, the strategy Gill and Burke propose corresponds with wider arguments about cultural change. When we draw upon the conceptual framework of the modern/postmodern problematic, parallels may be articulated which justify our claim that the Gill and Burke's plan envisages a questionable Erastian accommodation to contemporary social conditions. It is often thought (in rather superficial terms) that the so-called "postmodern condition" proposes the universal necessity of identity-formation in a cultural marketplace of opportunities, where participant selves compete on basically equal terms, having lost their traditional foundations. It is possible to argue, not least on the basis of the prescient ideas of a founding father of the "postmodern condition" himself, Jean-Francois Lyotard, that for

those who are not members of the mutually self-affirmatory cohorts of the managerial elite, this "condition" affords a far darker prospect than might superficially appear to be the case.

According to Lyotard in his famous "Report on Knowledge", the "need for proof" is emphasised in a society dominated by scientific knowledge which "replaces traditional knowledge or knowledge based on revelation"[15]. Many of may us may be familiar with the ensuing consequences for theology of this secularising displacement: theology lost its central integrative role as provider of the ideas and practices that helped maintain a pre-modern social order. What, however, it is important to recognise is that Lyotard uses the term "modern" to

> "designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth"[16]

In other words, *modernity* provides rival comprehensive ways of thinking, speaking, writing and doing which are examples of which are the Hegelian option and Protestant theology, interpretative sociology, Enlightenment rationality, Marxism and capitalism itself. Thus modernity confronts pre-modernity as rival narrative accounts of the human condition. By contrast, Lyotard famously defines "postmodern" as,

> incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being

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15 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 496.

16 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 482.

> dispersed in clouds of language narrative elements - narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable[17].

Thus instead of addressing and understanding the human condition in terms of the meaning of any given metanarrative, it is the search for, and combination of fragments itself that become the meaning of life. The pre-modern and modern means of social integration through comprehensive narrative collapse into a chaotic free market of fragments. Perceived negatively, identity is sought in a kind of societal car-boot sale in which the cast-offs of pre-modernity and modernity emerge into a universal black economy of meaning in which no one has any ancestral right to domination on the basis of received authority in the religious, educational or political spheres.

As regards institutional and established religion, this implies that the assertion of *authority* is outmoded; it is thus unsurprising to find churches which are losing this form of legitimation now turn to *power* and *performativity* as an alternative means of retaining their influence. This does not mean, however, that the search for identity that appears to succeed the metanarrative confrontation of pre-modernity and modernity is to be understood simply as an individual quest freed from structural constraints; this would be intolerably naive and misleading. What we observe is a transition from the *assertion of authority* to the *exercise of power*, above all *managerial*, rather than overt coercive power. This new societal constellation of the "postmodern condition" disposes of all authority based in residual ancestral legitimation and replaces it with universal performativity. All providers (or producers) and receivers (or customers) are participants in a process which is transgressive of all antecedent boundaries laid down

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17 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 482.

by custom and tradition, and infringes the question of basic meaning, that is rootedness in being itself.

"Postmodernity" reaches those parts of the human condition which pre-modernity and modernity left private; *nothing*, I repeat *nothing* is so sacred that it cannot somewhere prove its utility in a market-place. For academic and priests the public private distinction scarcely exists. Lyotard puts this in the following terms which apply directly not only to technology but more widely in cultural systems. Indeed life itself can be said to be:

> a game pertaining not to the true, the just, or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical "move" is "good" when it does better and/or expends less energy than another[18].

Such an efficiency criterion is part of an overall perspective in which an ambiguous unresolved interpenetration between *power* and *empowerment* is central and determinative. Lyotard envisions science in these terms; but our point is that since the publication of Lyotard's text in 1971 much has changed, with the result that the the performativity of which he speaks has ceased to be the prerogative of a narrow band of social agents and become a universal feature of late modernity, of which the so-called "postmodern condition" is an aspect. Thus according to Lyotard:

> legitimation by power takes shape. Power is not only good performativity, but also verification and good verdicts. It legitimates science and the law on the basis of their efficiency, and legitimates this efficiency on the basis of science and law. It is self-legimitating, in the same way a system organized around performance maximisation seems to be[19].

Legitimation through performance does not permit former patterns of legitimation survive unless they too adapt themselves to apposite patterns of

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18 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 495.

19 J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 498.

performativity and commodification. An obvious example of this is the transformation of historic buildings into "heritage" and the global commodification and marketing of certain kinds of cultural identity. Why, in the context of this scenario, should institutional and established religion not undergo "reform" and be *improved?*[20] In other words, if we accept that the managerial revolution and performativity enhancement has been applied to industry, commerce, health, social welfare provision, and education at all levels, then why should not this great transformation also take place in order likewise to renew institutional and established religion? Is there anything to be lost? Fortunately, we do not have to abandon ourselves to pure speculation at this juncture as the proposals presently under consideration envisage the rational managerialisation and performative transformation of, not least, the Church of England. Bishop Turnbull's report *Working as One Body* was the first step; as we have seen, the second is now provided by Professors Robin Gill and Derek Burke in *Strategic Church Leadership*. These two texts are instruction manuals for the conscious transition from *authority* to managerial *power* exercised in the interests of *directed performativity* in a way which can be seen to conform to the postmodernising transformation of late modernity. Neither authority so conceived, nor power so exercised, correspond with the religious requirements of today.

III A Safeway Gospel? - Some Questions

Working as One Body and *Strategic Leadership in the Church* propose a vision of institutional and established religion which relies on theology at two levels. For a very general justification and sanctification of their proposals, both *Working as One Body*

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20 The same question arose at the end of the eighteenth century once the wider implications of the "improvement" of agriculture began to be understood. The serial "reform" of all areas of society within the reach of government is the analogue of such "improvement".

and *Strategic Leadership in the Church* make a general appeal to theology; but this may well seem a nominal, even decorative effort selectively drawn from scripture and tradition. Such legitimation is of marginal significance in comparison with the substantive use that Gill and Burke make of the Book of Acts which becomes a template for a mode of Church management harnessed to the culture of performativity. Gill and Burke offer an unashamedly suburban, embourgeoised and consumerist Church. Their apparent denial is in reality a Newspeak affirmation:

> Churches are not filling stations, all selling much the same product, yet with some stations outsellling others. In churches, as indeed in universities, outcomes are rightly assessed in qualitative as well as in quantitative terms. For both churches and universities, quantity without quality, although it might superficially seem exciting, is actually worthless. At the same time, quality without quantity can be extremely depressing. However rich in quality, a church or university which attracts a decreasing number of people decade by decade, for over one hundred years has problems (Gill and Burke, p. 81).

Despite their attempt to represent "quality" as differentiation, Gill and Burke envisage the equivalent of a supermarket gospel, a cultural universe of providers and receivers all too compatible with highly conservative theologies, whether Evangelical or Catholic. In both these strands of the Latin Western Christian tradition, obediential reception and relative conformity are in order. Sociologically, the managerialisation of the Church involves both the social production of the Gospel in terms of a pervasive "McDonaldisation"[21] (G. Ritzer) well suited to the now dominant forces in the Church of England. These changes are congruent with the triumphal progress of the global "managerialism" that succeeds capitalism, socialism and democracy[22]. Whether,

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21 G. Ritzer (1993), *The McDonaldization of Society*, London: Sage.

22 W. F. Enteman (1993), *Managerialism: The Emergence of a New Ideology*, Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin press.

however, this new "Safeway Gospel" (a product subject to strict quality control and utterly predictable) can match the religious appetites of more than a minority of consumers is doubtful. Religious consumers live in a dynamic if not wholly free religious market-place. Unlike universities (which are now directed within a quasi-sovietic, centrally-directed pseudo-market of centrally-determined production quotas), British religion and the churches are still free to compete for customers; the future therefore holds open the possibility that religious entrepreneurs (and theologians) may exercise their agency and risk the re-enactment of the charismatic function in an variegated religious arena.

The Gill and Burke vision of the future Church poses some very basic questions. Could, for example, the Fourth Gospel or the Gospel of Mark sustain their account of Church leadership? Would the Paul of II Corinthians fit well into this managerial scheme? Even more fundamental is the question as to whether the strategic managerial mode as expounded by Gill and Burke reinforces or subverts whatever it might be that the Christian faith might be about. In other words, can the the imposition of "strategic leadership" and thus admission of managerialism take place without affecting the substance of the faith?

IV Roots in the Order of Being?: Futures for Institutional and Established Religion?

It is not insignificant that Professors Gill and Burke make only one passing reference to the context or "market" of religious opportunities (Gill and Burke, p. 47). These policy proposals may well serve to insulate the churches from the task of interpretation which should pertain to real changes in the "market-place" of religious opportunities. The mission statement is concerned with the efficiency of worship as a generator of quantitative (and qualitative) returns in terms of unit customer response (i.e. through teaching and moulding). The problematic theological terms in the Mission Statement are, however, seemingly untouched by a range of issues relating to major socio-cultural

change: for example, a patriarchal divinity, feminism, environmental ethics, and the proliferation of the individual spiritual search. In short, bare performativity becomes the single, exclusive criterion which obviates any need to pose the question as to what it is that Christianity in the final analysis is all about.

The continuing revolution from above in the universities has created a kitsch educational experience for the masses[23]; correspondingly, Gill and Burke are in imminent dnager of providing the Church with an equivalent theology, a spurious assimilation of religion into the consumerist mode of provider and customer. This "bearable lightness of being" requires religious professionals to accept and ingest the shallow rootlessness of identities which may be reinscribed in accordance with the vagiaries of those invested with the "right to manage". In this barren future a banal repetition becomes the order of the day:

> Plans are set, tested, monitored, reviewed, adapted, set again, tested, monitored adapted, set... and so on indefinitely. Strategic leaders need to keep this process moving (Gill and Burke, p. 82).

Perhaps, on reflection, Christianity is too complex and compromised a religion to survive as a benign power in the globalised, consumerist world order of later modernity. Whilst T. S. Eliot argued for the continued significance of a clerisy as the necessary condition of the continuation of Christian identity; by contrast, perhaps the time has now come for the church to divest itself of its inner complexity and relinquish its depth. Given the confused syncretic past history of Christianity, it is perhaps timely that a model of the church understood in terms of a quasi-Islamic pattern of submission to the moulding of worship is now in order. Such a church would be *efficient* as the world construes the cost-benefit driven appraisal of the performance of providers and

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23 See R.H. Roberts, "The End of the University and the Last Academic?" in The Journal of Christian Ethics (forthcoming).

the response of customers. Shorn thus of its capacity for a profound. self-critical reflexivity such a Chriatinity and a Church would merely live out its inherited vices.

In British universities (outside strictly delimited elite institutions) there is now taking place the progressive elimination of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the "sovereign rights of the mind". Gill and Burke afford the opportunity for the churches to replicate this pattern of managerial integration on the level of the soul. Such an assimilation would remove one of one of the few remaining public spaces for the experience of life-transforming self-transcendence. Fortunately, the migration of religion and religiosity in contemporary culture means that there is no residual spiritual monopoly that can be captured and marketed in the Christian churches. Human beings will follow that pattern of migration and respond wherever they encounter life-transforming possibilities. If the churches buy into the consumer culture in the way proposed by Gill and Burke then they risk the corelative consequence - if what one buys does not work, then one scraps it.

In the final analysis, what Gill and Burke offer the Church of England (and whatoever other church that might follow their lead) is a high risk strategy, for there is evidence that for many people institutional and established religion of the Christian kind does not "work" for a range of very good, but profoundly alarming reasons. There are alternatives to institutional and established religion and social reality does not stand still. At an earlier time in the eighteenth century, for example, when the Church of England compromised its principles and did almost anything that might be required to retain its privileges, the major response was the appearance of Methodism as a supremely practical and individualised religion. Now, however, there is little evidence to support any hope that the *Zeitgeist* will promote a *Christian* future alternative to a compromised institutional and established religion that drinks deeply from the poisoned well of managerialism.

In the so-called "postmodern condition" human beings have limited opportunities. In Lyotard's words:

> We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives - we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern discourse. But we as we have just seen, *the little narrative remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention*, most particularly in science (my emphasis)[24] .

All we have now have available to us are these "little narratives", which "remain the quintessential form of human invention". The exercise of religious imagination is not of course a Christian prerogative. In a competitative religious market-place there is much that can rival the well-worn and problematic offerings of institutional and established religion in the theatre of human spiritual opportunities. Whether, and in what ways, institutional and established religion can and should respond to this challenge is to my mind an open question. One future is to march after the banners of executive control and managerialism unfurled within the Church by Bishop Turnbull and Professors Gill and Gill, respectively. They have extended into the Church all the potential for the systemic psycho-social abuse of women, men and communities to be found in a contemporary Britain invaded and colonised by managerialism. This loss of the residual arena for grace and self-transcendence will contribute to the completion of the slavery of mind and spirit. Other futures for the Church are possible, but they will require the exercise of religious imagination, prophetic separation - and charismatic intervention. The soul of the Church, that is to say the life-dedication of many well-meaning individuals, is being sold out to a questionable, even (and I use this word advisedly) a pernicious paradigm. There will be much suffering, and the shipwreck and loss of many a Christian vocation unless this evil is seen for what it is: a dubious last resort of those who seek to cling to power in the face of the unexamined evacuation and redundancy of meaning experienced by the Christian West at the end of the twentieth century. This is the practice of the unrootedness of being - it must be challenged!

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24 (J.-Fr. Lyotard, in L. Cahoone (ed.), p. 499).

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Is there Salvation *Inside* the Church? (Gresham Lecture, March 17th 1997)

by Mary Grey.

Introduction

My title, deliberately provocative, recalls an age-old tension in the context of a new one. The ancient conviction- *No Salvation outside the Church , extra ecclesiam, nulla salus-* found its first negative formulation with the Alexandrian Church Father Origen`s harsh words:-

> Let no one persuade or deceive himself; outside this house, that is outside the Church, no one will be saved; for if someone leaves, he himself is guilty of death-[1]

This message, fortunately, has long been dropped from the Church`s mission or proclamation of the gospel. But I have turned the statement on its head, in the face of today`s massive alienation from the Churches - at least, most of the so-called mainstream Christian Churches in Britain, (in other parts of the world, there is a different picture)- in the face of the empirical fact of falling numbers - a fact which the newspapers love to depress us with every Sunday morning! - and in the face of the deep sense of malaise, alienation and embitteredness, on a psychological and spiritual level, which is causing a steady exodus for a variety of reasons. In the context of all of this, I ask *Is there Salvation inside the Church?.*

My hunch is, that it is the very success of the creeping conviction that we are a secular society, where religion has little voice

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1. Origen, *In Jesu Nave* 3,5;PG 11, 841. Still earlier citations are found in Ignatius of Antioch *Adv.Haereses.* III, 24,1; PG 7,966; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1,6; PG 8,281. For a more extended discussion of the history of this belief, see Hans Kung, *The Church,* (London and Tunbridge Wells, Search Press, 1968), pp.313-319.

except to be called upon to provide some ideological *moral fibre* from time to time, which is creating the context of apathy, death of the prophetic imagination, and the pressing invitation to the churches to commit a collective suicide: and it is this death of the prophetic imagination, death of vision, death of prophetic role of the Churches that I want to challenge. I will ask in what ways our contemporary experience could possibly have warranted turning this statement on its head; and in what way the statement that *there is salvation within the Churches* could be uttered with integrity, prophetically, so that from the ashes of despair and alienation, new sparks of hope are kindled.

2. No turning back....

Next, I want to show how, like the song puts it, in any case there can be *no turning back* to reclaim a society and world view long transformed. One of the great problems of a postmodern society -Church and state alike- is how to deal with the past. All too readily have we swallowed the lesson of postmodernism that the grand universalist - and colonialist - story which the western world imposed upon the conquered nations, has to go, Truth, so we are told, is partial and contextual. But we also have a deeper intuition at a psychological and anthropological level that we- in our personal and community experience - are deeply influenced by the past and our shared community memories. It is the search for a *usable past,*[2] which is so crucial - the need to communicate and dialogue with each other across our differences of race, culture, history and economic divisions which characterize so much of the current struggle and misunderstanding over the authority of tradition. So, whereas it may have been *intelligible* in the face of the barbaric invasions, pagan idolatry with its sexual perversions, and in Augustine`s case, the struggle against heresy and schism - intelligible but perhaps not *excusable-* to assert *no salvation outside the Church* - it is now an intolerable statement, and in the Roman Catholic Church for one, was officially moved away from, and the violence and violation it caused repented of, in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council with its commitment both to ecumenism, anti-racism and interfaith dialogue. [3]

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2. The phrase is originally that of the US A feminist theologian, Letty Russell.

3. See *The Constitution on the Church,*(Lumen Gentium); *The Church in the Modern World,* (Gaudium et Spes), Nostra Aetate, in *Documents of the Second Vatican Council,* Austin Flannery ed.,

But there's no turning back in another sense. The statement is uttered now at a time when there is a crisis of language - certainly of religious language. We have lost even *the dream of a common language* or *a common language for the dream*: [4]words like salvation, redemption, grace and sin have meaning for small groups of people in a worship context- and even then, a diversity of meaning- *(Jesus saves- but not on my salary-* is the way this has been mocked) - and a metaphorical meaning for the vast majority of people:

> The *salvation* of this company, bank, government lies in higher interest rates;
> You have five minutes *grace* to leave the carpark, the building....

are only two examples of the **metaphorical reductionism** of religious language: at the same time the language of sinfulness has been replaced by the discourse of mistakes, translated into deficiencies of diet, and a multitude of social deprivations. (I'm not denying the importance of these- simply commenting that we lack a commonly-owned language of accountability, except in terms of profitability in respect of shareholders).

But the third area of the search for a usable past is the question of where the boundary lies:- *who is in and who is out* of this thing called Church? For the disciple of Augustine, Fulgentius, it was very clear:

> Of this you can be certain and convinced beyond any doubt: not only pagans but also all Jews, all heretics and schismatics, who die outside the present Catholic Church, will go into everlasting

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4. The phrase is from Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, (New York, W.&W, Norton, 1978).

fire which has been prepared for the devil and all his angels. [5] Not only is this statement reprehensible for its appalling cruelty to anyone other to the Christian faith, but it also glosses over the fact that Jesus in his own ministry was much less careful about boundaries than any of his followers ! He continually horrified those around him by addressing, ministering and healing those on the margins or outside them- the Samaritan woman, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the lepers, the demonically possessed, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, and even the roman centurion. It is a picture evocatively - and probably unhistorically depicted by Franco Zefirelli in his film *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*: the occasion is Sunday High Mass within the great Duomo of Assisi. The bishop and all the clergy are there, vested, jewelled -but the Church is empty! Where are the people? Beyond the walls -down in the valley with Francis and Clare, the sheep, the goats and the hens - and of course, the guitars! It is at least possible, as the Scripture scholar Francis Moloney writes, that the Eucharist even in its origins, was *a Body broken for a Broken people,* [6]that there was something at the core of the beginnings of ecclesial community far more about *including* than excluding. I am haunted by the words of T.S.Eliot,

> Pray for the children at the gate
> Who cannot pray -but who will not go away,[7]

when I think of a generation of young people alienated from the Church.

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5. Fulgentius of Ruspe, *De Fide, ad Petrum* 38,79; PL 65,704. Cited in Kung, *op cit.*,, p.314.

6. Francis Moloney, *A Body Broken for a Broken People,* (Dove Publications)

7. T.S.Eliot,

So, where does one go for an image of inclusive church? I think of the new movement which is springing up in many countries, asserting that, despite all embitteredness and alienation, *We are Church* [8]. I think of the inspiration of the global Women Church movement[9]- not as Exodus, not as alternative Church but as *inclusive space*, open yet bounded - which is the image used by the US Biblical Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Boundedness is significant in identifying commonly held goals, commitments and values - what we are for and what we are against. But the emphasis of this image is on reaching out across boundaries to those of other faiths and those of no faith. To do this a new vision of Church needs to be born, one which can generate new meanings, new words for inclusive community and deal with the fact that even the word itself *Church* carries harsh messages for many people today.

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8. See *The Tablet*, March 21st and 28th, 1997.

9. See Rosemary Ruether, *Women Church*, (San Francisco, Harper and Row,1986).

3. Lord, to whom shall we go?

Let me probe deeper. When the first disciples found the eucharistic teaching of Jesus difficult- in fact, a stumbling block as he appeared to be advocating cannibalism!(John6) - they nonetheless stuck with him, believing that "you have the words of eternal life"(John 6.)What has happened ? Why doen`t this operate today? When the severe word comes - and in the Roman Catholic Church, for many believers this has meant is *no contraception, obligatory celibacy, no ordination of women, silent submission* - the reaction is now very different. It is not the discipline itself which is the stumbling block. It goes much deeper than that. It is both the loss of confidence, a deep sense of betrayal and shame at the corruption scandals, the examples of clergy abuse of small children; it is the scandal of misuse of money, wealthy life-styles, the treatment of women and of the gay community, the silence to violence against women; and it is the alienation produced by the autocratic style of government and authority which ignores or trivialises movements initiated by laity, paying at the most lip-service to the authority of grass-roots movements. There is at the moment, a profound and widespread sense of sorrow- which goes wider than the RC Church - that a Roman Catholic priest and liberation theologian like Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka - after a lifetime of work for justice for the poor in Sri Lanka - should now be cut off from communion, excommunicated.

Secondly - and I now cast the net wider - there is a conviction that, as the Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff has written,

> The present crisis of the Church and of the major religions is essentially due to an agonising deprivation: *the lack of any profound experience of God.* To be sure, in their remote corner

> of Planet Earth some believers have taken up the anguished protest of the dispossessed. They now follow a new path, that leading to the liberation of modern slaves .... [9]

The lack of any profound experience of God - this is just about the saddest manifestion of our current age. To remedy this - in this culture of competitive individualism - we see a mushrooming of privatistic, self-indulgent spiritualities, scarcely worthy of the name. *Salvation in the sauna,* I call it. Aromatherapy, aqua - aerobics, massage, - these can be worthy activities in pursuit of health: but they can also be functioning as alternative spirituality: - like drug-induced ecstasies, taking refuge in cultic behaviour - these can be desperate attempts to grasp hold of the experience of the sacred, no longer, it is felt, to be found in the mainstream churches. Because even feelings and emotions are privatised, instead of religious experience springing from the shared faith of community, this, the deepest and most ancient longing of humankind, becomes transmuted into self-indulgent escapes, or is converted by consumerism into desires for unattainable material consolations.

Does this privatising of human pain give a clue to a deeper sense of loss? Could part of the problem be that privatisation - publicly believed to be restricted to an economic level - *actually functions to rob us of our cosmic story,* our links with the earth's rhythms, joys, pain -and that this was what was the very core of religious experience in the faith traditions? There is at last a consciousness that the Churches have not responded to the ecological crisis. At the Rio Summit in 1992 the *Letter to the Churches* proclaimed,

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9.Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: a New Paradigm,* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1995), p. 138.

> We dare not deny our own role as churches in the crisis which now overwhelms us. We have not spoken the prophetic word ourselves. Indeed we did not hear it when it was spoken by others of late, including a number of scientists. Much less did we hear the cries of indigenous peoples, who have told us for centuries that modernity would foul its own nest and even devour its own children. So we need to mourn and repent.....We plead for forgiveness and pray for a profound change of heart, a radical turning away from the way of death to God and the way of life.[10]

This powerful plea, that the Church recover an ecological mission is one way of turning around the words "Is there Salvation inside the Church?" For in this call to recover *the dream of a common language*, salvation must meant *at least* the recovery of our shared cosmic story, what Thomas Berry calls the *Dream of the Earth*, [11] - and in this process the Church is one voice in a much larger conversation. But it is a voice which has something unique to offer.

For in this run up to the millenium, in this crisis of the environment, of spiralling poverty in the southern hemisphere, brokenness of relation here at home, I suggest that -in a pre-election moment- it is not to the political parties we look to for prophecy, but to the religions. Could it be because the Churches are reneging on their prophetic role that we force politicians into a role which they can and should not fulfill ? It was the prophet Isaiah - not the King- who gave us the dream of the Peaceable Kingdom of God, where all are called to the messianic feast. It was a tradition where law is sacred, and represented the will of God, and not the House of Commons, which produced the

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10. "Letter to the Churches", Appendix 1 in Wesley Granberg Michalson, *Redeeming the Creation: the Rio Earth Summit: Challenges for the Churches*, (Geneva, WCC, 1992), p.70

11. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, (San Francisco, Sierra Books, 19).

Jubilee Laws setting free land, debts and slaves every fiftieth year. If the religions respond to the signs of the times with visionary prophetic voices, and a powerful witness of integrity, politicians are given wise guides and don't have to claim moral high ground they don't possess. So when the Roman Catholic Bishops produce a document like *The Common Good*, I want to rejoice and proclaim it as both an attempt to respond to the prophetic role and to articulate - in a new, non-triumphalist way - *this dream of a common language.* When the Aid Agency CAFOD sets a new covenant with the poor of the world at the very centre of the millenium agenda, (and this has been called for by many of the Bishops), I see this as a prophetic call to put Kingdom values at the heart of the political process. It is how to take all of this further to respond to the despair and alienation with which I began. A despair which, in my new book, I am calling the *Dark Night of the Church.*[12]

The way forward is both to explore, humbly, how the Church - through conversation and committed action with many others- from the religions, from a multitude of justice-seeking groups, from the very groups it has excluded- can recover prophetic integrity and prophetic witness. The treasury which the Churches possess - and which society, even secular society, itself cannot do without - are our communal memories of the sacred, of God's communication, the cherished values never quite lost, that poor communities are at the heart of the process, that truth, goodness, justice, peace and reconciliation are achievable realities on this earth.

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12. M.Grey, *Beyond the Dark Night -A Way forward for the Church* ? (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1997).

For, if competitive individualism is the basis of our ethos, it will only be turned around by prophetic community; if violent crime is its manifestation, only by shared commitment to the eradication of the causes of structural poverty brings light in the darkness. If stress and pressure are the problem, only silent stillness and genuine mystical contemplation lead us back to the rediscovery of our common earth story. As Joan Chittester, the prophetic Benedictine sister put it:

> We need to intervene for one another. We need a new world view that puts the old one "in a new light". But how? And where will this spirituality of contemplative co-creation come from in this individualistic culture? And in what way can the religious leaders of our time help build this bridge from privatized piety to public moral responsibility? I suggest that ....we begin to look at the bases of social brokenness...that we begin to see the link between the personal and the political..[13]

I now explore the building blocks for the recovery of prophetic community suggesting that in the very process we are shifting the meaning of salvation inside the Church.

13. Joan Chittester, *Woman Strength: Modern Church, Modern Woman*, (London, Sheed and Ward, 1990), pp.69-70.

IV The Recovery of Prophetic Community.

The first step for faith community manifesting a prophetic dimension is to engage in a listening process. It will engage in the kind of listening or *hearkening,* (Newman`s *cor ad cor loquitur*) of which the Jewish writer, Etty Hillesum, who died in Auschwitz, wrote in her journal:

> Even if one`s body aches, the spirit can do its work, can it not? It can love and *hineinhörchen* - hearken unto-itself and unto others and unto what binds us to life. "*Hineinhörchen*" ...Truly my life is one long hearkening unto my self, and unto others and unto God. And if I say hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside me. The most essential and the deepest in me hearkening unto the most essential and deepest in the other. God to God. [14]

This culture of listening or hearkening is actually a very ascetic discipline. Not only is it a call to listen to the marginalised groups, and to hear them where they are especially if they are not in the churches: it is a call to listen to the other and especially to the despised other. This inclusive listening is often ridiculed as moral amnesia, as a total cop-out to exercising judgement and discernment. But if it is authentic prophetic listening, then it is informed by evangelical values, where the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and all categories of the poor, including nature as the new poor, have pride of place. Jesus **listened** to the Samaritan woman who had had 5 husbands and was co-habiting with another man. What counts as healing or saving in an encounter is that channels of communication are opened, the life experience of the despised other becomes the challenge subverting the discourse of the dominant. It is always to those holding the strings of power -like the unjust steward of the Gospel- on whom the command to forgive is laid. But the battered

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14. Etty Hillesum, *Etty: An Interrupted Life,* (Washington Square Press, 1985), p.214.

woman is not told to forgive the rapist: rather, forgiveness is linked with achieving whatever justice is possible in the situation. A remarkable example of listening is the way society reacted to the Dunblane tragedy - with enormous compassion, which created real community among the bereaved- and much wider. But when the deeper implications were faced -should guns be so widely available? - immediately vested interests became threatened.

Through its communal listening the community can engage in the process of challenging the way it exercizes its own power. Yet, conversely, the liberation theologian Jon Sobrino has told us that the *crucified peoples of the world* - in other words, the poor who are sinned-against- are generous with their forgiveness. So the call is rather to rich communities to beg forgiveness from them by concrete acts of justice such as release from the debts which cripple entire civilisations.

Secondly, the process of prophetic listening is helped by the counter-imagination of faith communities. *The way we are is not the way we have to be...* We do not need to let our imaginations be sickened and stultified by advertisements, by the bad dreams which society feeds us with, by pornographic fantasies. We are nurtured by the *counter-world of evangelical imagination.*[15] This recalls us to the dangerous memory of the past, where a gracious God has called us from nothingness with a dream and a vision for creation which is not yet complete. The power to imagine and to dream stand at the heart of prophetic community. Walter Bruggeman challenges us to

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15. This is the phrase of Walter Brueggeman, *The Bible and the Postmodern Imagination*, (London, SCM, 1993), Chapter 2.

> Imagine a world, no longer an area of limited resources and fixed patterns of domination, no longer caught in destructive power struggles, but able to recall that lyrical day of creation when the morning stars sang for joy...(p.51).

Hearing, remembering, imagining and dreaming - how can they turn around the fact that contemporary human identity is more defined by consumerism than by anything else ? This must be the fourth building block, this must be what constitutes salvation- the ability of the faith story to inspire an identity constitutive of the full potential of humanity, satisfying human yearning in a far more appropriate way.

For consumerism, the *public face* of the prevailing defining ethic of our society actually constitutes the identity of the postmodern man and woman. We have become defined as fully human insofar as we are able to satisfy our desires, by what we can buy and consume. Gandhi`s maxim, "Enough for each man`s need, but not for each man`s greed" is a despised proverb in the continual frenzy of whipping up our compulsive desires for ever more objects, clothes, cars, varieties of food and drink, (usually out of season, imported from some poor country, produced in exploitative conditions). It is not even being in employment, or being young, which constitutes the identity of the postmodern person. And the reason that consumerism has hi-jacked our identities so totally is that this happens at the level of our psyches and our imaginations. (Hence the call for the prophetic imagination to resist and keep alternatives alive). The centres of consumerism, the great Shopping Malls, function as parodies of our Cathedrals and centres of worship: usually at the edge of urban centres, attracting a car-mobile population, their architecture parodies the great Cathedrals. The towers and spires of *St Tesco`s* and

Holy Waitrose invite our perambulations around their aisles in unconscious parody of ancient liturgies. The Word of consumerism is proclaimed, seductively and repetitively; the music of the adverts seduces our senses, along with the invitation to eat, drink, taste- all the time stimulating our desires for sensations, objects and fantasy shapes of our very selves. And, as Ian Linden - General Secretary of CIIR once said - *the click of the till is the great sacramental act of today,* sealing our active membership in today`s worship of consumerism. But in the case of the Shopping Malls, at least the people we meet are still real people: embodied encounters are still possible, and there *is* a real argument that wherever people are, that is where religious community should begin. On the other hand, if encounter happens exclusively - as is increasingly so - on The Internet - then dis-embodiment and virtual reality have the upper hand. And there is no control.

It is no accident that this hi-jacking of the public imagination happens at a time when Christian liturgies almost seem to have lost their power to engage the whole person, mind, body and heart. Boredom, irrelevancy, are fuelling the exodus from church: so the power to stimulate wonder in creation, adoration, compassion and community responsibility for what is happening to creation must be part of the rediscovery of story. The cosmologist Brian Swimme recalls the ancient cultures where people gathered to tell the stories of

being initiated into the mysteries of the Universe.[16]This, he says, is not simply a question of scientific information about the universe- we have an overplus of that. It is initiating young people into the sense of awe, wonder, connectedness and responsibility for the sacredness of existence. Sadly, the caves of revelation today are mostly the darkened rooms where children imbibe the consumerist advertisements of today`s media gurus and prophets. The recovery of community story will come through realising that we do hold the power of choice and the power to resist. The media wins because we let it. But it is as community that we can be most effective in naming these choices for a sustainable level of consumption.

Next, (fifthly) faith community -and I speak here specifically of Christian Church - has a tradition to call on of reverencing nature, namely the sacramental tradition through which we can recover and celebrate the connections between the sacrament symbolism of water, bread, wine, salt with their full ecological, material, economic and political dimensions. Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* [17]described this perceptively when he opened his story with the famous words, "It was the best of times , it was the worst of

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16. Brian Swimme, Video, *The Heart of the Universe.*

17. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities,* (London, Chapman and Hall, The biographical Edition, Vol.XV), p.1: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,it was the age of wisdom, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going the other way..."

times" ?- with a burst wine barrel in a small French village. For one glorious day the wine ran free for the poor, oppressed peasants -and meanwhile, in Paris, the blood of the aristocrats poured from the guillotine into the gutters: wine/blood/death/joy/violence- Dickens leaves us in no doubt as to the relevance of sacramental symbolism to life, death and violence in society. Our community memory enshrines sacred traditions which kept alive wonder and reverence for created realities: as well as the sacramental, there are the sabbath traditions of blessing, the covenant tradition, as well as mystical awareness. In the Russian Orthodox worship there has always been a fidelity to the centrality of liturgical experience as the heart of community. This was and is the mystical theology of the whole community, not a privatisation of a dawn picnic. To recover this wondering at the heart of worship is both critiquing consumerism and re-creating a communal language for satisfying spiritual hunger and longing.
It is, at the same time, recovering connection with the processes of nature - from the cycle of birth and death, to the daily rising and setting of the sun and the coming of rain just in time to save the crops, these are events at the core of our being. Our own grief is cosmic grief - expressed through prophetic lament over loss, destruction and tragedy.

There is still more to it - and this is the 6th building block. It is

discovering *Eucharistic lifestyle*[18] as the praxis of community. It involves connecting the heart of worship -the action of Eucharist, Eucharistic thanksgiving, with the justice of its actual celebration and the reality of the relationships actually being lived out in the community and its life-style. And this is where the question of inclusion/ exclusion and the issue of presidency bite deep. Is it not time to take the bit between our teeth? If the core of Eucharist is hospitality, this is where the praxis of inclusion must be an energising experience, an icon of prophetic community. This is where we look to find participatory structures embodied.

Lastly, in a permissive society, prophetic community has to re-discover sacrifice. Ian Bradley in *The Power of Sacrifice*,[19] has already called for the "costly praxis of self-giving" as an explicit response to the exclusive focus on self-affirmation and self- indulgence. But, mindful that the call for sacrifice has often condoned unjust suffering, been blind to the suffering of women and underpinned an unhealthy spirituality where sanctity is equated with pain, sacrifice needs to be earthed in its primary meaning of *making sacred.* Flowing from worship, it can inspire the praxis of wonder, reverence, simplicity and joy in creation which hopes for the *transfiguration of the whole cosmos.* As

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18 .. A range of books and movements already exist, for example, Ronald Sider`s *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, Jim Wallis and the Sojourner community, in Washington, Celtic Spirituality, John Taylor`s *Enough is Enough*, Schumacher`s *Small is Beautiful*...

19 . Ian Bradley, *The Power of Sacrifice*, (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995).

communitarian ethic it inspires compassionate solidarity with the suffering of all earth creatures and with poor communities whose survival is so intertwined with this. The praxis of sacrifice means solidarity and prophetic action beyond the constrictions and boundaries of our blinkered perceptions. It means being willing to moving out of the safety of familiar attachments and convictions to come on board a global movement embodying an ethic which is life-giving in the widest sense. The old concept of sacrifice is turned on its head: it is not altruism, repression of desire, self-denial which is the wellspring: rather, the *eros* of the mystics spoke. The object of our yearning, our Augustinian restlessness, *is* transfiguration, renewal of the cosmos.

These building blocks - listening, imagining, constructing a more satisfying identity than "I shop, therefore I am", reclaiming the power to resist, rediscovering a renewed sacramentalism, the praxis of eucharistic hospitality, and living a sacrificial ethic of solidarity with poor communities here and everywhere, as well as recovering a common cosmic story, these are at the same time caught up in the process of redeeming and transforming the global culture of violence. The rhythms of creating and redeeming, making and mending, - two dynamic ways of describing the same process - this is the very glue of society. This is the *common good*, the *common wealth*, what holds us together in civic life, in the face of what appears to be a rising tide of military, criminal and sexual violence.

If there is salvation inside the Church, it is because she is one of those communities who live by the rhythms of making and mending - in the case of Christianity, living the creating, redeeming and recreating which happened in the Christ story. But the meaning of outside/inside, secular/profane, Church/world has to be turned around. Rather than insisting on holding onto the power and means of salvation, as in the old triumphalist model, I suggest the way forward is for Church to be a catalyst and enabler for the making and mending process to be furthered wherever it is happening. Let grace be seen as ecological, as political, even as economic, the management of public affairs according to the justice of the Kingdom. To be really prophetic today, at this juncture of history, is to be proactive in discerning where are the movements and moments of grace, truth and integrity, and to enable their flourishing, especially where there are humble and stammering attempts to articulate a different vision. But Goliath will always be tempted to crush little David- especially when he or she does not speak in the correct categories. Yet, in a pluralist, multi-cultural society, it is the Churches, in dialogue with all the religions who must take initiative, the Churches who, through being in touch with the ancient rhythms of dying and rising, keep the Cross symbol alive as a protest against the violent death of innocents, refusing to let the murderer have the last word.

There is a terrible story of the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador

in 1981 which tells the story of the murder of a young girl, an evangelical Christian, raped many times during the course of one afternoon. Yet she had kept on singing right through her torture:

> She had kept on singing, too, even after they had done what had to be done, and shot her in the chest. She had lain there on La Cruz -(La Cruz, the Cross, was the name of the hill where the soldiers carried out their killings) - with the blood flowing from her chest, and had kept on singing - a bit weaker than before, but still singing. And the soldiers, stupefied, had watched, and pointed. Then they had grown tired of the game and shot her again, and she sang still, and their wonder turned to fear, until finally they had unsheathed their machetes, and hacked her through the neck, and at last the singing stopped. [20]

We are in the realm of great mystery here. We are witnessing to new experiences of transcendence. The girl who dies on La Cruz and continues to sing, along with all children of the Spirit, whose spirit sings in the midst of suffering, are turning aside the story of violence, and *threatening the world with Resurrection hope.*[21] This is the light which the Churches keep burning in the Dark Night of a violent world. This is the new salvation story which will not allow boundaries, the discourse of domination, and the cruelty of exclusion to define the limits of God`s action in the world. *Poor, prophetic and bearing witness* - this is the face of the Beloved community today and the hope of a juster future .

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20 Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote*, (New York, Vintage, 1994), pp.78-9.

21. `. "Threatened with Resurrection" is a poem by Julia Esquivel, in *Bread for Tomorrow*, ed. Janet Morley, (London, Christian Aid, 1986), pp.125-6;127-8:
I live each day to kill death;
I die each day to beget life;
and in this dying unto death,
I die a thousand times, and
am reborn another thousand
through that love...(p.127). The source i s *Threatened with Resurrection*, (The Brethren Press, Elgin, Il 1982).

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