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Abstract

Can Karl Barth's Canonical Narrative Theology guide rural parishes in the Anglican diocese of Carlisle as they attempt to respond to the challenges set out in the recent Mission and Evangelism Strategy?

This practical theology thesis investigates the theology of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886 -1968) in order to see if this can help the rural parishes of the Carlisle diocese as they face the challenges set out in the latest mission and evangelism strategy *Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 – 2020 (GD)*. The exercise brings together, in a sharp conversation, Barth and the content of *GD*. The dialogue leads to several practical evangelistic outcomes that are offered to the traditional churches of the diocese. The partnership that is created between Barth and Carlisle is galvanised by focussing on several similar concerns about discipleship expressed by both parties. These include: the nature of revelation; the possibility of knowing God; the content of the gospel; the task of ministry; and the challenge of mission and evangelism. The strategic plan expresses anxiety over declining church attendance in the Carlisle diocese. This was a matter Barth faced during his early years as a pastor and it is argued that it is an issue that should not dominate the thinking of traditional churches or deflect them from the main task of mission and evangelism. By placing the roots of Barth's thinking in the arena of Canonical Narrative Theology, the Bible becomes the main source of instruction from which creative insights are derived. However, to avoid giving the impression that Barth's theology of mission and discipleship can be transferred uncritically to Carlisle, the argument is deliberately reflective as it weaves in and out of both Barth's theology and Carlisle's strategic mission plan. An attempt is made to construct practical outcomes in the form of resources which can be offered to the rural parish of the diocese where there is an eagerness to make new disciples.

Title Page

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INTRODUCTION

An overview of the task set

This practical theology thesis was conceived during the years when I was the part-time Officer for Evangelism in the diocese of Carlisle, Cumbria (2003-2011). During these years I became interested in why, despite the high profile given to parish mission and evangelism by senior clergy of the diocese in terms of mission strategies, church attendance and membership figures for local churches did not show an increase but rather, in many places, continued to decline. If parish mission and evangelism is, among other things, about persuading people that the gospel is relevant and true why do so few, if any, who hear it, turn to Christ and join local churches? Realising that these questions could not be answered fairly without an in-depth exploration into the nature of the gospel as well as the evangelistic activities of the Carlisle diocese I decided to research both.

My method of doing this is to view both the gospel and the content of Carlisle's latest strategic plan *Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 – 2020*¹ (*GD*) through the lens of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886 – 1968). I argue that Barth's Canonical Narrative Theology can shed light on how parish mission and evangelism might be conducted today in the traditional rural setting of the Carlisle diocese (referred to as *Carlisle*). *GD* is used as a template for the exercise because it is a document that includes numerous goals set by senior clergy for parishes in the diocese who want to engage in mission and evangelism. Although there are a growing number of Fresh Expressions of church in the diocese, and *GD* encourages these, the major focus of the strategic plan is on traditional churches. The result of this research is presented in six chapters.

¹ *Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 – 2020* (Church House, Carlisle, 2011) Appendix A

The first chapter introduces Karl Barth, the man, as being a suitable conversation partner for the *Carlisle* project. It goes on to identify three aspects of Barth's life and work that become building blocks on which to establish the emerging argument about the value of his insights for the interpretation and application of the goals set for discipleship in *GD*. The three building blocks are: 1) a reflection on why Barth became dissatisfied with his own discipleship and also the liberal theology he inherited as a student - this demonstrates that it is possible to think 'outside the theological box' when considering the subject of parish mission and discipleship; 2) an investigation into how his struggle to make sense of his ordained ministry during his early years as a pastor in Safenwil, resulted in his search for an operative theology that could be applied to parish work - this roots Barth in a pastoral context and gives him a platform from which he can address other parish ministers, including those in the Carlisle diocese; 3) an analysis of his intensive Bible study and how this practice resulted in a change of theological language and focus in regards to parish mission and discipleship – this challenges modern parish evangelists to think biblically as they attempt to respond to the goals set for them in *GD*. The chapter argues that these three issues eventually rooted Barth's theology in the narrative of the Bible and therefore justify the description of his theology as being *Canonical Narrative Theology*. Without this justification the rest of the argument would have had to proceed in a different way.

The first chapter, therefore, sets out what Barth considered to be the task of mission theology and provides a backdrop for the conviction that Barth's new theological paradigm can benefit those who are engaged in interpreting and applying the overall message of *GD*.

The second chapter explores the narrative theology of Barth in regards to the subject of discipleship and concentrates on Barth's insistence that discipleship, like every other aspect of Christianity, must be understood as being derived from God.

The argument introduces four aspects of Barth's theology of God which are used to construct another building block shown to be foundational in both Barth's theology and the theology of *GD*. The four aspects are: the experience of God; the nature of God; the knowledge of God; and the church of God. These four intertwined subjects are shown to be important since they are integral to the reasoning given in *GD* as to why the parishes of *Carlisle* are urged to reach out to the surrounding communities with the gospel in order to make modern disciples. Attention is focused on how and why Barth used a dialectical method to achieve his theology of God. His method of distinguishing God as the subject of mission and his anchoring the church in the human sphere of mission both provide *Carlisle* with a working theological model by means of which readers of *GD* can observe the inner ingredients of discipleship. These are shown to be rooted in the gospel of God. It is this God, that they are being asked by the diocese, to proclaim. The outcome of the chapter is a demonstration that it is possible for parish evangelists to find a means of expression about God and discipleship in the narrative theology of Barth.

Chapter three continues to examine talk about the church and its challenge in *GD* to go into the community and make disciples. The chapter starts to build on the foundations of Barth laid in the first two chapters. Particular attention is given to three presuppositions (Gospel, Ministry and Mission) that are said to run 'like golden threads' through *GD*. Barth is consulted about these three subjects and *Carlisle* is reminded by Barth that although the church has a vital contribution to make in the application of the three presuppositions, it is still a human agency. If the church is to be effective it must become aware of and also be motivated by the life of God the Holy Spirit. Barth says Scripture makes it clear that: the gospel is called God's gospel; the ministry is primarily viewed as God's ministry; and the mission of the church is defined as God's mission. It is argued that Barth, by clarifying the

divine motivation behind the action of the church, can help *Carlisle* to press on with its tasks of making disciples despite the apparent set back to this mission indicated by declining church attendance.

Chapter four enters the debate about the rural context of Cumbria and creation theology. The challenge extended to parishes in *GD* - that they should make full use of creation festivals as well as Christian festivals and to see them as opportunities for mission and evangelism - is presented to Barth for his comment. The reason for this is to find out if Barth's apparent aversion to natural theology makes him an unsuitable conversation partner in regards to this aspect of *Carlisle's* mission strategy. Barth's biblical concessions over this subject are noted, and then left open, so that they can be taken up again in the final chapter when the place of apologetics in rural evangelism is discussed.

Chapter five investigates the background of church history that led the Carlisle diocese to formulate the parish mission strategy published in *GD*. This takes place in the form of cameo critiques of a decade of traditional evangelistic initiatives that have been undertaken in the diocese. Evidence of the impact these various traditional approaches to evangelism is presented under five headings in order to see if lessons learned during these events have contributed to the specifications for parish mission in *GD*. The value Barth placed on church history and human initiative is brought to bear on the findings.

Chapter six draws together the insights gained from Barth in the previous five chapters and an attempt is made to galvanise and apply these to the section 'five marks of evangelism' outlined in *GD*. The result is the offer of several original and practical resources and ideas to *Carlisle* to assist parishes in their evangelism. Some of these resources have been piloted in the diocese, during the time of the research, in order to see if they can be packaged and transferred for use in traditional rural parishes. Each of the 'five marks of evangelism' are

brought under the scrutiny of Barth's narrative theology and the outcomes are an attempt to show that Barth's theology lends itself to organic application.

Though sympathetic to Barth's canonical narrative theology, the thesis also recognises that there are blind-spots in Barth's thinking and that sometimes he was inevitably conditioned by the theological and social context in which he worked. However, since Barth was a theologian who managed to move church thinking from 'maintenance to mission', his theology is recommended as a tool to the clergy and congregations in rural parishes as they attempt to respond positively to the challenge in *GD* to make disciples. For Barth 'maintenance' was not primarily about maintaining ecclesiastical property and traditions, but about the church's understanding of God and the advance of parish mission and evangelism. The thesis ends by identifying areas where further research into both Barth and *GD* would be of value to the church.

By practical theology I mean finding the meeting place where Christian religious belief and tradition can conduct a dialogue with contemporary experiences and questions, both inside the church and outside of it: 'a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practically transforming'.² I argue that Barth was primarily a practical theologian and that his method of reasoning is intended to help those who are faced with the task of proclaiming the Christian message in local communities.

For ten years Barth was a pastor and much of his early theology emerged and was formed within a parish context. The methodological tool used to unfold the material in this research is a simple fourfold pastoral cycle: Experience, Exploration, Reflection and Action. This method is intended to accommodate the variety of theological views that exist in the Carlisle diocese. It is based on the concept that 'there is no standardised way of doing

² James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Blackwell Publishing, 8th imp., 2007) 7

practical theology and it is not owned by any wing of theology.’³ Although there are numerous variations that can be made to this simple cycle, it remains a basic heuristic tool,⁴ for the practical theologian, because it introduces a means by which the lid can be lifted on situations. This uncovering is necessary in order to investigate what is said to be going on, if anything, in certain contexts. It also allows us to ask what actions might be taken to improve or advance the objectives that have been set. It can create a forum for ‘collective seeing’⁵ which, in regards to this project, is intended to raise consciousness about parish mission and evangelism at both a parochial and diocesan level in a particular Anglican diocese.

Having said this, not all Anglicans are eager to adopt the use of a pastoral cycle in order to reflect on parish mission and some even regard it as being responsible ‘for much unfortunate thinking about the mission of Christianity to culture. ... and denies the complexity of present-day experience.’⁶ This thesis, while heeding this reservation, uses the pastoral cycle as ‘a guide not a chain’⁷ since this will help to establish a theological framework in which complex matters that relate to both Barth and *GD* can be discussed critically and reflectively.⁸

There is no evidence that Barth used a ‘pastoral cycle’, but we know that he considered the gospel to have pastoral implications. Barth was concerned that pastors should be lovingly involved in the life of their churches, not least when preaching to them and also ‘to live the

³ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (SPCK 2nd ed., 2006) 85

⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 3rd imp., 2009) v

⁵ David Willows and John Swinton (eds), *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2nd imp., 2004) 76

⁶ Andrew Davidson and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions*, (SCM Press, 2010) 128

⁷ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of the Church and Society* (SPCK, 2006) 87

⁸ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology in Action: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008) 139

life of his congregation'.⁹ It is the intention of practical theology to advance good pastoral practice.

Barth's experience of the plight of the factory workers in his parish fed into his theology and eventually led him to be involved in socialism and the trade union movement. He did this with the support and encouragement of his good friend and colleague Eduard Thurneysen, a pastor of the Münster in Basel. Thurneysen eventually became Professor of Practical Theology at the university in that city. Barth and Thurneysen corresponded regularly over matters of pastoral involvement.¹⁰ Later Barth was to become attracted to the work of prison visiting and preaching.¹¹ Throughout the argument I combine the experience of reading Barth with the experience of reading *GD* and attempt to make pastoral as well as evangelistic connections since parish evangelism takes place in a pastoral setting.

However, one of the dangers of a sympathetic reflection on Barth's narrative theology is the temptation to suggest that his Christian narrative 'offers an effective antidote to the evils of postmodernism'.¹² It is therefore only after the Experience, Exploration and Reflection stages of the pastoral cycle have been conducted that the Action stage is recommended.

To proceed in this manner allows care to be taken not to absorb Barth into the factors which supposedly influenced him and also not to treat his theology as if it were simply a record of his times.¹³ It also provides an opportunity to investigate the situation under review in *GD*. In both cases, sources related to the topic are identified.

The research assumes the value and significance of sources and so includes the examination and evaluation of primary and secondary sources as they relate to Karl Barth and to *Carlisle*.

⁹ Karl Barth, *Prayer and Preaching* (SCM Press Ltd, 1964) 96

¹⁰ *Revolutionary Theology In The Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964)

¹¹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life and Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 414

¹² Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (SCM Press, 2005) 126

¹³ John Webster, *BARTH* (London: Continuum, 2000) 16

One reason for going through the texts of Barth is based on John Baillie's advice that 'there can be no hopeful advance beyond his teaching ... if we attempt to go round instead of through it.'¹⁴ One of the aims in attempting to apply Barth to Carlisle is to show that this new context will also require a theological advance on Barth, since theology is not just about going back to examine the past but it is also about facing the future where new alliances are waiting to be made and new lines of connection drawn.¹⁵

In his early texts Barth tried to stay close to Scripture, to classical Christian texts such as Augustine and Anselm, to Church Confessions of Luther and Calvin and to traditional creeds such as the Apostles Creed. Later, as he prepared his Göttingen lectures in dogmatics, he also discovered the value of the writings of the Patristic period.¹⁶ His central task throughout was to interpret these sources for the church of his day. Since this theological procedure is assumed in *GD*, Barth's theology can be consulted for insights on how to read ancient texts, especially the Bible, for the mainly traditional churches of this diocese. Yet, as this task is undertaken, the thorny question is raised as to whether Barth's interpretation of the canon of Scripture and the other sources he uses will 'spell the end of free speech in the church?'¹⁷ One thing that is sure, as Barth discovered, is that an encounter with Scripture and tradition, as with all narratives, inevitably brings about some restriction of freedom.

While the distinction between primary and secondary sources in recent church history cannot be rigidly maintained,¹⁸ every effort has been made to ensure that the secondary sources only occur at the edges of the research and are of such a quality that they are not

¹⁴ John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God* (London, 1962) 254

¹⁵ Colin E. Gunton, *Theology Through The Theologians* (T&T Clark Edinburgh, 1996) 18

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. One (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan) 64,76,105,143,320,343,383

¹⁷ John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) 65

¹⁸ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods* (Grand Rapids: MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995) 39

used to simply fill in the gaps of knowledge left by the primary sources.¹⁹ Inevitably, the primary sources themselves are used to create secondary sources. In order to build up a picture of the background where Barth's parish mission strategy was first enacted, primary texts and secondary interpretations are used. In the case of Carlisle, material relating to *GD* and previous mission strategies has been assembled and subjected to critical reflection. Documents and traces left by people and events, both in Barth's life and in the Carlisle projects, are assessed theologically and socially in order to gain insight into these periods of history. Although the passage of time allows them only to be descriptive insights about the successes and failures of the recorded activities, they are used as tools in the formation of potential outcomes of the project.

Other sources at a tertiary level include, in the case of *Carlisle*, the reporting of oral accounts and the transcript of interviews carried out with individuals and groups associated with the various mission events. Although these are sometimes fragmentary they are assessed as valuable sources of information as far as they seem to add meaning and implication to the other sources. However, since indirect sources may include their own errors they are used selectively.

The fact that I was *Carlisle's* part-time Officer for Evangelism during the initial stage of the research cannot but be seen to influence my observations, critique and conclusions, since we all 'exist and act in situations and engage in interpretations of situations.'²⁰ So throughout the following discussion this useful but also potentially detrimental information is constantly taken into account. I approach the exercise from inside the system and so I am

¹⁹ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods* (Grand Rapids: MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995) 41

²⁰ Edward Farley, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral And Practical Theology*, eds. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Blackwell Publishing, 2007) 119

susceptible to the 'emic viewpoint'.²¹ Recognition of this unalterable situation is intended 'to minimize the risk of universalising the particular.'²² The data collected here is my 'own constructions of other people's constructions.'²³ This situation is inevitable, but it does lead to 'a view of anthropological research as rather more of an observable and rather less than an interpretive activity than it really is.'²⁴ This aspect of ethnography involved me as a fieldworker to engage with a series of conversations which, on occasion, meant being caught in an intellectual trap not necessarily of my own making, in order to tell the story of certain experiences. The result is, to some extent, to 'distort, simplify, symbolise and compress the complex holism of daily life into the plot.'²⁵

As a researcher into the events recorded, I have assured the participants that any personal information collected that could identify them will remain strictly confidential and, where necessary, will remain anonymous at all times. Where a person is identified, or where information could identify that person, I have obtained permission either verbally or in writing. In this way the collection, storage, and use of research data is intended to comply with the Data Protection Act of 1998. Where research surveys carried out include the form of 'personal data', the requirements as prescribed in the Collection Notice in the Data Protection Act have been followed. The reason for this is to ensure that the survey participants have been given sufficient information about the research to obtain consent to collect their data. Ethical approval for this aspect of the research was given by the University of Durham in June 2010. The questions in the surveys were designed to collect data for specific research and therefore are adequate, relevant and not excessive.

²¹ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2008) 59

²² John Swinton and David Willows, *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in a Multidisciplinary Context* (London Jessica Kingsley, 2000) 72

²³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 9

²⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 9

²⁵ T.M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Blackwell, 1989) 14

It is understood that ethical and legal dilemmas occur at all stages of anthropological research. I recognise that there is a responsibility to anticipate problems and where possible to resolve them without harming the research participants or the scholarly community. Utmost attention has been given to ensure that on leaving this field of research it will allow future open access to other researchers. In the reports that follow, sensitivity to predictable harmful effects and repercussions of the interpretations embarked upon are taken into account and so these have been kept to a minimum.

The Bishop of Carlisle has been consulted over the research into his diocese and has given approval for the above procedures to be followed.²⁶ He has asked that the eventual outcomes of the project be submitted to him for consideration as potential parish evangelism resources. This has been agreed.

²⁶ May 5th 2012

Chapter One – The Task of Theology: Barth and Carlisle

The Introduction has discussed the personal reasons for embarking on this research about parish mission and evangelism in the diocese of Carlisle. It has explained my desire to understand why the mission strategies, and the resulting efforts in parish evangelism, do not seem to be reflected in an increase of church membership or attendance. It also briefly sketched my intention to introduce Karl Barth as a conversation partner to those who want to rise to the challenges set out in *Carlisle's GD*. The purpose of this first chapter is to consider the task of theology from Karl Barth's point of view and present these findings to the rural parishes of Carlisle as a potential key that can be used to unlock and enter into the challenges about mission and evangelism that are outlined in *GD*.

After initial introductory comments about the suitability of Barth as a conversation partner for theological engagement, the chapter is organised to do three things. First there is an explanation of how Barth's search for an operative theology gradually caused him to doubt the validity of his inherited theology and why this reflection is important to a consultation about parish mission and discipleship in *Carlisle* today. The second section shows that Barth's struggle to make sense of the pastoral ministry in his early years in Safenwil means that he can empathise with those clergy and congregations in *Carlisle* who now struggle to implement diocesan strategic mission goals in their parishes. The third part analyses what particular circumstances led Barth to engage in intensive Bible study and how this practice resulted in a change in his theological language and focus in regards to mission and discipleship. These three issues are brought together as building blocks that support the argument that Barth's new theological paradigm can be of benefit to those who are engaged in interpreting of the overall message of *GD*.

1.1 A Suitable Candidate

Selecting a main conversation partner for a large project is not an easy matter and the choice of Barth might well raise some hesitations on the part of *Carlisle*. This could be simply due to the neglect of Barth studies in the English-speaking theological circles until recent times.²⁷ Or it could be due to the overwhelming number of his theological publications that would seem to demand too much attention from busy clergy and their congregations. Also, Barth, in his time, argued against dominant liberal Protestant academic theological thought-forms which he had once trusted. Later, he also reacted strongly against pietism which he initially appreciated. These reactions were part of his attempt to rise above historical theology and feeling-based based faith. However, both of these expressions of Christianity, as well as others, are to be found in abundance today in the Carlisle diocese. So the question this raises is: can Karl Barth embrace this varied approach to Christianity and its differing expressions of mission that exist in the Carlisle diocese and which are set out in *GD*?

In his defence, and despite his limitations and mistakes, it is because Barth, like *Carlisle*, was passionate about the mission God and the mission of the church in the world that I recommend him as a conversation partner to those in the Carlisle diocese who want to respond positively to the challenges of *GD*, especially in regards to discipleship. Barth is a conversation partner who, like many in the parishes of Cumbria, faced the problem of declining church attendance, He was also ministering at a time when the first World War broke out, the centenary of which will be commemorated in the of parishes in Carlisle on 4th August of 2014, by the opening of all churches to the public. The initial task is, to firm up these and other connections by drawing *Carlisle's* mission strategy into an experience of

²⁷*The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge University Press, 2000) xi

Barth. Once this achieved it will be necessary to find ways of drawing Barth into *GD* and its talk about how to grow disciples. By this method I embark upon the *Experience* stage of the pastoral cycle.

Although the substance of this thesis does not require an in-depth rehearsal of Barth's biographical details²⁸ an outline of his early life and some of the events that contributed to his eventual struggle as a pastor as he tried to make sense of Christianity, will give the readers of *GD* a human profile of the conversation partner to be employed. Barth's life and work are inseparable. Without a sketch of his identity and background it might easily be assumed that he arrived at his theological position without too much difficulty.

To raise consciousness of Barth's difficulties, which were theological, pastoral and personal, is intended to give some credence to his biblical insights into parish mission. Barth's early development provides *Carlisle* with a human face to ponder and it also introduces a theological thinker who was eager to engage in conversation with other thinkers. Barth entered into theological discussion with others, not as mere observer, but as someone who had been alerted to the importance of the subject matter under consideration:

' – it is impossible to be an opponent of theology without being a theologian oneself – but only as an idle onlooker who thinks that he can see and talk about something that does not concern him. Here as anywhere, this onlooker sees nothing at all of history as such, of the event, no matter how carefully and widely the net of things that have happened is spread before him. If his eyes are to be opened and he is to be entitled to join in the discussion, he must be involved in the matter.'²⁹

Although *GD* is only a short document consisting of fifteen pages, it is in outline a theological manifesto that aims to set before the parishes of the diocese theological matters

²⁸ See: Colin Brown, *Barth And The Christian Message* (Tyndale Press, 1967) 1-29; John Webster, *BARTH* (Continuum, 2000) 1-19

²⁹ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (SCM Press, 2001) 2

that concern the church in Cumbria, especially in regards to the modern meaning of discipleship. The aim is therefore to ask Barth for his opinion and where necessary his advice on the theological content of this strategic plan the contents of which are described as being 'a number of stepping stones to get us from here to there' (*GD* p. 12)

For Barth any stepping stones, that are intended to lead to parish action, must be approached theologically as well as pragmatically:

'It is always a suspicious phenomenon when leading churchmen, whether they are adorned with a bishop's silver cross along with certain fiery evangelists, preachers, or well-meaning warriors for this or that practical Christian cause, are heard to affirm, cheerfully and no doubt a bit disdainfully, that theology is after all not their business. "I am not a theologian; I am an administrator!" a high-ranking English churchman once said to me. And just as bad is the fact that not a few preachers, after they have exchanged their student years for the routine of practical service, seem to think that they are allowed to leave theology behind them as the butterfly does its caterpillar existence, as if it were an exertion over and done with for them. This will not do at all.'³⁰

If this polemic by Barth is not to fall on deaf ears by those who approach *GD* it will be necessary for him to prove to them that he practised what he preached. Added to which Barth may also need to show that he can respect the work of those who struggle to think theologically about parish mission and evangelism. The fact that Barth, at the end of his life, was credited as being the greatest theologian of the twentieth century by many admirers may tend to overwhelm some modern parish practitioners. Barth, however, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday disputed this suggestion and responded modestly to such a statement which had been written of him by a friend:

³⁰ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* trans Grover Foley (Collins, The Fontana Library, 1965) 42

With horror I read his statement that I was the greatest theologian of the century. That terrified me, first of all because our century is not over yet, there are still thirty-four years to come. Who knows what little creature still wrapped in his diapers – or perhaps already wrapped in his theological diapers – will, when this century is looked back on, turn out to have been its greatest theologian, which I shall then turn out not to have been? When it finally becomes known who the greatest theologian of this century really was, perhaps it will turn out to be some little man or woman quietly engaged in Bible study somewhere on whom the light will shine.’³¹

This modest approach on the part of Barth towards theology and theologians is intended to encourage the clergy and congregations who are now wondering how to respond to *GD*, to take notice of Barth. A further encouragement also comes from an appreciation of how Barth did in his own time what *GD* describes as ‘getting from here to there’.

The process for Barth began much further back than his imaginary ‘little man or woman quietly engaged in Bible study somewhere’. His search for an operative theology, that gradually caused him to doubt the validity of his inherited theology, began during his student days and years before he discovered the God revealed in the narrative of Scripture. Attention to this process becomes the first building block on which eventual consultation about mission and evangelism in *Carlisle* will take place. This important episode in Barth’s life underpins the concept that Barth’s narrative theology emerged out a frustration with an approach to Christianity that did not seem to work when he was ordained to minister in a local church. One of the criticisms of diocesan strategies such as *GD*, is that they are all too often are produced by senior clergy who themselves stand aloof as administrators and so are not involved in the challenges that they set others:

³¹ Karl Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*, trans Eric Mosbacher (Collins, The Fontana Library, 1971) 112

‘To suggest that dioceses, like churches, would benefit from a health check is not to imply any particular criticism. ... The spiritual vitality and energizing faith of a diocese can be renewed by conducting its own health check. ...So a diocese is far more than just an administrative body needed to keep the parish system ticking over. It can hold the key to the future of the Church of England in its locality. By being proactive, by joining up its policies around a coherent aim, by giving strategic impetus to every local church, by all the ways it can model the marks of the healthy community of faith and help to multiply new and healthy expressions of local church life, the diocese can ensure that the Church grows rather than declines in the twenty-first century.’³²

Barth underwent his own spiritual health check and it was this that led him to realise that local churches needed pastors who would model the Christian faith that they attempted to proclaim. The health check began to be experienced before his ordination.

1.2 A Searching Student

The theological journey that Barth took in his lifetime was complex and often uneven, even to his own reflection. His comment that, ‘they ought not to bind the Professor at Bonn too tightly to the Pastor of Safenwil ...’³³ is constant in his reflectivity.³⁴ Even so, his Safenwil experience, and the canonical narrative theology he developed in those years, became foundational to his later theological work in the universities. The thread that links his early work to his fuller theology may not have bound him to Safenwil but it was not absent once he left parish ministry. This being the case there is some justification for examining Barth’s thinking prior to his time as a pastor and before he became a professional academic who had no choice but to treat theology as a university discipline. This background is intended to

³² Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church: contemporary strategies for growth* (Church House Publishing, 2003) 181

³³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle To The Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford University Press, 1963) vi

³⁴ Karl Barth, *How I changed My Mind: 1886 - 1968* (The Saint Andrew Press Edinburgh) 40

provide those in Carlisle who are responding to *GD* with a model of local theology in the making.

Prior to his ordination to the Reformed church by his father in Bern Cathedral in 1908, Barth, like most Swiss undergraduates of his day, studied at several universities. During this period he came under the influence of impressive liberal theological teachers such as Harnack and Gunkel (at Berlin) and Herrmann and Jülicher (at Marburg). Adolf Jülicher was later (1920) to provide a famous review of Barth's first commentary on The Epistle to the Romans, but it was Wilhelm Herrmann who influenced him most after 1908, 'I soaked Herrmann through all my pores.'³⁵ Herrmann stressed that God's transcendence was revealed through the inner consciousness of Jesus. This theological position was new at the time since it attempted to distinguish faith from scientific knowledge without disparaging the latter. Barth was initially attracted to Herrmann's strict concentration on Jesus and his surrender to the will of God the Father, but in 1922 he distanced himself from it and explained that he viewed Jesus 'quite differently from him'³⁶ and he did so by presenting his own scheme of revelation.

Although the new scheme was, in the main, independent of historical criticism, it was from these teachers that he received a foundation in the eighteenth and nineteenth century 'historical-critical school'. This foundational training eventually gave Barth the courage to try and do theology differently. During his student days the Bible was not a chief guiding source in his thinking. He remarked in one of his conversations at the time, that it dawned on him that he could understand 'the Bible in terms of the history of religion ... and alongside Kant

³⁵ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 45

³⁶ Karl Barth, *Theology and Church* (New York, 1962) 239

and Schleiermacher took a lower place in my thought than before.³⁷ Once he embarked upon the reality of parish ministry he soon became dissatisfied with this situation. In 1911 he became pastor of Safenwill in the Aargau, a growing agricultural and industrial parish in Switzerland.

1.3 A Struggling Pastor

It was while he was engaged in parish work that his struggle to communicate his beliefs came to the surface. The problem seemed to be a result of his liberal theological background. He had already expressed something of this unease in an article written in 1909, which had arisen out of a discussion with students over why modern graduates in theology preferred to work in foreign missions. His essay 'Modern Theology and Work for the Kingdom of God'³⁸ expressed the opinion that those trained in liberal theology experienced greater difficulties in parish ministry than those with conservative backgrounds. When it came to preaching about Jesus Christ he thought that liberals were up against a relative individualism which lacked certainty.

A similar discussion about theological certainty emerged at a recent small clergy conference,³⁹ jointly organised by the dioceses of Carlisle and Blackburn for a 'Self Supporting Ministers' group. These clergy represented a variety of theological positions in the two dioceses. The theme of the addresses given by an Old Testament scholar, concerned 'A realistic approach to Hebrew prophecy'. The material, which was based on biblical texts, aimed to demonstrate the value for today of attempting to interpret the message of Old Testament prophecy in the parish context. The ensuing discussion revolved

³⁷ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 40

³⁸ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 40

³⁹ Waddow Hall, Clitheroe, 11-12 October, 2013

around the attempt, by the speaker, Dr Jules Gomes, to transfer a pre-modern biblical worldview to modern congregations. The main question surrounded the topic of how the modern gospel preacher can handle the tension of two realities: the sacred knowledge of a God-controlled universe found in Scripture, and the secular knowledge of a self-contained universe found in natural science. Although the log-jammed discussion was not resolved it was of interest to note that Karl Barth was called upon as someone who might mediate. Reference was made to Barth's attempt to overcome the scientific objections to the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus by describing it as 'above history' or 'non-historical'.

Although for Barth, the Resurrection was physical and did take place in time, it transcends the limitations of space and time so it is, 'Little wonder human language begins to stammer at this point even in the New Testament.'⁴⁰ For Barth, Christ's resurrection is the comprehensive structure that holds Christianity together. The reality of the resurrection is a turning point in history. In order to be able to comprehend Barth's treatment of the resurrection, the original manner in which he deals with time must be taken into account:

'God's revelation in the event of the presence of Jesus Christ is God's time for us. It is fulfilled time in this event itself. But as the Old Testament time of expectation and as the new time of reconciliation it is also the time of witness to this event'.⁴¹

According to Barth, both the resurrection and the ascension of Christ belong together in biblical time. Yet our information about these and other miracles depends on the accounts provided by the recollection of the New Testament witnesses⁴²:

⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/2*, trans. G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight, eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 115

⁴¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/2*, trans. G.T. Thompson and Harold Knight, eds. G.W, Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Cark International, 2004) 45-70

'In the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ we have to do with an inwardly coherent event It is an event which involves a definite seeing with the eyes and hearing with the ears and handling with the hands, as the Easter stories say so unmistakably and emphatically, and as is again underlined in 1 John 1. It involved real eating and drinking, speaking and answering, reasoning and doubting and then believing The event is not perhaps 'historical' in the modern sense, but it is fixed and characterized as something which actually happened among men like other events, and was experienced and later attested by them.'⁴³

This discussion about Barth's view of the miraculous resulted in the clergy at the conference being asked if they would still remain Christians if the bones of Jesus were eventually to be found by archaeologists, There were three responses: those who said this would make little difference to their faith; those who said that such evidence would cause them to re-consider their understanding of Christianity; and those who were unsure. Barth's response would be:

'The empty tomb was obviously a very ambiguous and contestable fact (Mt. 27:63f; 28:11f). And what has happened around this sepulchre is a warning against making it a primary focus of attention. The empty tomb is not the same thing as the resurrection. It is not the appearance of the Living; it is only its presupposition. Hence it is only a sign, although an indispensable sign.'⁴⁴

This cameo reflection indicates that theological discussions, similar to those which Barth began to take part in prior to the start of his parish ministry, are still taking place amongst the Carlisle clergy. However, though Barth's 'modern' graduates may have appeared to be

⁴² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/2*, trans. G.T. Thompson and Harold Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 115

⁴³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/2*, trans G.T. Thompson and Harold Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark, 2004) 143

⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/2* trans. H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J. K. S. Reid, R. H. Fuller; eds, G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 452

happier to work overseas because of their uncertainties, *Carlisle's* clergy in 2013 seemed to be content to return to their (mainly rural) parishes, despite having to live with unresolved religious tensions over matters of history and faith and presumably for some to continue contemplating how to respond to the goals set in *GD*. Barth, in his day, decided that the tensions had to be resolved and his experience as a struggling pastor heightened this determination.

The discomfort about the then modern understanding of religious life, which Barth felt needed to be resolved, came to a head in his parish work. In Switzerland, as in other European countries, the interpretive framework for the history of religion was that of 'a progressive secularization'.⁴⁵ The idea of secularization is a complex one, as recent work on the subject, by sociologists of religion shows.⁴⁶ This being the case I return to the debate in the final chapter in order to show the significance of understanding the impact of the secular environment of Cumbria when analysing the religious life of the Carlisle diocese. Barth functioned as a pastor in a lively secular environment and recognised the need for the church to appreciate that it also existed in a secular society and so could not be immune from secularism. His short experience of secular Germany as a theological student may have affected his approach to pastoral ministry when he returned to Switzerland. Perhaps it was his appreciation of the power of the press that caused him to recommend to those who wanted to understand the complexity of human life as it is unfolded in the Epistle to the Romans that they undertake, 'A wide reading of contemporary secular literature – especially

⁴⁵ Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford University Press, 2010) 16

⁴⁶ Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case, Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002) 13-16, 75-77, 146-147, 150-152. Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage, 2007) 2-4, 11-12, 46-66. Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularisation in the West* (Blackwell Publishing, 2002) 1-45. Rob Warner, *Secularisation and its Discontents* (Continuum, 2010) provide an overview of the current debates.

of newspaper!’⁴⁷ He made the same point in 1918 in a letter to Thurneysen.⁴⁸ His commentary on Romans illustrates that he practised what he preached and he included numerous references to contemporary and ancient secular literature and art.⁴⁹

The fact that Barth’s religious life in Safenwil was not separated from his social, political and cultural experience should give *Carlisle* a certain amount of theological confidence in his insights, especially in regards to the mission of the church, since he arrived at these in the context of a secular setting. They show that Barth’s desire to rescue the gospel from its absorption into culture was based on understanding of both culture and the gospel.

Reading Barth in this way raises two questions about the content of *GD*. The first is whether serious attention has been paid to outside factors that place pressure on local churches as they seek to engage in mission and evangelism and the second, whether enough attention is given to the Bible and its teaching about God and his ideas concerning mission and discipleship? The only reference to secularism in *GD* could give the impression that it is a matter that affects only those outside the church:

‘Church attendance has been steadily declining for more than a century. ... Cumbria is not immune from the blight of secularist consumerism’ (*GD* p.5)

For Barth this was also a church concern:

‘Throughout the world, the Church is concerned today with the problem of secularization of the modern man. It would perhaps be more profitable if the Church

⁴⁷ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford University Press, 1963) 425.

⁴⁸ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 46

⁴⁹ For example: by the time Barth started to write his Romans commentaries his mind was saturated with the Russian novelist Dostoyevsky: Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford University Press, 1963) 67,68,117,141,185,220,230,238,276. For a detailed discussion see P.H. Brazier, *Barth and Dostoevsky: A Study in the Influence of the Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky on the Development of the Swiss Theologian Karl Barth, 1915-1922* (Paternoster Press, 2007). Barth also refers to Tolstoy (p.57) *Aesop’s Fables* (p.177), *Gulliver’s Travels* (p.262) and Socrates (p.271). Examples of art in Romans include: Grünewald’s *Crucifixion* (p.158) and Michelangelo’s *Creation of Eve* and *Creation of Adam* (pp.247, 249).

were at least to begin to become concerned with the problem of its own secularization.

Secularism surely reigns where interest in divine revelation has been lost or bartered away from the interests of man.⁵⁰

Whether Barth handled the secular pressures he came up against in his parish effectively or not, is open to discussion; what cannot be denied is that he was at least aware of them. Also whether Barth interpreted what he found in the Bible concerning God and discipleship accurately is equally debatable; what cannot be denied is that he tried hard to do this.

It was during these early years, when Barth was a parish minister, that he endured the loss of his operative theology. In particular he was forced to rethink and develop new ideas for preaching and for preachers. He was honest with the congregation over his struggle with preaching and how, all too often, the subject matter of the set biblical text was alien to him. In his attempt to be relevant he would preach about the issues that affected the lives of those he was in contact with:

‘During my time as a pastor ... I often succumbed to the danger of attempting to get alongside the congregation in the wrong way. Thus in 1912 when the sinking of the Titanic shook the whole world, I felt that I had to make this disaster my main theme the following Sunday, which led to a monstrous sermon on the same scale.’⁵¹

All too often Barth felt that he and his congregation were always ‘looking at each other through a pane of glass.’⁵² His attempt to use the Bible in his Sunday sermon preparation

⁵⁰ Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans. E.G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Edinburgh:T&T Clark, 1936) 15

⁵¹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 63

⁵² Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 64

‘was forced out with terrible birth pangs.’⁵³ This was not because Barth did not spend time on his sermon preparation, since he often spent days preparing and revising his messages, but because he was highly self-conscious of his inability to apply Scripture to the contemporary issues that his congregation had to face after they had returned home.

At the same time as Barth was beginning to feel frustrated with his attempt to preach appropriately, there were also other prominent factors that were caused him to rethink the aim of his parish ministry. One of these arose from his association with Kutter and Ragaz which led him to join the local Social Democratic Party in Switzerland in 1915. He saw this move to be a pastoral obligation especially in his attempt to help the workers in the yarn factory who were threatened with dismissal because they had formed a trade union. From this point onwards he was known as the ‘red pastor’.⁵⁴ His reason for becoming a Social Democrat was linked to his eschatological preaching:

‘Just because I set such emphasis Sunday by Sunday upon the last things, it was no longer possible for me personally to remain suspended in the clouds above the present evil world’⁵⁵

Another most important factor that caused Barth considerable discomfort came about the year before he joined the Social Democrats. In August 1914, 93 German intellectuals published a declaration supporting the policies of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his government. Among those who signed the document were some of Barth’s former teachers whom he respected and had attempted to imitate. He first read about their support for the war in copies of *Die Christliche Welt* which he received from Germany. He was to write later:

⁵³ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 61

⁵⁴ Robert E. Hood, *Contemporary political orders and Christ: Karl Barth’s Christology and Political Praxis*, (Pickwick Publications, 1985) 6

⁵⁵ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1994) 28

'I could no longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history,'⁵⁶

Barth's formative years as a pastor in Safenwil were in many ways both difficult and a disappointment to him, especially because liberal theology and socialist politics seemed to offer few resources for preventing the First World War. However, the result of the struggle and disillusionment was a quest to search for a more meaningful way to operate both as a pastor and a theologian. It gave him the opportunity to try to crystalize his doctrine of the living God. This search led him to become immersed in the biblical writings, especially those written by Paul. In the years that followed he developed an approach to Scripture that has come to be known as '*Canonical Narrative Theology*'⁵⁷ since it binds the exposition of theology to the biblical text which the church has recognised and acknowledged as the Canon. This is the standard, the normative, basic and exemplary form for the continuing delivery of the church's message. In the Bible, Barth found a narrative that contradicted the theological schemes which he had previously trusted. In his rediscovery of 'the strange new world within the Bible' he found that Jesus was the key to not only the Bible but also to the whole of human history:

'The Bible gives to every man'⁵⁸ and to every era such answers to their questions as they deserve.'⁵⁹

Barth's observation that in order to read Scripture correctly there is a need to presuppose that there is a literary unity in the whole biblical narrative was not new. Christian tradition, in both its creeds and confessions, is focussed on this narrative approach to Scripture. What

⁵⁶ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, (London: Collins, 1961) 14

⁵⁷ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (SCM Press, 2005) 79

⁵⁸ Barth uses '*man*' and '*men*' in reference to human beings in the same way that early feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir does in *All Said and Done* (Penguin Reprint, 1997) 228, 229

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 32

is new in Barth is that he retold the Old and New Testaments stories in order to show how God is involved in revelation and human history. Although the term 'narrative theology' technically refers to a theological movement that developed in North America and is linked with the Yale Divinity School⁶⁰ Barth can be said to have his roots in this remit. Barth is eager, along with writers such as Hans Frei⁶¹ to identify the distinctive features of the Christian Gospel story as a realistic primary narrative source that testifies to Jesus Christ as God's purpose for the world and humanity. In order to be able to do this Barth had to argue his case hermeneutically for a realistic and often literal reading of Scripture in preference to a hermeneutic of suspicion. Therefore, the literal narrative of Scripture became primary in the development of his theological scheme. His new way of reading the Bible was an attempt to let it speak to us, and disclose its message from itself, and so rescue it from the emphasis of the eighteenth century Enlightenment's concentration on the constructive use of human reason to demolish ancient oppressive narratives that bound and restricted societies.

Although it would be an exaggeration to describe all Scripture as narrative, it is this type of literature that dominates most of the Bible. By approaching Scripture in this way Barth was able to outline and affirm a continuous story showing where God, who is involved in history, meets humanity in history. His Christ-centred approach to the Covenant and Creation which he sets out in his *Doctrine of Creation* is a detailed example of Barth's examination of the narratives that constitute chapters one and two of *Genesis*.⁶²

⁶⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Blackwell Publishing, 2001)167

⁶¹ Hans W. Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford University Press, 1993)

⁶² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, T&T Clark International, 2004) 42-329

The overarching question in Barth's initial investigation into Scripture was a practical one: How can ministers speak of God? He considered this to be one of the most perplexing tasks given to ministers when they came to preach and teach. In an address given to clergy in October 1922 Barth tackles the subject head-on and offers his conclusion in the form of three sentences which come at the start of the lecture:

'As ministers we ought to speak of God. We are human, and so we cannot speak of God. We ought therefore to recognize both our obligation and our inability and by that very recognition give God the glory. This is our perplexity. The rest of our task fades into insignificance in comparison.'⁶³

In the rest of the lecture Barth unpacks this observation phrase by phrase and suggests to the audience that the outcome should be a heartfelt recognition of the problem. Both ministers in the parishes and theologians in the universities should not start by asking, 'what should we do about it?' but rather that they should stand back and reflect on their dilemma as preachers and teachers, instead of immediately setting about a search for pragmatic solutions. Such reflection may or may not result in a change of practice, but this is not the main object of the exercise. Being dumbfounded in the presence of God gives parish clergy and others confidence that they are behaving correctly, 'Our perplexity is our promise.'⁶⁴ There is no doubt in the minds of senior clergy in *Carlisle* that the crisis over declining congregations requires urgent action in the parishes. They give no suggestion in *GD* that the clergy are not committed to God or to gospel proclamation. Since nothing about clergy spirituality is included in the plan. It is assumed that the quality of clergy is not considered to be the cause of the problem to be addressed. The main concern voiced is the need for

⁶³ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 186

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 215

the clergy to act and act quickly in order that the crisis of decline in church attendance can be halted.

Mission action and parish evangelism have also been the topic of the recent annual clergy conferences and deanery synods in *Carlisle*. The imaginary questions this thesis proposes is: What would Karl Barth say to Carlisle's clergy about mission action and evangelism, if he was invited to do so? Also, how would Barth use Scripture to justify his recommendations? In preparation for his answers there is a need to examine how he arrived at his fresh theological position in his own context. This third building block secures Barth as a useful conversation with *GD* since it establishes for parish evangelists that he was a pastor who had an unflinching desire to get to the heart of Christianity.

1.4 A Sensitive Thinker

In 1916 (Barth was then thirty) he and Thurneysen decided to re-read and interpret the Old and New Testaments with great diligence. On January 1st 1916 he suggested to Thurneysen that, 'Sometimes we should discuss our sermons in detail.'⁶⁵ At the same time Barth also turned back to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'as though preparing for an examination.'⁶⁶ His reason for this dual activity was to establish for himself a comprehensive metaphysical foundation for the work of understanding revelation. Barth was sensitive to the fact that without such an in-depth study and reflection he would soon come to the end of his own resources in his preaching. When speaking about the human task of preaching, Barth was not primarily concerned with the technique of delivery of the message but with its substance. It is this aspect of proclamation that gives him the liberty to extend the delivery

⁶⁵*Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925* trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 35

⁶⁶*Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925* trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 38

of the gospel beyond the sermon to the special order of the sacraments, worship and other aspects of church life:

‘indirectly through the medium of the Church’s prayer and worship, its confession and instruction, pastoral activity and, not least, of theology itself ... over the whole field the attempt is made to speak of God with the intention that others shall hear of Him.’⁶⁷

By making this concession and widening the scope of proclamation Barth embraced the parameters for gospel proclamation as they are set out in the *GD*. This aspect of Barth’s thinking will be demonstrated in the final chapter of this thesis, when various human possibilities for modern parish evangelism are extensively discussed. Barth wants every activity in the church to be God-centred. But this focus is not to be a token allusion to God that may be offered in a sound-bite, but rather an encounter with the living God. Barth calls this encounter ‘*KRISIS*’ since in Scripture he discovered the sovereignty of God displayed in power, the power of life that overcomes death.

Prior to his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth had explained in some detail what he meant by ‘reflection’ on the Word of God, and describes it as being present in three forms, that:

‘which is spoken by God in revelation, which is recorded in the holy scripture of the prophets and apostles, and which now both is and should be proclaimed and heard in Christian preaching.’⁶⁸

In each of the three forms of Barth understood that there was a tension in the Word of God: ‘there is a paradox and scandal between the divine and human to be grasped.’⁶⁹ Barth

⁶⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of The Word of God I/2* trans. G.T. Thompson and T.F. Knight, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 750

⁶⁸ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 14

⁶⁹ Trevor Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1999) 28

discussed the divine and human aspects of the Word of God and their interconnection in great detail both in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and in the *Church Dogmatics*. His reason for doing so is to help preachers in their task of proclamation to understand that, 'God's Revelation is the basis of Christian preaching.'⁷⁰ It is because 'preachers are not private entrepreneurs'⁷¹ and because 'preaching is not a monologue' but 'a kind of dialogue'⁷² that the human element of this aspect of the Word of God needed to be understood. One result of preaching, according to Barth, is that it provides us with a clear insight into the puzzle of human life. However, in order for this insight to be uncovered by preaching, the preacher must do more than address the cultural, political and domestic issues of life but must let God speak directly. Barth calls this 'Deus dixit' since:

'The presupposition of the Bible is not that God is but that He spoke.'⁷³

God communicates himself and the event of this address God opens a window into himself. This revelation, though partial, is immediate and comes through Scripture.

Much more could be said about Barth's view of the Canon of Scripture and also about his departure from the Protestant claim that the Bible is without error,⁷⁴ but this is not of immediate concern. What is of concern is his endeavour to maintain the paradox between the divine and human content of revelation. In order to do this Barth adopted a dialectical approach to the interpretation of Scripture. By this theological method he was able to establish the existence of two spheres of reality: the sphere of God and the sphere of human beings. For Barth, when the theologian speaks dialectically the subject matter is the

⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 69

⁷¹ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 202

⁷² Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 70

⁷³ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 58

⁷⁴ Colin Brown, *Karl Barth And The Christian Message* (The Tyndale Press, 1967) 59-67

mystery of God, who is a free and gracious subject. God's grace is identified in Jesus Christ, the person who brings God to human beings together. However, dialectical and analogical thinking⁷⁵ is a human method that enables us to make some sense of life:

'If our thinking is not to be pseudo-thinking, we must think about life; for such a thinking is a thinking about God. And if we are to think about life, we must penetrate its hidden corners, and steadily refuse to treat anything – however trivial or disgusting it may seem to be – as irrelevant. To be sincere, our thought must share in the tension of human life, in its criss-cross lines, and in its kaleidoscopic movements. And life is neither simple, nor straightforward, nor obvious. ... The reality to which life bears witness must be disclosed in the deep things of all observable phenomena, in their whole context – and in their KRISIS. Only dialectical human thinking can fulfil its purpose and search the depth and context and reality of life: only dialectical thought can lead to genuine reflection upon its meaning and make sense of it.'⁷⁶

It is Barth's unflinching desire to get to the heart of Christian knowledge as revealed and witnessed to in the biblical narrative that makes him a provocative dialogue partner in this project about parish mission and evangelism. By taking up his challenge to approach every subject dialectically, we will have little choice but to consider our pragmatic mission material in the light of our knowledge of God. One of the temptations for the modern parish practitioners is often to want to get on and do things without too much theological reflection. Anne Richards challenges this hyperactivity by asking us to pause and reflect, since:

'God calls us, asks us questions and invites us to respond as part of the *missio dei*, the mission of God's love to the world. So before we share God's truth with others, we

⁷⁵ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) xxxii

⁷⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 425

might pause to consider what God is asking us. We need to allow ourselves to be questioned and to be open to being disturbed if we are going to be transformed people who are able to dialogue with others.⁷⁷

Barth, through his dialectical theology, intends to help practitioners to pause and reflect on both the content and proclamation of the gospel. Capturing the movement of God is as difficult as attempting to draw a bird in flight.⁷⁸ The distraction for us, when we attempt to concentrate on God's movement, is that we so easily become stationary because of our absorption with religious traditions, experiences or practices. Yet even when Christ the mediator is introduced to our immediate conscious thinking, a distance is still maintained between God and humanity:

'But keep your distance! No mental apprehension of the *form* of this truth, however subtle that apprehension may be, can replace or obscure the true transcendence of its *content*. The step from the *experience* of the Lord to the experience of *Baal* is a short one. ... We must return to that reserve maintained by the divine over against the human – though it must now have become clear to all that the separation of the two cannot be ultimate for then God would not be God. There *must still* be a way from there to here. And with this "must" and this "still" we confess to the miracle of the *revelation of God*.⁷⁹

In all his early writings Barth uses and develops his dialectical approach to the interpretation of the central message of revelation. He did this in order to show that he was passionately concerned to preserve the objectivity and identity and of God, although at the same time preserving God as a subject. If God remains an object in our thinking then there is the potential to suggest that we can control him. This dilemma is overcome by the grace of God

⁷⁷ Anne Richards in *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: communicating faith in a changing culture* (Church House Publishing, 2005) 61

⁷⁸ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 282

⁷⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 286-287

shown to us in Jesus Christ. It is the dialectical approach that helps human beings grasp the distinction between God and themselves. Both the proclamation and a dogmatic explanation of the gospel are best served by the dialectical approach. Convincing *Carlisle* that this is still relevant requires more than proofreading Barth and so reference to a more extensive justification for the value of being a dialectical theologian is required.

An expansive description of the dialectical approach is found in *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, which Barth first produced in the form of lectures at the University of Göttingen between 1924 and 1925. Here his dialectical method is seen on almost every page. In some sections he provides an extensive explanation on how this method can become a key to theological reflection on God and human beings. In *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth uses the term ‘dialectic’ in four senses⁸⁰: dialectical concepts that cannot be thought without each other and which protect God from becoming subsumed within a conceptual dialectic; dialectic of existence which Barth calls a ‘relative dialectic’, which cannot be the main problem on which the dogmatic theologian has to work; the dialectic of revelation, which refers to God’s twofold word of grace and judgement, of Yes and No, of God in human form, of God’s hidden revelation and revealed hiddenness; and a dialectic as a theological method for theological reflection and thinking so that God is always subject and cannot be made into an object. It is this fourth sense that is of interest at this point of the argument:

‘For every time, on the one side, when I believe that I have thought about God, I must remember that God is subject, not object. I have to turn around, then, and think radically, on the other side whence I came in order to be able to do this. When this situation is seen again at any point there arises the dialectical relation of two concepts. Dialogue takes place in this relation, and to that extent, like all dogmatic thinking, it is

⁸⁰ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Volume I (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) xxviii

dialectical dialogue. Thinking non-dialectically would mean in principle not thinking before God. Before God human thoughts *become* dialectical.’⁸¹

According to Barth, using dialectic as a theological method helps us to engage in a continuous movement in our thinking. This takes us from one inadequate concept to another while at the same time allowing the Word of God to define all our concepts and the result is that we give glory to God even as we acknowledge both our own limitations and God’s secure promise.⁸²

‘Everything depends, then, on the dialogue being conducted honestly and bravely. It must not be like manoeuvres or party gatherings (mere tensions of unreal opposites, victory assured), or, as in Schleiermacher, a matter of feeling. Only the object is transcendent. For the sake of this object we do not want to be transcendent. We take every antithesis seriously even at the danger of contradiction. In the movement of our thinking we point to the object. We break off the dialogue and speak a non-dialectical last word [?] only when to light.’⁸³

Barth had an acute awareness that use of the dialectical method, as a means of theological reflection that can be no more than a human activity, provides Carlisle with a freedom to apply it only where it is seen to be useful. It is not a requirement or a law of God; neither is it an eternal method. It is no more than a means by which the parish practitioner can attempt to think biblically about the task in hand. In this case the task is parish evangelism and discipleship that takes place on earth:

‘It will be no longer needed in heaven. With the angels and the blessed we will at least have a share in God’s central view of things. But we need it on earth, and we will be

⁸¹ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 310

⁸² Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) xxix

⁸³ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 311

thankful that we have it like any good gift of God. Let us see to it that we use it to God's glory, not as a game, but as the serious work of the catharsis of our pious words. How are these words to be purified for the purpose that they serve if we do not think them together with the Word of God that is to be proclaimed through them, if we do not think dialectically?'⁸⁴

His reason for making such an effort to understand dogmatics, and to advance on what had been understood on the subject down the centuries, was because he wanted to be able to consolidate the preaching of the gospel. When speaking to ordinands about the relationship between dogmatics and preaching he gives them some practical advice:

'The only thing is that we must not confuse dogmatics and preaching. You should not go out and for a few years overpower your poor congregations with the contents of your notebooks, with the objective and subjective possibilities of revelation, with exercises in the ancient and modern theologies of the schools that we have to study here, with the dialectical corners into which I have to lead you here. You must draw the content of your sermons from the well which stands precisely between the Bible, your own concrete situation, and that of your hearers. Homiletics and practical theology as a whole will deal with it. ... Dogmatics is an exercise, an academic exercise a necessary and useful exercise when it is done properly, but still an exercise, a preparatory act behind the scenes.'⁸⁵

This chapter is intended to be such 'a preparatory act'. It anticipates a presentation of some of Barth's insights about how the church in *Carlisle* might go about the task of parish mission

⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, eds., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 312

⁸⁵ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume One, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 276

and discipleship. Barth explained to clergy in 1922 why he had changed his liberal theology to that governed by Scripture:

‘For twelve years I was a minister, as you are. I *had* my theology. It was not really mine, to be sure, but that of my unforgotten teacher Wilhelm Hermann, grafted upon the principles which I had learned, less consciously than unconsciously, in my native home ... Once in the ministry, I found myself growing away from these theological habits of thought and being forced back at every point more and more upon the specific *minister’s* problem, the *sermon*. I sought to find my way between the problem of human life on the one hand and the content of the Bible on the other. As a minister I wanted to speak to the *people* in the infinite contradiction of their life, but to speak no less infinite message of the Bible, which was as much a riddle as life. ... But it simply came about that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at his desk and on Sunday in his pulpit crystallized in my case into a marginal note to all my theology, which finally assumed the voluminous form of a complete commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans.’⁸⁶

This chapter has introduced Barth to the readers of *GD* by providing three essential building blocks on which a scaffold for his mission theology about discipleship can be built. Barth’s search for a theology that would be a useful tool for his own parish mission was hard won. It involved him changing theological direction in order to try to do things differently from what he saw his teachers saying and doing. As far as he was concerned his liberal background gave him no certainty about the Christian faith and no confidence to pass it on to others. This building block is part of the thinking behind the goals set out in *GD*. Under the heading Maturity of Faith (p. 7) we read:

‘Understanding and good teaching are vital for effective discipleship.’

⁸⁶ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 100

Barth had to search for this and so he is able to contribute to teaching about Christianity. However, for Barth it meant that he had to learn to think outside 'the theological box' which involved him questioning the current scientific and historical approach to the Bible and theology. This was something that his theological teachers, especially Harnack, found quite disturbing in 1923.⁸⁷ One of the challenges for readers of *GD* is to be able, when necessary, to think and imagine parish mission and evangelism differently to what has been seen and received from others. *GD* encourages such creative thinking:

'This is not about 'the Diocese' attempting to control the Parishes in a detailed and meddlesome way. It is, though, an attempt to chart a direction of travel which we can take together, each Parish looking to God for the detail of how they take the journey.

We want this to be a shared venture ...' (*GD* p. 4)

The second building block comes from Barth's struggle as a pastor to find an operative theology to replace what he inherited as a student. His desire to think differently was not only to satisfy his own religious curiosity but in order to become more effective in his proclamation ministry. It was from this platform that he was able to provoke other parish ministers in his day and it is from the same platform that he can provoke *Carlisle's* gospel ministers, both ordained and 'lay'. *GD* encourages this approach:

'So we hope it will stimulate discussion, motivate action and provoke prayer.' (*GD* p.4)

The third building block is Barth's return to the Bible as the main source for understanding and responding to God's mission plan. *GD* on most of its pages begins with a Scripture verse and so anticipates that the readers will be in tune with the need for biblical consultation.

These three foundation stones introduce Barth's understanding of the task of theology to *Carlisle*. The next task is to introduce *Carlisle*, through the lens of *GD*, to Barth.

⁸⁷ H. Martin Rumscheidt, *Revelation and Theology: An analysis of the Barth – Harnack correspondence of 1923* (Cambridge University Press, 1972)

Chapter Two – The Theology of Discipleship: Carlisle and Barth

Chapter one has set forth some reasons for turning to Barth as a conversation partner for insights about the gospel of discipleship and its proclamation in the parish setting. As such it is intended to give *Carlisle* an introductory experience of how Karl Barth developed as a pastor and how he gradually turned to the canon of Scripture for illumination over parish mission. The chapter also introduced Barth's narrative theology and the dialectical method, by which he attempted to polarise and identify God and human beings, when interpreting Scripture. He was amazed by what he found. The three building blocks presented emerged from his ability to begin thinking outside of the 'theological box' when he was a student, his determination to make sense of his eventual pastoral ministry and his change of theological focus and language that came about through his new Bible reading practice. The value, for *Carlisle*, of this portrait, and subsequent outcomes, lies in its complexity, since it resonates, in some measure, with the less than straightforward content of the latest strategic plan, *GD*. This chapter, and the next one, brings Barth's new approach to theology into sharp conversation with *GD* and enters the Exploration stage of the Pastoral Cycle. The aim is to find out from Barth what are his views on the central theme of *GD* which is 'Growing Disciples':

'To see our churches growing Disciples of all ages.'

'Being a disciple means being a committed follower of Jesus with all that involves for belief and lifestyle. It is the key to growth of every kind, and everything we do as a Diocese during the next ten years will be geared to enabling this vision for discipleship to be realised. "Go and make disciples of all nations" said Jesus in what is now the seen as the 'Great Commission' (Matthew 28) – and this is what we believe He is now saying

to us. We long for Cumbria to be a place where disciples both grow, and help to grow, other disciples.’ (*GD* p. 5)

GD identifies five areas of discipleship: Maturity in Faith; Expectant Prayer and Lively Worship; Community Service and Engagement; Evangelism; Quality Relationships. These ‘five marks of discipleship’ are interconnected and based on the conviction that this ‘where we believe God is leading the Diocese.’ (p. 4). In order to expand this concept each of the ‘five marks’ have five bullet-points which are intended to aid good parish practice.

The document, by the use of bold statements, presents a pragmatic work-programme about how to make disciples. There is no suggestion that the readers might like to ponder the theological meaning of discipleship either for themselves or for the others they are encouraged to reach. As such *GD* is wide-ranging in scope and, like Barth, repetitive in places. Unlike Barth, the document aims for practical outcomes (‘result in sustained growth’) without an engagement in practical theology. The plan is like a jigsaw puzzle with an abundance of pieces that need to be brought together in order that the reader can see what is called the ‘Big Picture’ (p. 6). The big picture is set in the framework of a God who guides today and discipleship being the destination where God leads

‘This document sets out where we believe God is leading the Diocese.’ (*GD* p.4)

What stands out is that God is central to discipleship both in *GD* and to Barth. Since this is so, it is this chapter which identifies God as being the subject to analyse. The intention is to ask Barth for his theological comments about God in order that these might help the readers of *GD* to focus more precisely on what it means to believe in the God who guides us into true discipleship.

Barth when he speaks about discipleship does so in realistic and active terms:

'We will again begin by stating that the call to discipleship is the particular form of the summons by which Jesus discloses and reveals Himself to a man in order to claim and sanctify him as His own, and as His witness in the world. It has the form of a command of Jesus directed to him. It means the coming of grace, for what is disclosed and revealed in Jesus is the reconciliation of the world with God as his reconciliation and therefore the fullness of salvation.'⁸⁸

Barth equates discipleship with conversion, and he understands conversion to be the work of God rather than the psychological or social experience that is often noted by other commentators:

'If it is the case that conversions frequently take place at certain ages, then conversion must be understood within the stages of development. Conversion then becomes both a religious act as well as a psychological-social-physical phase of development.'⁸⁹

Barth, though not ignoring social and religious factors related to conversion and discipleship, begins by first developing theological concepts that emerge from his doctrine of God. So the subject of God, as understood by Barth, is now presented as a further building block that can be added to the three established in chapter one. The question now put to Barth by the readers of *GD* is: who is this God who is guiding parishes to reach out and make new disciples? Four matters relating to God constitute this fourth building block.

2.1 The Experience of God

A major theme of Barth's theology is God. God as he has revealed himself to the world in Jesus Christ according to the witness of Scripture. It is in the *Church Dogmatics* that Barth goes into systematic detail about the relationship between experience and faith:

⁸⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 534-535

⁸⁹ Scot McKnight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 175

'In the first place it is true ... that the Word of God must be understood as an event in and to the reality of man:

There can be no objection in principle to describing the event as "experience" and even as "religious experience." The quarrel is not with the term nor with the true and important thing the term might finally denote, namely, the supremely real and determinative entry of the Word of God into the reality of man. But the term is burdened – this is why we avoid it – with the underlying idea that man is capable of religious experience or this capability has the significance as a norm.'⁹⁰

For Barth, Christian experience is experience of the Word of God, and this is not a given:

'Thus in real experience of the Word of God, man becomes an independent actualisation of this experience with his own independent interest. He thereby makes the experience possible. There are religious men into whose existence and nature the Word of God has entered and is present and whose existence and nature are therefore bound to become the depository and the first decisive criterion and standard of knowledge of the Word of God.'⁹¹

Barth is clear that it is possible for human beings not only to know but also to experience the Word of God. Religious experience is foundational for the preaching and hearing of the Word of God:

'And now for our part we must advance the following positive conclusion. This possibility, in distinction from others that slip through our fingers, the possibility of human experience of the Word of God understood as the possibility of this Word itself, is one that we can and must affirm with certainty, with final human seriousness. ... We

⁹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of The Word of God, I/1* trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 193

⁹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of The Word of God, I/1* trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 213

can and must actually put our hand in the fire for its character as a unique possibility. When we refer to this possibility in dogmatics, in Church proclamation and in Church generally, we are in all circumstances building on rock and not on the sand.'⁹²

God, according to Barth, is not an accumulation of human reflection on the basis of existence but rather he is the one who has revealed himself as Lord through the manifestation of Jesus Christ:

'We may look closer and ask: who and what is the God who is to be known at the point upon which Holy Scripture concentrates our attention and thoughts? Who and what is the God who rules and feeds His people, creating and maintaining the whole world for its benefit, and guiding it according to His own good-pleasure ...? If in this way we ask further concerning the one point upon which, according to Scripture, our attention and thoughts should and must be concentrated, then from the first to the last the Bible directs us to the name of Jesus Christ.'⁹³

Barth, though making a connection between religious experience and faith, bases his understanding that religious experience is not to be the ground for faith, but that experience needs to be focussed on faith in the Word of God. *GD* places Maturity in Faith as being the first of the five 'Marks of Discipleship' because it wants the churches to:

'enable disciples to become more Mature in Faith' (*GD* p.7).

Barth would underline this aim but would ask that this faith should be rooted in a clear understanding of the God who, *GD* says, 'equips God's people for work in his service' (*GD* p.7). For Barth this God is the Trinity.

⁹² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds, G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 223-224

⁹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics The Doctrine of the Word of God II/2*, trans. G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 53

2.2 The Nature of God

Although *GD* does use the name 'Jesus' a few times the reader is not told that an experience of Christ is central to the concept of discipleship. Also it is assumed, rather than emphasised, that the mention of 'God' is a Trinitarian concept. God the Spirit is given a fleeting reference (p.8) and mention of God as Father is almost incidental (p.2). In one sense these omissions are understandable in that a strategic plan is not intended to be a doctrinal statement. However, if Barth is to contribute to this part of the conversation then the root doctrine of the Trinity and unity of God cannot be side-stepped since he intends that this doctrine should be to the front of Christian understanding of God. Barth sees the knotty problem of the Trinity as the central theme of the canon of Scripture, and in order to highlight this he expounds the unity of God in dialectical detail in the first two volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*:

'the doctrine of the Trinity confirms the knowledge of the unity of God, but not of any knowledge of any unity of any God. ... At issue here is the revealed knowledge of the revealed unity of the revealed God – revealed according to the witness of the Old and New Testaments.'⁹⁴

Although *GD* makes no attempt to explain that the God of discipleship is the triune God of Scripture, there is reason to assume that the publication by an Anglican diocese is a Trinitarian document and therefore is underpinned by the orthodox formula of the Church of England's *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which states in Article one:

'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both

⁹⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 353-354

visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.’⁹⁵

Barth, along with the Church of England’s *Thirty-Nine Articles*, places this doctrine at the beginning of his exploration into Christian truth. This common ground allows for comment about God on the part of Barth.

In his exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity Barth goes to great lengths to emphasise that God is the supreme Subject and Lord and can only be understood as Object for us from his own point of view. We can only objectify God when God does this for us:

‘If it is true that man really believes 1. that the object of faith is presented to him and 2. that he himself is assimilated to the object, then we are led in conclusion to the third point that man exists as a believer wholly by the object. In believing he can think of himself as grounded, not in self but only in this object, as existing indeed only by this object. He has not created his own faith; the Word has created it. He has not adopted faith; faith has been granted to him through the Word. As a believer he cannot see himself as the acting subject of the work done here.’⁹⁶

For Barth the triune God becomes knowable through the triune event of God’s self-disclosure and our participation in this event. The relationship between God and ourselves exists only because:

‘The Word of God becomes knowable by making itself known.’⁹⁷

Since it is not possible to separate Barth’s description of the experience of God from his doctrine of the Trinity, *Carlisle* can be confident that the God Barth talks about is the God of the Bible, despite his use of different language. And since *GD* wishes to promote education

⁹⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 613

⁹⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 244

⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 246

on the subject of in modern disciples, *'Understanding and good teaching are vital for effective discipleship'* (GD p.7) the conversation with Barth about the knowledge of God should be able to continue smoothly.

2.3 The Knowledge of God

Barth did not conceive his new theological scheme in a vacuum or quickly. He developed it gradually as he tried to see beyond what he had learned as a theological student. In particular he was concerned (as his early essays and lectures delivered, prior to arriving in Safenwil, demonstrate) because the religious individualism and historical relativism of 'modern' theology seemed to do little to prepare young clergy for the task of practical pastoral activities.⁹⁸ It was a challenge to Barth to express and explain why historians of religion, when employing the tools of historical criticism in Bible study, could miss the miraculous element of biblical history. Having established that the God of the Bible is the self-revealed Trinity Barth, from his earliest writings, wrestles with the problem of how human beings can know this God. This was not a straightforward exercise for Barth since it required him to also maintain at every point the dialectical distinction between God and humanity. *Carlisle* suggests that the way forward in parish mission is by:

'each Parish looking to God for the detail of how they are to take this journey.' (GD p 4)

Barth would commend the idea that we need *'to look to God for the detail'* but he would then go on to stress that the journey involved requires more from us than a formal acknowledgement of God as Trinity. True knowledge of God, which is necessary for true discipleship is a divine gift and is not easy to access.

Barth's initial answer, to what he considered to be the theological problem of liberal biblical criticism, was to identify the possibility of 'knowing' God, despite the seemingly human

⁹⁸ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909 - 1936* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 70

impossibility of gaining access to such knowledge. He attempted to do this by arguing that there was a pathway to divine knowledge that superseded the normal process of learning and understanding.

Reference has already been made to Barth's struggle to align his own theological understanding with the philosophical theology of Immanuel Kant. As a student Barth had read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and so he would have encountered the concept: '*Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.*'⁹⁹ Kant held that the content of our knowledge comes through the senses and it is thought that organises and gives form to this information. This traditional Kantian concept was eventually challenged and refined by two Marburg philosophers, Paul Natorp and Hermann Cohen. Both of these men considered Kant's ontology to be rather dated and uncritical. The advances in science and mathematics caused Cohen to question Kant's idea that thought was autonomous and could sort out data that was presented to it from the outside. Cohen argued that there was nothing given to thought which is not itself the creation of thought. If this were the case then knowledge of God was no more than self-knowledge and so people are God. This neo-Kantian move that disposed of God, raised the issue over where to place religion in society. Natorp handled the same problem but arrived at a different solution by which he located religion in the non-cognitive human spirit of awareness. This resonated, to some extent, with Schleiermacher's theory that human beings had a general capacity for God-consciousness or 'the feeling of absolute dependence expressing itself as consciousness of God.'¹⁰⁰ Neither of these two philosophers had any room for a God who was outside of human cognitive knowledge. If Natorp's philosophy of religion failed because it had

⁹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965) 93

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, eds., H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960) 26

neglected the objective side of religion, Cohen's philosophy of God proved inadequate because it lacked a subjective side.

Barth had no desire to be a philosopher and so did not spend time disputing neo-Kantianism. Rather he retained those philosophical categories¹⁰¹ that were useful to him and proceeded to explain his own understanding about how humans can 'know' God. He used Kant's ground rules¹⁰² which held that the infinite could not be grasped by the conceptual language of time and space. Human language was appropriately used to define people and things but inappropriate to define God. Kant's project confined knowledge within the limits of what we could possibly experience. This means that we cannot have any knowledge of God in Kant's restrictive sense. This dilemma required Barth to find a new starting point, a place where God revealed himself by the miracle of revelation rather than through human observations of finite metaphysics.

Theology for Barth is the function of the church. Church theology is intended to serve its confession of God which takes place in both word and action. For Barth both confession and action are theology. Although Carlisle does not spell out this dual function of the church in *GD* it does assume that the church is the place where God reveals himself and calls disciples to go and act out their Christianity in the world:

'That is what the Christian Church has been here to do for hundreds of years, and despite immense goodwill and significant presence at the heart of nearly all our communities the task today is as challenging as it has ever been.' (*GD* p. 5)

GD is a church-based plan designed to help parishes regain confidence as they face new challenges presented by parish mission and the call to modern discipleship. Barth's view of

¹⁰¹ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909 - 1936* (Oxford University Press, reprint, 2004) 245

¹⁰² Trevor Hart, *Revelation*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge University Press, 2003) 38

the church, though presented in a theologically different form than that of *GD*, can underpin its basic ecclesiology.

2.4 The Church of God

Karl Barth is essentially a churchly theologian and his doctrine of God is bound to the church. He argues, that the positive vocation and calling of a human being is to be a Christian. This comes about only through an encounter with the Trinitarian God:

‘In accordance with the particularity and uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the vocation of man is a particular and unique event in God’s encounter with man, which is such a history, the occurrence and coming into being of a relationship which does not exist always, everywhere and from the very first.’¹⁰³

However, this vocation is not only for the benefit of the individual but also for the church. Barth says it is impossible to be called into the church of the living Lord Jesus Christ prior to an encounter with God:

‘As we have tried to explain and affirm in the preceding section, the vocation of man is his vocation to be a Christian. But we must now continue that vocation to be a Christian means vocation or calling into Christendom or the Church, i.e., into the living community of the living Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to be called first into the Church and then, in and by the Church, to be a Christian. On the other hand, it is equally impossible to be a Christian and then subsequently to be called, or possibly not to be called, into the Church. As Christian existence is not a mere complement of existence in the Church, so existence in the Church is not a mere complement of Christian existence.’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation IV, 3/2* trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 483.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 492

Barth never contemplated the idea of 'believing without belonging', a subject which will be considered at a later stage in this thesis. He understood believing to be belonging, since his doctrine of reconciliation cannot be separated from his doctrine of election:

'He is the God who elects Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. On the strength of this God in His eternal election of grace, man's justification before Him in Jesus Christ, but also his vocation to the active recognition of this and therefore to concrete fellowship with God, are first and real and certain. The election is the basis of vocation.'¹⁰⁵

In order to arrive at this point in his ecclesiology Barth had to root his understanding of the election of human beings to salvation and to church membership in the doctrine of election and creation. The doctrine of election is found in Barth's comprehensive discussion about the doctrine of God,¹⁰⁶ where he makes the transition from the knowledge of God to knowledge of all his work. When human beings are elected, they are elected to service and this is their vocation:

'The righteousness of God in His election means, then, that as a righteous Judge God perceives and estimates as such the lost case of the creature and that in spite of its opposition He gives sentence in its favour, fashioning for His own righteousness. ... He cares for the creature as for His own passion. ... It is rather the revelation of the reasonableness of His work, in which we may recognise that work as well-founded and accept it, and allow it to come upon us as a blessing. ... The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation IV/3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 484

¹⁰⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 32-35

¹⁰⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 34

Having established that the vocation of the Christian, and therefore discipleship, is possible because of the election that takes place in Jesus Christ, Barth was in a position to demonstrate that the church is not a natural community but a divine reality and yet at the same time remains an earthly and historical event:

‘The Christian Community is not a mere phenomenon, however distinguished. It is an event. Otherwise it is not the Christian community. ... The fact remains that it is not itself a foundation or institution. In correspondence with the hidden being of Jesus Christ Himself, it is an earthly-historical event, and as such it is the earthly historical form of His existence.’¹⁰⁸

The foundation for this high view of the church was established by Barth in his doctrine of creation. Here he explains the relationship between the divine and human action. God who is Lord of the creature both preserves and accompanies human beings as a father:

‘God fulfils His fatherly lordship over His creature by preserving, accompanying and ruling the whole course of its earthly existence. He does this as His mercy is revealed and active in the creaturely sphere in Jesus Christ, and the lordship of His Son is thus manifested to it.’¹⁰⁹

However, the lordship of Christ does not mean that the creature has no freedom but rather that the autonomous creature is surrounded by the love and care of the Creator:

‘But in this autonomy of the creature in its own activity we see in a new light the activity of God in providence, in the exercise of His fatherly lordship over the creature.’¹¹⁰

By use of the dialectical method Barth describes the relation of two seemingly incompatible notions: the lordship of God and the free autonomous activity of the creature. This

¹⁰⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 696

¹⁰⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 58

¹¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 91

relationship is not an obvious one and does not exist in a general framework. It has to be explained since it is foundational to an understanding of Christian theology; in our case the theology of the church:

‘But Christian theology can and must differ from a general philosophy of God and the world in the fact that to Christian theology the factor upon which everything depends, the activity of God which becomes event, is not an unknown but a known factor, and known in such a way that it demands a knowledge and an acknowledgement of the How? ... As its very name suggests, Christian theology has to do with Jesus Christ, with the history of the covenant of grace as it leads up to Him and has its source in Him, and therefore with the almighty operation of God governing all cosmic occurrence as it is revealed ...’¹¹¹

Having established that Jesus Christ is the right theological starting point for viewing the connection between the divine and human action, Barth places himself in a good position to describe the human and divine activity of the church. For *Carlisle* this means that its attempt to guide local church activity by means of a human strategic plan can be galvanised by Barth’s thorough-going ecclesiology. The visible institutional church, despite its failures, both for Barth and *Carlisle*, is seen as God’s instrument for proclaiming the gospel to the rest of humanity. Barth sees it to be the vocation of every Christian to recognise their ordained responsibility to address the non-Christian, in their locality, with the gospel. This is made possible by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit:

‘The Holy Spirit is the enlightening power of the living Lord Jesus Christ in which He confesses the community called by Him as His body, i.e., as His own earthly-historical form of existence, by entrusting to it the ministry of His prophetic Word and therefore

¹¹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004)141

the provisional representation of the calling of all humanity and indeed of all creatures as it has taken place in Him. He does this by sending it among the people as His own people, ordained for its part to confess Him before all men, to call them to Him and thus to make known to the whole world that the covenant between God and man concluded in Him is the first and final meaning of its history, and that His future manifestation is already here and now its great, effective and living hope.’¹¹²

The four building blocks, on which to erect the task of parish mission and evangelism which leads to the establishment of new discipleship, are now in place. The next chapter looks at what needs to be built theologically on this foundation. By weaving in and out of *GD* and Barth the single focus of discipleship is maintained:

‘The Vision and Strategy provides a single focus (Discipleship) and a plan with which a fresh start and realistic, though challenging, way forward.’ (*GD* p.4)

¹¹² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation IV.3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 681

Chapter Three – The Action of the Church: Barth and Carlisle

The first two chapters have established Barth as a reliable conversation partner who can engage with *Carlisle* through the medium of its strategic plan *GD*. Three of four foundational building blocks were laid from Barth's life and complex theological journey in chapter one. The fourth building block established in chapter two, was Barth's understanding of the experience of God and the miraculous means by which human beings can discover knowledge of the Holy Trinity. Without this understanding of God the task of exploring the challenge of discipleship presented in *GD* would not be possible. Barth considers that the knowledge of God is a possible impossibility. In order to describe this miracle Barth uses philosophical, as well as theological concepts, as tools to state his case. Bruce McCormack observes that Barth's dialectical theology of veiling and unveiling in God's Self-Revelation presupposes the legitimacy of Kantian epistemology.¹¹³ The chapter also discussed the most important conceptual resources of the subject-object relation in Barth's epistemology. This means that left to ourselves we have no means by which we can enter into the revelation of God apart from grace that provides access through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Barth's strength, as far as *Carlisle* is concerned, lies in the way that he works out these themes. Some of *Carlisle's* themes are to be found in Barth and so this makes another important connection between *GD* and Barth's narrative theology. The *Exploration* stage of the Pastoral Cycle is now developed further. As an introduction to the numerous mission action proposals and suggestions about discipleship *GD* assumes three things:

'These run through every part of our vision and thinking like golden threads. They are:

The eternal message of the **Gospel** and our calling to teach and proclaim it in and out of season.

¹¹³ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909 – 1936* (Clarendon Press Oxford, 2004) 466

The pastoral nature of our **Ministry** which means that relationship is at the heart of everything we do

The imperative to engage in **Mission** which is the main reason (together with worship) for which the Christian Church exists.' (p. 4)

So what does the first of the three 'golden threads', the **Gospel**, look like in the canonical narrative theology of Barth?

3.1 The Gospel of the Kingdom

Barth's first major attempt to expound the gospel is found in his two commentaries on *Romans*; the first he published while he was a pastor in Switzerland and the second, though completed in Safenwil, was published in 1922 when he was a new professor at a German university. Both books demonstrate the value of the dialectical method when it is used to identify significant theological themes.

A worthy reason for introducing Barth's narrative theology to *Carlisle* is that he is accepted in the theological world as a one of the classic theologians¹¹⁴ who needs to be consulted by Christian thinkers who do not, 'wish to reinvent the wheel'.¹¹⁵ When Barth is consulted in *Romans* he requires the readers to listen to Scripture in such a way, that they can see how to participate actually and with supreme realism in the biblical gospel. The gospel, when encountered in this way introduces us to an unknown world:

'In announcing the limitation of the known world by another that is unknown, the Gospel does not enter into competition with the many attempts to disclose within the known world some more or less unknown and higher form of existence and make it

¹¹⁴ C.K. Barrett is reported to have included Barth, along with Augustine, Luther and Calvin, as a classic interpreter of Christianity. (*The Times*, September 8th 2011) 58, and he places Barth's *Romans* alongside Luther and Calvin in his Preface to his own commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Adam & Charles Black London, reprint, 1967) vi

¹¹⁵ David Ford, *The Future of Christian Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 8

accessible to men. The Gospel is not a truth among other truths. Rather it sets a question-mark against all truths. The Gospel is not the door but the hinge.’¹¹⁶

Barth places the Resurrection at the heart of the gospel and considers it to be powerful enough to stand apart from all other attempts to introduce God to the world:

‘The Resurrection from the dead is, however, the transformation: the establishing or *declaration* of that point from above, and the corresponding discerning of it from below. The Resurrection is the revelation: the disclosing of Jesus as the appearing of God in Jesus. The Resurrection is the emergence of the necessity of giving glory to God ... In the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it.’ (p. 30).

As such the Resurrection is its own apologetic by which:

‘is the action, the supreme miracle, by which God, the unknown God, dwelling in light unapproachable, the Holy One, Creator, and Redeemer, makes Himself known.’ (p. 35).

This approach to a realistic reading of Scripture has a history. It can be traced back to Christian preachers and theological commentators such as Augustine, who ‘envisioned the real world as formed by the sequence told by the biblical stories.’¹¹⁷ This was a dominant form of biblical interpretation, with variations, through and beyond the Reformation up until the Enlightenment.¹¹⁸ In a similar way, *GD* introduces each of the ‘Marks of Discipleship’ with an appropriate but unexplained realistic Bible verse. This method is intended to give the vision of the document, especially the gospel of the Kingdom of God, biblical authority:

¹¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 35

¹¹⁷ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1974) 1

¹¹⁸ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1974) 17-50

'Our specific (and we believe, God-given) vision needs to be interpreted in the context of an overall mission:

By God's grace, to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria.' (p. 5).

For Barth, as for *Carlisle*, the Kingdom of God is the message of the gospel. In *GD*, God's kingdom is a spiritual concept that comes into being when modern disciples of Christ work out their Christian faith in the various communities in which they live:

'The Kingdom of God is what all our efforts are about. It is what Jesus came to preach – and to bring.' (*GD* p. 5)

Barth would agree that Christ's mission was to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. During his early years in Safenwil his association with religious socialism was not in order to stem the tide of working-class defection from the church to secular socialism. Rather one of the attractions of the movement was its desire to establish a programme for the Kingdom of God upon the earth. He felt that Jesus wanted what the socialists wanted. However, when he came to write *Romans II* Barth changed his fundamental theological understanding of the matter. The Kingdom of God was now presented in terms of Jesus and his message being over and against the world rather than it being part of the world's experience. One of Barth's major disagreements with liberal Protestantism was over its identification of the Kingdom of God with the society where Christians lived. He accepted that it was impossible for the Christian to escape from society and live elsewhere:

'From life and society one cannot turn away. They surround us on all sides; they set questions for us; they confront us with decisions. We must hold our ground. ... We should like to be out of this society – and in another. But this is only a wish ...'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 272-273

However, Barth was not satisfied with accepting society, as if it was out of God's domain. By means of the dialectical method he highlights the complexity of life for the Christian in society:

'We live in the midst of a tragically incomplete but purposeful series of divine deeds and evidences. We live amidst transition – a transition from death to life, from, from the unrighteousness of men to the righteousness of God, from the old to the new creation.'¹²⁰

The Kingdom of God as promoted in *GD* is left undefined and something to be imagined, whereas for Barth it is an act of God yet to be realised in all its fullness:

*'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God – in as much as the putting on is an act of God, and not a human action ... We await a new heaven and a new earth. The Righteousness of God in us and in the world is not a particular form of human righteousness competing with other forms; rather, your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii.3). If it not be hidden, it is not Life! The Kingdom of God has not 'broken forth' upon the earth, not even the tiniest fragment of it; and yet, it has been proclaimed: it has not come, not even in its most sublime form; and yet, it is nigh at hand. The Kingdom of God remains a matter of faith, and most of all is the revelation of it in Christ Jesus a matter of faith. It is heralded and it is nigh at hand as a new world, not as a continuation of the old.'*¹²¹

At the same time, for Barth, the Kingdom of God is not something apart from the gospel rather it is the *KRISIS* of the gospel of the Resurrection:

'The stone has been rolled away from the tomb. The Word has free course. Jesus lives; and He is the metropolis of the world. ... This may only be a parable, but a parable it is.

¹²⁰ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 297

¹²¹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 102

... the flag has been planted, that the name of the Lord is announced and received, that the Kingdom of God is being awaited and proclaimed. This then is faith; the fidelity of men encountering the faithfulness of God. Now when this occurs, the KRISIS introduced by the resurrection of Jesus is set in motion. ... The doors of Rome have been opened for the Lord ...' (p.32).

Barth's discussion of the Kingdom of God in both of his *Romans* commentaries is in many ways part of his attempt to describe that knowledge of God as a provision of God himself. Although he shifts from what has been described as 'process eschatology' in *Romans I*, to a 'consistent eschatology' in *Romans II*,¹²² Barth still links the Kingdom of God to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In *Romans II* this was a fully realised turning of the ages. There has been a turn from the old world to the new in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

'The two ways meet and go apart where in Adam men are fallen from God and where in Christ they find Him again. Here the old and visible world encounters judgement unto death, and the new and invisible world encounters judgement unto life. Where the two roads go apart, there they also meet. ... But God cannot stop here: there is no falling from God in Adam, no judgement of death visible to us except at the point where we are reconciled to God in Christ and assured of life. ... Where faith and the power of God are, men are what they are not. They stand as new men on the threshold of the new world. ... Now that we have this dialectical relationship between the 'old' and the 'new' in mind we can concentrate on the 'old'; not of course for its own sake – since it does

¹²² Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1919 – 1936* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 209

not exist in itself but only in relation to the pre-eminence of the 'new' – but in order that we may thereby be able to decipher the law of the new world.'¹²³

Barth learned two things from Paul: that the death and resurrection of Christ was a complex eschatological event and that it also had universal consequences. From these two features he went on to construct his doctrine of election in *Romans 9-11* and universalism. Later, in the light of his work on Christology, he would revise his understanding of election.¹²⁴ In the *Church Dogmatics* the central thesis of Barth's doctrine of election is that Jesus Christ is both the electing God and the elect human:

'It is strictly and narrowly only in the humanity of the one Jesus Christ that we can see who and what an elect person is. It is He who is the man distinguished by that special relationship to God. It is His life which is the genuine fulfilment of genuine election.'¹²⁵

Although Barth's theological universalism is both complicated and novel it is not possible to understand him when he speaks about the gospel of salvation unless we bear in mind his doctrine of election. At least this doctrine, in speaking about a God who acts in the lives of individuals and in communities, protects Barth's theology from being abstract:

'We are talking about thee, nay – we are actually talking *to* thee when we talk about the individual human person in relation to the election of Jesus Christ and the community!

¹²³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 165-166

¹²⁴ Bruce McCormack in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011) 244-245

¹²⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 351

... But this promise that establishes the elect person is not a theory about an object, but an address to a subject.¹²⁶

Everything that Barth wrote was concerned with the gospel and its outworking in the church and the world. Even taking into account some of the deficiencies in his theology, Carlisle can expect encouragement from Barth when it comes to teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God '*in and out of season*' (GD p.4).

It is reasonable to suggest that Barth wrote *Romans* 'out of season'; at a time when the war was taking its toll in Germany. The war also made life in Switzerland difficult, especially due to scarce food supplies, a decline in wages and an increase in redundancies. Barth helped to organise the local workers to resist the dismissal notices issued by their employers.¹²⁷ In stark contrast, it was also a time of cultural and intellectual advancement and McCormack is eager to highlight the 'expressionistic style' of both editions of Barth's commentaries.¹²⁸ Despite the varied styles adopted by Expressionist writers and painters, their overarching theme was to break into the surface of reality in order to uncover what lay underneath. This was something that Barth himself recognised and endorsed.¹²⁹ Barth's *Romans II* was a critical attempt to do the same for theology by the announcement of the gospel which:

'speaks of God as He is: it is concerned with Him Himself and with Him only. It speaks of the Creator who shall be our Redeemer and of the Redeemer who is our Creator. It is pregnant with our complete conversion; for it announces the transformation of our

¹²⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 323

¹²⁷ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth - Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 43

¹²⁸ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909 – 1936* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 139-141

¹²⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 292

creatureliness into freedom. It proclaims the forgiveness of our sins, the victory of life over death, in fact, the restoration of everything that has been lost. It is the signal, the fire-alarm of a coming new world. But what does all this mean? Bound to the world as it is, we cannot here and now apprehend. We can only receive the Gospel, for it is the recollection of God that is created by the Gospel that comprehends its meaning. ... We must be under no illusion: the reality of our present existence continues as it is!¹³⁰

It was in the *Romans* commentaries that Barth established a clear and important methodological move. By embarking upon a hermeneutical circle that excluded historical criticism and left little space for bridges to be built to public areas of human knowledge, he broke new ground and employed radical ideas. It was this 'non- traditional scientific' approach to the interpretation of Scripture that was to become the foundation of Barth's dialectical theology.

Instead of being intimidated by the restrictive boundaries established by the eighteenth and nineteenth century scientific methods of interpretation, the reader was encouraged to engage with the biblical text itself. The autonomous biblical text was the source that could lead to an experience of believing faith that demands a serious choice:

'The Gospel of salvation can only be believed in; it is a matter of faith only. It demands choice. This is its seriousness. To him that is not sufficiently mature to accept a contradiction and to rest in it, it becomes a scandal – to him that is unable to escape the necessity of contradiction, it becomes a matter of faith. Faith is awe in the presence of the divine incognito: it is the love of God that is aware of the qualitative distinction between God and man and God and the world; it is the affirmation of resurrection as

¹³⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London:Oxford University Press, 1965) 38

the turning-point of the world; and therefore it is the affirmation of the divine 'No' in Christ, of the shattering halt in the presence of God.¹³¹

The Bible informs us that there is a significant distinction between our knowledge of God and our understanding of ourselves. In order to achieve this goal Barth deliberately used new language, by which to state the gospel. He did the same when he discussed the Trinity. However, this prompted the question at the time and continues to do so today, as to whether Barth's change of language not only made old truths sound strange, but 'does it make them different?'¹³² This will be a decision that *Carlisle* will need to make. However, it does seem that the mission statement set out in *GD* views the Kingdom of God rather differently from Barth since:

'Growth remains our fundamental aim – in spiritual depth, fellowship, giving, service to others and numbers. ... The Kingdom of God is what all our efforts are about. It is what Jesus came to preach - and to bring.' (*GD* p.5).

Barth's formulation of the Kingdom of God in *Romans II* is to be seen in regards to what he was against rather than in terms of an affirmation of the dominant theology of his day. His disappointment with and reaction against the goals of his liberal Protestant heritage forced him to engage with a radical revision of his theology. During his study of *Romans* he discovered that Christianity is not in the first place about human effort and achievement but about the living God who strangely unsettles human beings. *Carlisle*, however, has presented a rather different version of the living God and his Kingdom compared to that presented by Barth. Though *GD* insists that the strategic programme encourages parishes to look to God for the details of how to serve as disciples in the new crisis facing the diocese (a

¹³¹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 39

¹³² G.W. Bromiley, *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, (ed. P.E. Hughes, Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1966) 51

crisis of decline in numbers), it provides little guidance about how, in concrete terms, parishes can go about their discipleship by 'looking to God':

'is not about 'the Diocese' attempting to control the Parishes in a detailed and meddlesome way. It is, though, an attempt to chart a direction of travel which we can take together, each Parish looking to God for the detail of how they take the journey. We want this to be a shared venture in which Diocese, Deaneries and Parishes work to support each other in our task of growing God's Kingdom in Cumbria,' (GD p.4).

Perhaps a conversation with Barth on how to understand the gospel and the Kingdom of God would provide theological engagement and reinforcement to an already established mission structure. *GD* allows for such engagement:

'despite the long process of thought, prayer and discussion that has brought us to this point, our vision and especially our strategy are not now 'set in concrete'! As well as monitoring progress in the coming months and years we will continue to listen and talk and then amend if necessary.' (GD p.15).

This willingness to listen and talk about the first 'golden thread' of *GD* - the **Gospel** – would alert Barth to the possibility of Carlisle wanting to link its quest for discipleship to that which he perceived in *Romans*:

'a crimson thread which runs through all history. Christ – the righteousness of God Himself – is the theme of this perception. (GD p. 96).

3.2 The Ministry of the Faithful

The second '*golden thread*' referred to in *GD* is the '**Ministry**' which, signifies a heartfelt pastoral relationship with those inside and outside of the parish congregations. Barth was deeply concerned about those who engaged in ministry in all its dimensions. Of all the responsibilities given to the church he saw this one as the most difficult and most

dangerous. The 'Ministry' for Barth emerges from the church being a community or the community of saints:

'It is the saints who are and act in this communion. ... As they now live and act on earth, in time, at the heart of the world history ... they are still the *communio peccatorum*, members of the race of Adam, participant in the transgression and fall of the misery of all men. But in spite of this, and in triumph over it, they are already distinguished from all other men ... a provisional representation of the new humanity in the midst of the old.'¹³³

The church is a community set within a community and its members have the privilege of proclaiming the gospel sensitively to others. But the church community is tight-knit and from its fellowship everything else, including its ministry, flows:

'It takes place, in the world, as the fellowship of the need of those who are moved by the burdens of the world, and the promise given to it, as their own innermost concern ... It takes place as the fellowship of service in which the saints assist and support one another, and in which they have also actively to attest to those outside what is the will of the One who has taken them apart and sanctified them. It takes place as the fellowship of hope and prophecy looking and reaching beyond the present ... Above all, of course, it takes place as the fellowship of their proclamation of the Gospel, of the Word by which they are gathered and impelled and maintained.'¹³⁴

Reference has already been made (p. 32) to Barth's lecture given in October 1922:

'*The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry*'¹³⁵ where he speaks directly to those, 'whose profession it is to teach the inner meanings of religion.' *Carlisle* extends this

¹³³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 642

¹³⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 64

¹³⁵ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*' trans Douglas Horton (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1928) 183-217

ministry to all of Christ's disciples and not just to 'authorised ministries' (GD p.7).

Barth commends such inclusive ministry of discipleship:

'Whenever men wait upon God they possess a mission and a *character indelibilis*, even though God be shrouded from their eyes and from the eyes of all in utter incomprehensibility, and even though they themselves be overwhelmed by catastrophes which affect their inner as well as their outer lives. God never reveals Himself to no purpose.'¹³⁶

Although Barth recognised the formal functions of ordained clergy, and was himself ordained, he was careful not to advocate the idea of two classes of people in the church – ordained and lay:

'The occasional coincidence of this distinction with the distinction between two classes of people can have only a passing technical significance. The distinction between esoteric and exoteric, theologians and laity, office-bearers and congregations can have no fundamental bearing. Basically there is on both sides only a common responsibility and participation.'¹³⁷

Carlisle is looking for:

'A steady growth in **vocation** to 'authorised ministries' (including ordination, Readership and authorised Lay Ministry)' (GD p. 7)

and:

'A scheme for encouraging and supporting Ministry at Work in every benefice. We need to help people understand that Christian ministry doesn't only happen in church.' (GD p.9)

¹³⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 80

¹³⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/2*, trans G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight, eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 797-8

Barth endorses all that *Carlisle* has to say about the broad sphere of ministry both inside and outside of the church; both in its ordained and its 'lay' form. He was concerned that those involved in formal and informal ministry should know what was at the heart of apostolic ministry. In order to discover this he read and interpreted St Paul's Epistles. In these Epistles Barth observed how the Apostles defined the knowledge of God and how they expressed the meaning of the gospel.

The above examination of *Romans* has demonstrated how Barth's dialectical narrative theology can be applied to certain sections of *Carlisle's* Strategic Plan in order to underpin the concepts biblically. Barth in his interpretation was acutely conscious that although Paul was setting out a universal message, he was at the same time, also addressing a particular congregation:

'Paul as a child of his age, addressed his contemporaries. It, is however, far more important that as Prophet and Apostle of the Kingdom of God he veritably speaks to all men of every age.'¹³⁸

Barth attempted to hold these two distant worlds together and did so by departing from the contemporary scientific method of handling Scripture in order to bring to light 'the otherness of the biblical world'¹³⁹ by setting the text free. His aim was not to counter the historical-critical method by recommending a return to the pre-critical privileged status of the text. Rather he wanted to affirm that a proper hermeneutic is underpinned by the principle that God is known through God.¹⁴⁰ Barth pressed on with the same dialectical method of interpreting the Bible when moved from his parish in Switzerland to become a university professor in Göttingen.

¹³⁸ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 1

¹³⁹ John Webster, *Karl Barth* (Continuum, 2000) 29

¹⁴⁰ John Webster, *Karl Barth* (Continuum, 2000) 30

One example of his work at this time is found in his published commentary on 1 Corinthians. This New Testament Epistle is noted for its apostolic instructions on the behaviour of church members and for regulations about certain forms of ministry. The move from the church pulpit to the university lectern presented Barth with the challenge of interpreting the Bible away from the pastoral and social concerns of parish life. A positive reason for introducing this commentary to *Carlisle* is because it provides an insight into how Barth interpreted Scripture and applied the centrality of the Resurrection, not only to the church's Confession but also to the problems that relate to congregational life and in particular to its ministry.

Barth's attempt in *Romans* to confidently affirm God to be the unifying centre of Scripture is consolidated in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, *The Resurrection of the Dead*,¹⁴¹ which was first published in 1924. Although this book, which examines Pauline eschatology, began as an exegetical lecture series in Göttingen, it did not receive the reception that was accorded to his book on *Romans*. However, it is an important text because it links Barth's biblical thinking during his pastorate with that of his academic approach to Scripture as a university teacher.

In *The Resurrection of the Dead* Barth used the same dialectical interpretive method he did in his work on *Romans*, in order to unearth the heart of Paul's message to a congregation. Although the Epistle is concerned with a denial of Paul's ministry and authority, as well as on the confusion caused by pseudo-ministers who had infiltrated the church in Corinth, Barth views these matters as secondary when they are compared to the ministry of Christ's resurrection. It is Barth's unusual approach to the subject matter of ministry in this book which can offer *Carlisle* a theological framework for pastoral ministry that enables churches to grow disciples of the risen Christ. This desire is the heartbeat of *GD*:

¹⁴¹ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H.J. Stenning, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003).

'Being a disciple means being a committed follower of Jesus with all that involves for belief and lifestyle. It is the key to growth of every kind, and everything we do as a Diocese during these next ten years will be geared to enabling this vision for discipleship to be realised. "Go and make disciples of all nations" said Jesus in what is now seen as the 'Great Commission' (Matthew 28) – and that is what we believe He is now saying to us. We long for Cumbria to be a place where disciples both grow, and help grow other disciples.' (GD p. 5).

As indicated, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, along with his other early biblical writings that he produced once he left his parish, had its origin in the classroom¹⁴² and not in the pulpit. Preaching for Barth in this period had to take a back seat.¹⁴³ This was a time in his life when Barth had to read widely the writings of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. He was studying night and day, 'going to and fro with books old and new until I had at least some skill in mounting the academic donkey'.¹⁴⁴ However, the message of the resurrection never left him:

'The mystery which Paul here discloses is ... the synchronism of the living and the dead in the resurrection.' The resurrection is 'the crisis which concerns all men in all ages', it is 'God's decisive word to all mankind'¹⁴⁵.

Without the resurrection:

"the whole edifice of piety would collapse, just as if the foundations were withdrawn from it" (Calvin).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² John Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology* (T&T Clark International, 2005) 5

¹⁴³ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 127

¹⁴⁴ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 127

¹⁴⁵ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans H.J. Stenning (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003) 207

¹⁴⁶ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans H.J. Stenning (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003) 212

Idealistically it is this subject that is at the heart of ministry but idealism is not always practical in parish life. The distinction between ministry and social involvement is often blurred and *GD* reflects this dilemma:

‘Part of our discipleship is an engagement with, and service of, the wider world beyond our own needs’ (*GD* p. 9).

This was a matter Barth wrestled with throughout his life. However, Barth’s new commentary was to be one result from the 1920s of him not:

‘throwing the whole theological business in the corner’ in order not to transform himself into, ‘a social worker.’¹⁴⁷

What 1 Corinthians established for Barth was that the interpreter of Scripture needed to submit to the active presence of God in the text. This objective gave him the courage not to allow exegesis to get stuck in the past or be limited by historical enquiry. His ambition to arrive at intelligent comment meant that he was driven on:

‘till I stand with nothing before me but the enigma of the matter; till the document seems hardly to exist as a document; till I have forgotten that I am not its author; till I know the author so well that I allow him to speak in my name and I am even able to speak in his name myself.’¹⁴⁸

What he aimed for in the book on Romans he established in *The Resurrection of the Dead*.

Barth, like those he studied (Anselm, Luther, Calvin and Schleiermacher, to name just a few,) is now part of a long tradition that cannot answer back. Yet, says Barth, it:

‘is partly contemporary: it takes place among those who belong to the same age and period of the Church. But to a much greater extent it is non-contemporary: it takes place among those who belonged to an earlier and those who belonged to a later age in

¹⁴⁷ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth - Thuneysen Correspondence*, (December 18, 1922) 118.

¹⁴⁸ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 8.

the Church, between the present age and those which preceded it. A common hearing and receiving is necessarily involved either way where the Church is the Church. The life of the Church is the life of the members of a body.¹⁴⁹

This sentence sums up Barth's view of how the church can find its way into the ever changing context that it is to fulfil its mission and recruit new disciples. Barth presents us with the churchly nature of Christianity but this concept does not come without modern problems especially when it comes to defining *Carlisle's* third 'golden thread' – Mission. For Barth the three golden threads of *GD* are woven together so that the gospel, ministry and mission become part of one subject in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3.3 The Mission of the Trinity

To some extent *Carlisle* sees mission as something that the church does:

'If we are truly growing as disciples, then this should overflow outwards from the church as we engage with our community and serve it, following the example of our Lord.' (p.9)

For Barth the subject of mission is more subtle: it is something that the church is:

'The Christian community is not sent into the world haphazardly or at random, but with a very definite task. It does not exist before its task and later acquire it. Nor does it exist apart from it, so that there can be no question whether or not it might have or execute it. It exists for the world. Its task constitutes and fashions it from the very outset. If it had not been given it, it would not have come into being. If it were to lose it, it would not continue. It is not, then, a kind of imparted dignity. It exists only as it, or rather only as the task has it.'¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, I/2, trans G.T. Thompson and Harold Knight, eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 588.

¹⁵⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, IV/3.2, trans. G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 795-6

The effect that Barth's ecclesiology has on the vocation of the church, with respect to those outside its boundaries, is to show its divine status without calling it divine. Rather, the church exists as a divine action:

'It may be granted that without His election and calling, without His will and work and Word, it would not exist even visibly, *ad extra*, in worldly form and to that extent in likeness with the various elements and factors in the world. It exists at all, and therefore in this sense, only in the power of the divine decision, act and revelation accomplished and effective in Jesus Christ.'¹⁵¹

As an elected community the eyes of the church are open to see its establishment as the work of the invisible God in Jesus Christ. The church's ministry is its mission. Mission, according to Barth, like revelation and the Trinity, is a miracle. This does not mean that the church is so controlled and overpowered by God that it never makes mistakes. The union between God and the church is a union of divine and human action. In the covenant of grace God and human beings are two distinct partners and so the action of the church counts for something. The objective work of Christ includes, within itself, the subjective outcome of that work. It is in its expression of this work that the church finds itself looking beyond itself. Mission, according to Barth is central to the church's existence and not simply a fringe activity. It is impossible to talk about the church without talking about mission. So in this respect *GD* conforms to Barth's theology. The question is: does Barth take the subject of mission further than *GD* allows for? I raise this question because *GD* places in parentheses '(together with worship)' (*GD* p. 4). It also lists 'Expectant Prayer and Lively Worship' as one of the 'five marks' of discipleship (*GD* p. 8).

¹⁵¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.2*, trans. G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 727

It is not the aim of this thesis to explore fully Barth's ideas about prayer and worship in detail. However, since the brief inclusion of the subject alongside the 'golden thread' of mission seems to act as a guard to them being absorbed into mission, a brief discussion of Barth's views on the nature of prayer and worship may help to clarify a potential confusion. For Barth both mission and worship are identified as being located in the sphere of God. At the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932 Barth read a paper in which he became one of the first theologians to ascribe mission as a work of God himself.¹⁵² Barth's concept of mission as *missio Dei* extends the classical doctrine of the movement of God as Trinity: God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son send the Spirit now included in God sending the church into the world. This makes mission an activity of God, not just an action of the church. In the same way Barth attaches prayer and worship to the action of God and not just to its expression as conducted in the church:

'It is not only in worship that the community is edified and edifies itself. But it is here that this continually takes place. And if it does not take place here it does not take place anywhere. This is the point where the building of God, and the divine-human Lord, and of Christians as those who have a part in this building, is distinguished from the dominion and appearance of a mere idea. This is the point where in all its totality it becomes a concrete event at a specific time and place. ... In all its elements, not merely in the administration of the Supper but in its goal in communion. Christian worship is the action of God, of Jesus, and the community itself for the community, and therefore the upbuilding of the community.'¹⁵³

¹⁵² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, 1995) 389

¹⁵³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 638-639

Barth, though giving due recognition to personal prayer and small prayer-groups considers the coming together of the church as the 'communion of saints' as an important event instigated by God:

'where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, they are called by Him to pray with one other. Those gathered by the revelation of His name are men who are wholly referred to and directed by God. That they are referred to God is something they have in common with all men. But they are also directed to Him. They know that in the last resort they are not in their own hands and under their control. They know that they are only creatures and not the Creator.'¹⁵⁴

Surprisingly *GD*, though an Anglican document, makes no mention of Baptism or the Lord's Supper. Barth, however, couches his description of prayer and worship in a sacramental setting:

'And so they meet to pray with one another. They also pray, of course, individually and in small groups. But this is not enough ... but the confession and baptism and Supper, in short the action, of the community are also needed if everything is to be lawful and right. The prayer of Christians, too demands that it should find its true and proper form in the prayer of the assembled community; in the united calling upon God: "Our Father, which art in heaven...." The reason why it must be united ... is because those gathered to the community may pray with the One by whom they are united and who is Himself present in the midst – their predecessor in prayer.'¹⁵⁵

This brief detour into Barth's comments on prayer and worship upholds *GD*'s concern that the activity should not be simply absorbed into mission. However, for Barth worship and prayer, as activities of the local church, reinforce the priority of mission even when the

¹⁵⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 704

¹⁵⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 705

church is praying, and should not be considered as a private occupation that bears no relation to mission:

‘Hence prayer is no mere gesture of elevation. It creates in the world a fact which has this significance and which it speaks for itself, whether it is heard and accepted by the world or not. Where else in the world does it take place that God is thanked for the love with which He has turned to the world and asked that He will turn to it again with this love? ... Does not the whole world need that this very thing should take place in it, that together with many other things which it does prayer should be offered?’¹⁵⁶

Barth’s ecclesiology focuses the vision of the church on God who reconciles us to Himself in Christ. The church, in both its mission and worship, is the mission of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings life to the church and enlightens it to look beyond itself:

‘The Holy Spirit is the enlightening, and as the enlightening the summoning power of the divine promise, which points the community beyond itself, which calls it to transcend itself and in that way to be in truth the community of God.’¹⁵⁷

Mission, then, in the hands of Barth, is who we are. This mission ontology can and should lead to the good parish practice outlined in *GD*. However, according to Barth, unless this focus on mission is rooted in the Trinity it could become our weakness. If our mission is so narrow that it only focuses on the individual’s salvation, or our ecclesiology so flexible that technique replaces the work of the Holy Spirit and our goal is solely to be relevant to culture, then Barth’s insights will count for little.¹⁵⁸ But if *GD* wants to see the confidence of ‘working together in and for God’s kingdom’ become a reality then there is reason to believe that Barth’s directives can assist the prophetic vision:

¹⁵⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 883

¹⁵⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 152

¹⁵⁸ Keith L. Johnson in, *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011) 226

'But our prayer and our work so far give us confidence that this the direction God is calling us to follow, and we look forward with excitement to working together in and for God's kingdom during the next ten years.' (GD p.15)

In summary Barth's argument about the gospel, ministry and mission has three characteristics:

First he makes a statement about the reality of God:

'God is. This is the simple statement that we have to develop and explain. ... What God is as God, the divine individuality and characteristics, the *essentia* or "essence" of God, is something which we shall encounter either at the place where God deals with us as Lord and Saviour, or not at all. The act of revelation as such carries with it the fact that God has not withheld Himself from men as true being, but that He has given no less than Himself to men by the overcoming of their need, and light in their darkness – Himself as Father in His own Son by the Holy Spirit.'¹⁵⁹

Second he makes a statement about the place of human beings:

'We should still not have learned to say "God" correctly (i.e., as understood in the Christian Church on the basis of Holy Scripture) if we thought it enough simply to say "God". However well-grounded or critical our utterance, if it has a logical exclusiveness, if it is only "God" it will not suffice. ... Jesus Christ is indeed God in His movement towards man, or, more exactly, in His movement towards the people represented in the one man Jesus of Nazareth, in His covenant with this people in His being and activity amongst and towards this people.'¹⁶⁰

Third he stresses the importance of church action:

¹⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H. L. Parker, W.B. Johnson, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 257, 261-262

¹⁶⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley. J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 7

'Thus the inner life of the community cannot be empty of word and thought. It is not a vegetative or animal life, but one which is "logical" in the strictest sense. At every place and time – and this is basic to all else – it must be a life of knowledge, a life with and under and from and in the Word by which it is commissioned. ... Hence the assemblies of the community are assemblies for the proclamation of the Lord and His kingdom as this is to be heard afresh by Christians themselves. This worship of the community in all its conceivable forms implies a re-establishment of the community by a new and common perception of the kingdom.'¹⁶¹

Taken together these three overarching characteristics of Barth's canonical narrative theology can be viewed as the warp into which the 'three golden threads' of Gospel, Ministry and Ministry can be woven.

In this chapter Barth's narrative theology has been offered to *Carlisle* in such a way as to give Barth an almost uninterrupted voice. The chapter is a theological (Barthian) lens through which to view the introductory assumptions about the outworking of discipleship as it is presented in *GD*. However, as the next chapter demonstrates, Barth's ideas cannot be transferred to *Carlisle* without adjustment.

Having introduced *Carlisle's* strategy to a less than straightforward Barth, it is now necessary to introduce Barth to the complex context where the strategy and his insights have to be worked out if they are going to have any practical parish value.

¹⁶¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/4*, trans A.T. Mackay, T.H.L. Parker, H. Knight, H.A. Kennedy, J. Marks, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 497

Chapter Four - The World of the Mission: Carlisle and Barth

Chapter three has begun to build on the four theological building blocks that introduced Barth to *Carlisle* in the first two chapters. Barth has been introduced to the three pre-suppositions that underpin the structure of *Carlisle's* current mission strategy for discipleship: Gospel, Ministry, and Mission. These three subjects, which 'run through every part of our vision and thinking like golden threads', have been shown to be in keeping with Barth's own thoughts concerning the message and task of the church, both in its universal and local setting. In Barth's canonical narrative theology these three subjects are to be central to the thinking and action of every church and the resurrection is the power behind all three.

Since Barth would not expect readers of his theology to transfer his ideas and doctrine to new situations without critical consideration, *Carlisle* should be prepared to reflect on what Barth says before attempting to apply his ideas to its own context. The Reflection stage of the Pastoral Cycle now ensures that this takes place.

For Barth the Gospel, Ministry and Mission of the church are not fringe subjects or activities. In particular, mission is not so much the work of the church as the church at work.¹⁶² Mission, though a human act and expression of the church, is motivated by experience of being sent into the world by God. It is in this capacity, according to Barth, that the church exists for the world. Mission, being the activity of God, identifies the church as an event of divine action and so brings together two seemingly incompatible ideas: the lordship of God

¹⁶² Keith L. Johnson in, *Karl Barth and American Evangelism*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011) 226

and the free autonomous activity of the creature.¹⁶³ It is the combination of these two these themes that form the structure of discipleship both in Barth and *GD*.

This chapter continues the discussion with Barth in two ways. First it describes some of the physical and social features of the *Carlisle* context in which parishes conduct mission and attempt to grow disciples and asks: how important are these features for these attempts to engage in parish mission? Secondly, it sets before Barth the response of a short questionnaire that was issued to PCCs concerning mission and evangelism in rural parishes, and asks for his comments on the findings. The reason for engaging in this discussion is because it is the task of the practical theologian to reflect on both the life and activities of the church and on those who live in local communities. It is understood that the 'ecclesiastical context is everything that affects the life and work of the church, including its history and its present concrete form.'¹⁶⁴ It has to be recognised by the researcher that each parish in *Carlisle* includes much 'that is Christian as well non-or-anti-Christian.'¹⁶⁵ This is the reason for asking parishes how they view their mission in their complex settings.

4.1 Rural Context and Creation Theology

One of the criticisms of the church and of Christianity is that it 'evangelizes by endless talking and pronouncing rather than by acting and listening.'¹⁶⁶ Another criticism is that its power structure is based to some extent on coercion whereby, 'Church members internalize the norms of the system and oppress and repress themselves and others.'¹⁶⁷ Part of the task

¹⁶³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 90

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 22

¹⁶⁵ Nicholas Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 22

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Pattison, *The Challenge of Practical Theology: Selected Essays* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007) 151

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Pattison, *The Challenge of Practical Theology: Selected Essays* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007) 150

of this chapter is to find out to what extent these criticisms can be upheld in *Carlisle*. This probing, however, can only be undertaken by an in-depth personal association with the project, since there can be no 'objective' examination of either a text or human situation, 'as if we could stand apart from the historical process and pass judgement from a position of neutrality.'¹⁶⁸

In order to gather this important information, relevant sections of a profile of the diocese which is issued to potential bishops and incumbents, is partly unpacked. This begins with a sketch of some of the salient physical and cultural features which provide a backdrop to the social environment in which the *Carlisle* parishes are situated. However, to avoid the tendency to treat this aspect of the study as being separate from theology, Barth is drawn back into the conversation in order to remind *Carlisle* that the secular context of church mission has a sacred foundation.

Barth in his doctrine of creation does not begin with an independent ontology of creation or with a prior understanding of cosmology before he speaks about God's special work of reconciliation. Rather he sees in the saga of creation an unfolding Christology with Creation being as the External Basis of the Covenant and The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation.¹⁶⁹ Jesus Christ is the concrete fulfilment of the Covenant and it is only in him that we can understand the constant meaning of creation and culture. By placing faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son at the centre of our understanding of creation and culture, Barth attempts to rescue creation from being irrelevant and meaningless in relation to the mission of the church. By beginning with the first article of the Apostles' Creed he makes creation an article of faith:

¹⁶⁸ David Lyall, *The Integrity of Pastoral Care* (SPCK, 2001) 56

¹⁶⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 94-329

'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, creatorem coeli et terrae. These last words - not by themselves, but together with what goes before, and with all that follows in the second and third articles – are the simplest and most comprehensive form of the teaching of the Church on creation.'¹⁷⁰

With creation firmly situated as the work of God and rooted in Jesus Christ the Lord of Creation, Barth is able to show its value, as opposed to meaninglessness, to human beings in the universal context:

'One thing at least is assured by our recognition of the context, and must be presupposed in any relevant consideration of the questions. This is that divine creation is a work of the very definite character. It is not a happening on which a character is later impressed from without by a particular interpretation, so that it may in any given case be disregarded or questioned.'¹⁷¹

This sacred foundation of creation as understood by Barth will prove to be indispensable to *Carlisle*, not least when the relationship between rural faith and discipleship takes place.

What Barth offers at the outset is not a world view but providence:

'The notion against which we have to delimit ourselves at this point is that which regards Christian belief in providence as an opinion or hypothesis concerning God, the world, man and other things, an attempt at an interpretation, exposition and explanation based on all kinds of impressions and needs, carried through in the form of a systematic construction. ... Only in these circumstances is this the case, and not when it is a so-called world-view, even a Christian world-view. For a world-view is an opinion, postulate and hypothesis even when it pretends to be Christian.'¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H.Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 1

¹⁷¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/1* trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 330

¹⁷² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich , eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 16, 18

The Diocese of Carlisle is roughly coterminous with the shire county of Cumbria. The county is in the far North West of England. It became a county in 1974 from the old counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, part of North Lancashire and a small patch of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Cumbria is bounded to the west by the Irish Sea, to the south by Lancashire, to the southwest by North Yorkshire and to the east by County Durham and Northumberland. Scotland lies directly to the north. The diocese itself is bounded by the dioceses of Glasgow and Galloway, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Durham, Ripon and Leeds, Bradford and Blackburn.

A large and part of the diocese is substantially rural. *Carlisle's* geographical centre is the Lake District National Park which covers about a third of the land area. This park is internationally renowned as one of the most beautiful areas of the United Kingdom. It is the central and most-visited part of the Lake District. There are additional large areas of rural land interspersed with small market towns and villages. The area has provided inspiration for generations of British celebrities: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, poet and critic (1772); John Peel, famous huntsman (1776); Arthur Ransome author of *Swallows and Amazons* (1884); John Ruskin, art critic (1819); Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1866); Alfred Wainwright the author of numerous walking guides and sketchbooks of the Lakeland Fells (1907). Contemporary personalities include the broadcasters Anna Ford (1943) and Melvin Bragg (1939), who were either brought up in or now live in Cumbria.

Much of the centre and eastern edge of the diocese is mountainous, with 20 over 2,791 feet (Grasmoor, 2795 ft.). The highest point of the county (and of England) is Scafell Pike which is 3,209 ft. All the land in England that is over 3000 feet above sea-level is in this diocese. It also contains many of England's most beautiful lakes, including the deepest being Wastwater (3.1 miles long, 0.5 miles wide and 260 feet deep). The longest is Windermere (10.5 miles long, 1.25 miles wide and 219 feet deep.) Significant parts of the Roman

Hadrian's Wall, which is 44 miles long and was built in AD 122 to help defend Britain against attack from tribes in the north, can be found along northern edges of the diocese. The west coast from Barrow to Silloth in the north has a strong maritime history which is illustrated in the Dock Museum in Barrow.

The importance of outlining this geographical and physical description of the diocese is because some of its features contribute to the mixture of communities that make the Carlisle diocese a complex situation in which parish churches have to function. These include it being a most attractive tourist destination with accommodation providers and visitor attractions on average catering for about 15.5 million people annually¹⁷³ and a desirable place for holiday accommodation on which 28% of the £6.5 million council budget is spent. It is a seemingly good place for retirement life and stories of those who once spent holidays in the Lake District and then went on to retire there can be found in visitor guides.¹⁷⁴ On the surface these features might seem to make it a magnetic place that would attract new Christian workers. Yet surprisingly it is not equally desirable for those seeking parish curacies or incumbencies. A recent job description in the Church Times¹⁷⁵ for the House for Duty position as vicar of Dacre, which is near Ullswater, and nestles among the hills of the Lake District National Park, was described as 'dream location' but attracted just two enquiries and only one applicant.¹⁷⁶ A similar lack of interest by clergy has been experienced over another House for Duty post at Patterdale.¹⁷⁷

Although much of the county is rural and seemingly beautiful there are several parishes situated in less attractive urban settings (eg., Barrow in the South, Carlisle city in the North

¹⁷³ <http://www.lakedistrictwiki.co.uk> 28/03/12

¹⁷⁴ Eg, *Lakes and Cumbria Today* (BAT Publishing Ltd)

¹⁷⁵ *The Church Times*, February 17th 2012

¹⁷⁶ Source: Archdeacon of Carlisle February 2012

¹⁷⁷ January 2014

and Workington in the West). Raising the profile of physical variations is important since ‘there is no such thing as a view from nowhere’.¹⁷⁸ Stephen Pattison’s point, that God’s creation has every reason ‘to be read as a kind of symbolic text which could be interpreted in both physical and spiritual senses’¹⁷⁹ is prescriptive for Cumbria. In speaking like this, Pattison urges theologians to return to a pre-seventeenth century approach that deliberately took notice of the physical world and saw it as sign or symbol; a book of nature that revealed the divine. Barth’s contribution to this debate follows below but what can be said at this stage is that it is only when motive, content and context have been clearly fixed and set in right relation to each other can the Christian mission become what it must be if it is going to reach the world for Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁰

4.2 Rural Life and Natural Theology

Prior to the publication of *GD*, fifteen rural parishes in *Carlisle* were visited¹⁸¹ with the main aim of finding ways forward in rural evangelism. Each Parochial Church Council (PCC) was asked to discuss, in advance of the visit, the question: ‘What, in your opinion, are the main issues that need to be taken into consideration by rural churches who decide to engage in parish mission and evangelism?’

There were two main responses:

1. Irregular church-goers attend church for seasonal festivals (eg. Rogation, Mothering Sunday, Christmas and Easter) these occasions should be seen as opportunities for parish churches to preach the gospel.

¹⁷⁸ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008) 15

¹⁷⁹ Stephen Pattison, *Seeing Things: Deepening Relationships with Visual Artefacts* (SCM Press, 2007) 160

¹⁸⁰ Gregory G. Bolich, *Karl Barth and Evangelicalism*, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1980) 24

¹⁸¹ 2007, Appleby, Brampton, Crosthwaite (Kendal), Clifton (Derwent); 2008, Walney Island, Aspatria, Allithwaite, Cartmel, Coniston, Dalston, Hawkshead, Moresby, Threlkeld; 2009, Ulverston, Warwick-on-Eden

2. Farming communities are in touch with the land and so those engaged in rural evangelism need to bear in mind the fact that many people hold traditional Christian beliefs alongside their 'folk religion'.

Since both of these interconnected issues are referred to in *GD* and in Barth the theological conversation can continue.

- Festivals

'A strategy for making the most of 'Special Occasions' (e.g. Festivals, Funerals, Back to Church Sunday) in every benefice.' (*GD* p. 8)

Barth's view on festivals emerged from his return to the realistic biblical tradition which can be seen in his early theology. For example, he asks if festivals celebrated by the church are just memorials or are they living realities? In a series of newspaper meditations (1926-1933) he connected the evangelist to the festival of Christmas:

'It is an event which happened and is still happening; to the evangelist it is as certain as his own existence and as self-evident of an axiom. God has spoken and still speaks. All abstract thought and metaphysics, everything one might know and say of God as Thought, Power and Deed is summed up and completed by the fact that God has spoken and still speaks. Yes, God!'¹⁸²

For Barth festivals are real because the promise of the Kingdom of God is close at hand and still the promise remains a promise for everyone.¹⁸³ Christian festivals have the edge over secular acts of commemoration because they are more than representations:

'What is the meaning of our keeping Christmas, Good Friday and Easter? What is the meaning of our proclaiming and hearing Jesus Christ as the Word of God spoken to the world and ourselves? What is the meaning of our believing in Him and loving Him and

¹⁸² Karl Barth, *Christmas*, trans Bernhard Citron (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London, 1959) 10

¹⁸³ Karl Barth, *Christmas*, trans Bernhard Citron (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London, 1959) 41-42

hoping in Him? What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? Do these things only make sense if they are only acts of remembrance and representation ... ¹⁸⁴

Barth acknowledges that he learned this biblical realism about festivals from the songs for children composed by the nineteenth century Pietist, Abel Burckhard who introduced 'the homely naturalism' into Barth's heart. ¹⁸⁵

- Folk religion

Although *GD* does not specifically mention that there should be awareness on the part of those who wish to engage in growing disciples of the relevance of 'folk religion' it does anticipate that *GD* will be read in conjunction with *Carlisle's 'Rural Manifesto'* (*GD* p.4). ¹⁸⁶

The '*Rural Manifesto*' encourages rural churches to engage with the 'rhythm of life':

'The rhythm of people's lives, particularly the rhythm of agriculture can be reflected in worship ... an opportunity to draw in the wider community, whether natives or incomers, and to build connections.' (*Rural Manifesto* p.6)

For Barth, the festivals which might create a positive atmosphere are the Christian ones, not seasonal festivals that may include ancient traditions with religious roots. Contemporary examples of seasonal festivals include 'well-dressing' in Derbyshire and 'mummer-plays' in Sussex. ¹⁸⁷ In Cumbria seasonal festivals also includes Rogation time and in some rural parishes Rogation Sunday Services are held when parishioners walk around the fields and ask for God's blessing on the agriculture. The latest profile issued in connection for a vacancy for a rural benefice states that, 'The new Rector should appreciate rural life, its

¹⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 112

¹⁸⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 112

¹⁸⁶ *Rural Manifesto: A vision for rural churches in Cumbria* (Carlisle Diocese, 2009)

¹⁸⁷ Alan Smith, *God-Shaped Mission: Theological and Practical Perspectives from the Rural Church* (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2008) 45

customs and traditions and engage in key rural festivals such as Rogation and Harvest'.¹⁸⁸ At least one church in the diocese holds an annual 'Thanksgiving for the Lambs'.¹⁸⁹ The question this raises is whether a rural existence can enhance an experience of God in a way that is unavailable in urban life? This matter was not as straightforward for Barth as it appears to be for some modern rural theological commentators:

'Rural living, and the Church still so often at the centre of rural life, can promote the good news of God in Christ in ways which are not so readily available to those who live, work and worship in urban environments. Enhanced sensibility to the cycle of the seasons, patterns of growth and decay, land use and abuse have profound theological and spiritual implication ...'¹⁹⁰

For Barth this statement would appear to endorse a theology of nature that offers rural dwellers knowledge of God that is parallel to the Word of God. As explained above, Barth's conditions for an experience of knowing God are bound to the Trinity as revealed in the Bible. It was from this theological standpoint that he came to resist the possibility of the potential of natural human reasoning being an active facility by which we can access God. According to Barth:

'God is who he is in his act of revelation. God seeks and creates fellowship between Himself and us, and therefore He loves us. But He is this loving God without us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the freedom of the Lord, who has His Life from Himself.'¹⁹¹

This being the case, natural theology, says Barth, attempts to offer an alternative sphere in which coherent doctrines of God can be known from revelation in the natural order of

¹⁸⁸ Inglewood Benefice, Penrith, February 2014

¹⁸⁹ St Theobald's Church, Musgrave, Sunday May 4th 2014

¹⁹⁰ *Changing Rural Life: a Christian Response to key rural issues*, eds. Jeremy Martineau, Leslie J. Francis and Peter Francis (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2004) 19

¹⁹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1* trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnson, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 257

creation. This is a natural or general revelation which is independent of the special revelation of Christ witnessed to by Scripture.

In 1934 Barth produced an angry response to a dual approach to revelation which had been presented publicly by the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner. Brunner, in a polemical essay on Barth's doctrine of revelation, had earlier produced a six-point attack on Barth's view. Brunner's six 'theses', though couched in friendly language, attempted to show that Barth's conclusions had marginalised several obvious features of God's dealings with human beings. These were: that man as a sinner had lost the image of God in which he was created; that because scriptural revelation is the sole norm of our knowledge of God there is no sense in acknowledging two kinds of revelation; that there is no grace of creation and preservation; that there is no such thing as God's ordinances of preservation; that it is not permissible to speak of the 'point of contact' and that the new creation replaces the old by the new.¹⁹² Barth's reply, in a companion pamphlet, expressed the acute danger present in the suggestion that human beings have a natural capacity for revelation:

'If you really reject natural theology you do not stare at the serpent, with the result that it stares back at you, hypnotises you, and is ultimately certain to bite you, but you hit it and kill it as soon as you see it! In all these matters rejection of natural theology differs from its acceptance even before rejection takes place. Real rejection of natural theology can come about only in the fear of God and only by a complete *lack* of interest in the matter.'¹⁹³

Both Barth and Brunner admitted that the subject of natural theology, especially as it was presented by the Reformers, and also by the Roman Catholic Church, was complex. Their

¹⁹² *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 20-21

¹⁹³ *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 76

two short pamphlets on the subject could do no more than alert their readers to the real differences that had by this time caused a distance between these two Swiss theologians. Barth had a particular concern about how the German Christians would react to Brunner's claim of support for his views by the Reformers:

'Of course the "German Christians" have been very glad about the new discovery of what "adheres to the teaching of the Reformation." Of course we are now able and indeed forced to concede more to their position than many "one-sided" people, who have not yet understood this new discovery, are prepared to allow.'¹⁹⁴

The particular context in which Barth's aversion to natural theology emerged needs to be taken into account in order that *Carlisle* can consider the relevance of his views in relation to the modern rural form of natural theology.

When Barth clashed with Emil Brunner over natural theology in 1934 this was at the same time that he was facing up to the course he had to take once the Hitler regime came to power in Germany. In his early years as a Pastor, Barth had wrestled with the possibility of an anthropological starting point for knowing God, and concluded that the distance between humanity and the transcendence of God had to be recognised and maintained. By 1934 he was determined to express the same discontent over the seemingly God-given cultural superiority being claimed by the totalitarian regime. The political implications of his understanding of divine revelation and the German church's allegiance to the ideology of National Socialism caused Barth to participate in the action taken against Hitler by the Confessing Church. The result of Barth's involvement in the Barmen Synod in May 1934 was

¹⁹⁴ *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, trans Peter Fraenkel (Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 99

the production of the Barmen Confession which in its attempt to legalise the formation of the Confessing Church,¹⁹⁵ made this statement:

‘Jesus Christ, as witnessed to us in Holy Scripture, is the one word of God to which we have to listen, trust, and obey in life and in death. We reject the false teaching that the church can and must recognise any other events, powers, personalities, and truths apart from and in addition to this one word of God as sources for its proclamation.’¹⁹⁶

Barth, being one of the main editors of the Barmen Confession, was motivated theologically to repudiate the power of the dominant political ideology which he considered was the result of a natural rather than a biblical understanding of revelation. Reflecting on the consequences of this human theology on Germany after the Second World War, Barth referred to Isaiah 14:

‘How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars:
I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North ...’¹⁹⁷

The importance of this detour into Barth’s political theology for rural *Carlisle* is to emphasise the social differences between the two contexts. Barth at the time of his debate with Brunner was, among other things, working out his theology of the State whereas *Carlisle* is working out its theology of rural folk-religion. The question *Carlisle* can put to Barth over his aversion to natural theology is: where, if anywhere, can a point of contact be made so that people in rural parishes can be drawn into a conversation about Christianity? In Barth’s 1934

¹⁹⁵ Klaus Scholder, *The Churches of the Third Reich, Volume Two: The Year of Disillusionment 1934 Barmen and Rome*, trans John Bowden (SCM Press Ltd, 1988) 136

¹⁹⁶ *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, ed. Peter Matheson (T&T Clark Edinburgh, 2000) 46

¹⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *The Germans and Ourselves*, trans Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1945) 31

response to Brunner he made it very clear that he did not believe that there was any point of contact:

‘There is no point of contact for the redeeming action of God. The new is in no sense the perfection of the old but rather the replacement of the old man with the new.’¹⁹⁸

However, later, when Barth came to extend his discussion about the doctrine of the knowledge and presence of God, he made it clear that there is room to speak of the general as well as the particular presence of God. When speaking about The Perfections of the Divine Freedom he says:

‘The general omnipresence of God in His creation is not in any sense a general truth which is seen in a distinctive form in His particular presence. In that case the unexpected presupposition of the possibility of the latter (and that which safeguards and covers assertion) would be the fact that God is admittedly omnipresent, and is therefore present primarily, not in a particular place, but everywhere. God is certainly everywhere. But God is not only everywhere. On the contrary, as the matter is presented in the Bible, it is in and along with His particular presence, and not apart from it, that the reality of this general presupposition encounters man. It is as we look back and forwards from God’s special presence that His general presence in the world is recognised and attested, and the authenticity and efficacy of the general divine omnipresence consists always and exclusively in the identity of the God who is present generally with the God who is present in particular, and not vice versa.’¹⁹⁹

However, Barth, under the heading ‘The Unity and Omnipresence of God’, also speaks about the fact that God in order to be God requires space:

¹⁹⁸ *Natural Theology: comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth* trans Peter Fraenkel (Geoffret Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 74

¹⁹⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 478

'The Christian conception of God at least is shattered and dissolved if God is described as absolute non-spatiality. Non-spatiality means existence without distance, which means identity. God's omnipresence in the Christian sense of the concept has the very opposite meaning that God possesses space. His own space, and that just because of His spatiality. He is able to be the Triune, the Lord of everything else, and therefore the One in and over all things.'²⁰⁰

The question this raises for *Carlisle*, as it tries to accommodate the rural attachment to creation in its parishes, is whether Barth in his *Doctrine of God* modifies his earlier views on how God is known? By discussing the distinction between the primary and secondary objectivity of God (the secondary objectivity being the way God mediates himself to human beings) does Barth's method open up the possibility of a middle way of knowing God in creation?

'It is this God in action, and indeed, this God in His action itself – and hence the God whom they can only follow with their eyes, whom they only know from behind in His secondary objectivity – who speaks to the prophets, and whose words the prophets deliver and whose name they proclaim. How or whence else could they know Him? What else could they have to say about Him? He really stands before them; He really speaks to them; they really hear Him. But all this takes place, not in a direct, but in an indirect encounter.'²⁰¹

In his 1934 debate with Brunner, natural theology was totally ruled out by Barth. God is knowable only because he is already known in his revelation. But does the Bible itself include natural revelation? Most Christian expressions of natural theology presume this to be the case.

²⁰⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 468-469

²⁰¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 19

Barth in his attempt to establish the knowledge of God sets this concept within time:

'When God gives Himself to us in truth of His self-knowledge as the triune God, He lowers Himself to be known in time.'²⁰²

God lowers himself in order that we might understand him. We cannot know God as he knows himself but we can know him in a temporary way and a truth that needs to be repeated in our time. This is made possible since Jesus the man is at the heart of time. God gives us his divine time so that we may have time for him. Barth presses the logic of this way of thinking by explaining that God in his revelation is an active, free and living being. This means that revelation includes the whole of life:

'The differentiation of the divine happening from the non-divine does not coincide in Holy Scripture with the distinction between nature and grace, soul and body, inner and outer, visible and invisible. On the contrary, the event of revelation as described for us in Scripture has everywhere a natural, bodily, outward and visible component – from the creation (not only of heaven but also of earth) by way of the concrete existence of the people of Israel in Palestine, the birth of Jesus Christ, His physical miracles, His suffering and death under Pontius Pilate, His physical resurrection, right down to His coming again and the resurrection of the body. We cannot give new meaning to this component without explaining away the specific sense of this revelation, and therefore the revelation itself, without giving over the field to another reflection foreign to the basis of the message of the Church.'²⁰³

Is Barth's suggestion that we should reflect on the immanence as well as the transcendence of God in his revelation a concession to some form of biblical natural theology? Although

²⁰² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 61

²⁰³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 265

Barth never gives natural theology a chance as an independent idea, he does seem to allow for an understanding of God in history and natural theology in the Bible:

‘At this point, too, it is best for us to begin with an open concession. There are not only individual passages, but a whole strand running through Scripture, in face of which we can certainly raise the question whether we are not invited and summoned to natural theology by Holy Scripture itself. ... This strand runs through the whole Bible in so far as the witness of the prophets and apostles to God’s revelation not only appeals, as it does primarily, to the confirming witness of God Himself, but also appeals to the confirming witness of the man who hears their word.’²⁰⁴

However, Barth, in making this concession, is eager to emphasise that the voice of natural theology is the voice of the biblical writers and the history of Jesus Christ. The court that represents a ‘Christian’ natural theology in passages such as Psalm 19 and Romans 1 and 2 does not represent it as an independent witness, but as part of the main line that connects God to human beings. Natural theology from the Christian point of view does not contradict biblical revelation but rather it flows from the Bible. For *Carlisle* this means accepting that rural parishioners may, because of their contact with the land, see it not so much as a natural ‘contact point’ but as a divinely established point of contact which is witnessed to in Scripture. Even so, this biblical concession, by Barth, does not mean that he automatically allows an independent apologetic for Christianity that lies outside of the biblical witness. This position on the part of Barth leads to further probing into the nature of human complexities that surround the place of parish mission in *Carlisle*.

²⁰⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, eds. G.W. Brpmiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 99

4.3 Rural Church and Human Theology

The numerical data²⁰⁵ indicates that a beautiful environment is not in itself an attractive incentive to attract more clergy to Cumbria. The number of stipendiary clergy in this diocese, as in most other dioceses, decreased between the years 2005-2010, although the number of non-stipendiary clergy did increase in the same period. It appears therefore that, 'best diocese in the world in which to live and work', will remain an illusion unless other positives can be added. Perhaps the mention of a sparsely populated county may add to its attractiveness, especially in the light of the desire on the part of a considerable number of the population to live in the countryside.²⁰⁶ It may also be of some comfort to the church to know that it is not the only business in Cumbria that is faced with the problem of attracting workers and investors. The beautiful environment with its low population and its growing retirement sector proves to be a mixed blessing for many entrepreneurs.

On the one hand it attracts some workers and businesses and helps some firms retain staff. But the perception of Cumbria's landscape has led many potential investors to think that Cumbria is a non-business location and this is of concern for those wishing to attract investment.²⁰⁷ There is a desire to alter this attitude on the part of 'Cumbria Vision', which has offered Cumbria a strategic business plan and has taken a leading role to help develop four Delivery Boards in Cumbria – Carlisle Renaissance, West Cumbria, Barrow and Eden, and South Lakeland, with the intention of developing a transformation project for the county.²⁰⁸ The aim is to consolidate a strategy around Cumbria's key strengths and opportunities. Their focus, despite the current recession, is to find ways of creating jobs and

²⁰⁵ Carlisle Diocesan Directories 2005-2010

²⁰⁶ *Rural and Urban areas: comparing lives using rural/urban classification*, Tim Pateman, Officer for National Statistics (Regional Trends 43, 2010/11)

²⁰⁷ *Cumbria Local Economic Assessment, Cumbrian Summary November 2010* (University of Cumbria, Centre for Regional Economic Development) 33

²⁰⁸ *Cumbria Economic Strategy 2009-2019*

wealth both for the short and the longer term by highlighting the Energy and the Low Carbon Economy. The intention is to tap into the nuclear renaissance with support for two new reactors at Sellafield and also to promote the development of renewable energy projects, as well as trying to influence planning authorities in regards to energy efficiency.²⁰⁹

The overall strategy:

‘is to raise the attractiveness of Destination Cumbria as a Place to Live, Work and Visit

... to promote high-value tourism, such as sport, adventure, culture and eating out.’²¹⁰

The new bishop of Carlisle, prior to his ordination service in Carlisle cathedral, spoke out publicly in favour of nuclear development in Cumbria and this resulted in a vocal group of anti-nuclear campaigners gathering outside the cathedral as the service took place.²¹¹

In order to achieve these and other goals, the physical infrastructure of the county is said to need improvement, not least with better roads. The east of the county has good inter-regional road transport links via the M6 motorway which connects Cumbria with cities in Scotland to the north and the cities of the North-West Midlands to the south. Yet, despite recent improvements, east-west transport links are much less effective. West Cumbrian towns experience disadvantages in attracting investment due to the remoteness of the area. In a recent survey, 45% of businesses in Copeland identified the road network as a particular concern for business.²¹² Rail links are said to be less of an issue for businesses especially for workers at Sellafield, because of the efficient services provided by the Cumbrian Coast Line.²¹³

²⁰⁹ *Cumbria Economic Strategy 2009-2019*, 6

²¹⁰ *Cumbria Economic Strategy 2009-2019*, 2, 6

²¹¹ October 9.2009

²¹² *Cumbria Local Economic Assessment November 2010*

²¹³ *Cumbria Local Economic Assessment November 2010*,8

One of the modern concerns over the development of the county's infrastructure is the potential effect this might have on the environment. The Natural Economy North West's Study (2010)²¹⁴ of green infrastructure, which refers to the region's life support system (a network of natural environmental components) speaks of a pinch point where significant investment is expected to occur over the next few years with each pinch point constituting a risk to the success of a project or investment.²¹⁵ The study attempted to address some of the environmental risks that could impede economic development. In Cumbria the principal concerns were risks of flooding, coastal storms and inadequate water supply, which led to the publication of major flood and drought orders between November 2009 and July 2010. Those places that were said to be likely to experience economic growth and with the greatest number of pinch points were the West Cumbrian coast between Maryport and Whitehaven, Barrow and Carlisle. Interestingly enough these are the 'less attractive' urban areas mentioned above.

At first glance it could appear that geography, travel and the environment have little to do with the spiritual issues that surround the subject of parish evangelism in *Carlisle*. However, a closer look, for example, at the Cumbrian floods of January 2005, where two people died and 70 sustained major injuries, resulting in damage that cost £250 million at the time and subsequently a further £25 million on flood defences, produced a story about how the churches worked together to provide aid.²¹⁶ Also in November 2009 the West coastal towns around Workington and Whitehaven were flooded and the churches supported the Local Authorities in setting up flood centres, one of which was at Christ Church, Cockermouth.²¹⁷ Prior to the floods, in 2001, the rural churches across the diocese became the backbone of

²¹⁴ Centre for Regional Economic Development, *Cumbria Local Economic Assessment*, 20

²¹⁵ Executive Summary 1.2. *North West Green Infrastructure Unit*

²¹⁶ Source: Environment Agency.

²¹⁷ *After the Flood ... The Case for Cumbria, February 2010*, Cumbria County Council

support for communities hit by the foot-and-mouth disaster on farms. The churches provided pastoral care, use of church buildings and access to crisis funding.²¹⁸

The reason for identifying these episodes in social and church history in *Carlisle* is not to report that they provided new opportunities for parish evangelism, since no evidence to suggest this has been uncovered, rather they are included because scrutiny of these complicated catastrophes provides the researcher with a way of seeing a 'complexified, challenged, and transformed as the envisioned eye of the qualitative researcher encounters it.'²¹⁹ For *Carlisle* the involvement of the churches in alleviating suffering is viewed in *GD* as justifiable mission in the community:

'If we are truly growing as disciples, then this should overflow outwards from the church as we engage with our community and serve it, following the example of our Lord.'*(GD p.9)*

The added question, as far as this research is concerned, is how Barth views such social complexities? In the light of his debate with Brunner over natural theology, it may appear that human action according to Barth, when bound to natural theology outside the Bible, is not justified. This means that Christian mission, in terms of social care, cannot be an independent activity. Brunner, in his second thesis against Barth's objection to those who look for knowledge of God in nature, in the conscience and in history, argued that:

'The world is the creation of *God*. In every creation the spirit of the creator is in some way recognisable. The artist is known by all his works. ... All activity of man which the creator himself uses to preserve his creation amid the corruptions of sin belongs to this

²¹⁸ *Coping With Crisis in Cumbria: Consequences of Foot and Mouth Disease*, Research Report: Department of Agricultural Economics and Food Making (Newcastle University, January 2002) 39,106,108.

²¹⁹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (SCM Press, 2006) 32.

type of activity within preserving grace. It is from this doctrine of civil and secular functions and offices that it is derived.²²⁰

In his final sentences of response, Barth relegated natural theology and the ecclesiastical activity that is said to flow from it to a false sphere:

‘Natural theology is always the answer to a question that is false if it wishes to be “decisive.” That is the question concerning the “How?” of theological and ecclesiastical activity. Hence it has to be rejected *a limine* – right at the outset. Only the theology and the church of the antichrist can profit from it.’²²¹

One of the problems of attempting to get inside the mind of a theologian such as Barth by only analysing one text, and in this case a polemical text, is that it could provide no more than a superficial understanding of his wider view of this subject. As far as human action and action of the church is concerned, it would be a misrepresentation of Barth’s ethical theology to conclude that he is a thoroughly unreliable theologian who would not be able to accommodate *Carlisle’s* social response to the crises of flooding and foot-and-mouth disease. This situation in *Carlisle* provides an opportunity to investigate what has become a key question in interpreting Barth and his relevance to modern church life and ethics. In Barth’s view, is all ethical action, including that of the church, secondary to that of the proclamation of the Word?

Carlisle shows no hesitation in wishing to uphold the churches social response to natural disasters and does not suggest that such action is to be a stepping-stone to preaching the gospel. Rather, it encourages such a positive response and sees it as fundamental to an outworking of Christian discipleship. So does Barth commend this positivity or is he as

²²⁰ *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace”*: by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth, trans Peter Fraenkel (London Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 29

²²¹ *Natural Theology: Comprising :“Nature and Grace”* by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth, trans Peter Fraenkel (London Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946) 128

suspicious of *Carlisle* as he was of Brunner? Although Barth's early texts do not provide us with a full account of his moral theology, they do contain a line of thought that develops extensively in his later work, especially in his *Church Dogmatics*. A recognition of this development in his thinking means that Barth does not need to be dismissed by *Carlisle* at this point in the argument.

It does initially appear that in Romans II Barth pronounces the death sentence of human action. This arose from Barth's understanding of eschatology and God's action which seemed to leave the correspondence of human action without any justifiable basis. Barth acknowledged this dilemma at a later date:

'So when I came to expound a passage like Rom. 13^{1f} ("Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand"), in spite of every precaution I interpreted it as if it referred only to the moment which confronts all moments in time as the eternal "transcendental meaning" of all moments in time. The tension between the "then" when we believe and the "now" of "disturbing recollection," a new awareness of Christ's *parousia*, was only a continual tension, having no connexion with the tension of two points in time and the time of Church history.'²²²

However, despite Barth's intention to try to correct his suggestion in Romans that God's action left no room for human action, his overriding aim at the time was to be sensitive to the possibility of human action in the church being seen as replacing divine action:

'When such a Church embarks upon moral exhortation, its exhortation can be nought else but a criticism of all human behaviour, a criticism which moves through every one of the 360 degrees of the circle of our ambiguous life. ... The whole problem of ethics is

²²² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/1*, trans T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.Haire, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 635

so delicate, so dubious, that the addition of one word too much is far more disastrous than the omission of one word which might have been said.'²²³

Barth was anxious in case the human action of the Christian was shown to be no more than an extension of the natural human being rather than it being the new miracle of God's grace:

'As such, all this human being and having and doing is the miracle of the new creation; it belongs to an order wholly distinct from every other being and having and doing. So different is it, that it eludes the expression; for when expressed, it appears as though it were a second or peculiar disposition of human affairs capable of being compared with other dispositions. It may, for example, be described as a being 'clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven (2 Cor. V. 2).'²²⁴

Barth in Romans attempted to show that the divine activity in human life established rather than excluded human morality.²²⁵ His address, *The Problem of Ethics Today*, delivered at a conference of ministers at Wiesbaden in September, 1922, starts with similar assertions as those found in Romans:

'When the ethical problem arises, we begin to perceive what the perfect life may mean; but, for us, what can it mean but death? We begin to build that life, but how can it be completed except by progressive destruction?'²²⁶

Barth was debating the possibility of human activity under the shadow of the cultural ethics of liberal Protestantism, where he felt that moral life had become a comfortable and natural progression of a human anthropology; a life that could exist independently from the grace of God:

²²³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London Oxford University Press, 1963) 428

²²⁴ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London Oxford University Press, 1963) 223

²²⁵ John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (T&T Clark Edinburgh, 1998) 30

²²⁶ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 139

'here was a human culture building itself up in orderly fashion in politics, economics, and science, theoretical and applied, progressing steadily along this whole front, interpreted and ennobled by art, and through morality and religion reaching well beyond itself toward yet better days.'²²⁷

Although serious attention to the positioning of morality can be seen clearly in Barth's early texts, the development of the issue of the disjunction between divine and human action is found especially in his Doctrine of Reconciliation where he grounds all human activity in the work of the living Christ. By placing the work of Jesus Christ at the centre of our knowledge of God, Barth secures a theological ecclesiology that allows the mission of the church to be free of having to justify its contingent existence. The purpose of God does not depend on the witness of the church:

'They may be summoned to attest to it, but only because its expression has first taken place, and still takes place, authentically and originally in Jesus Christ Himself. It is not they which do what is certainly expressed through their ministry. They cannot, then, give any direct or reliable information of their own concerning it. To the extent that they are entrusted and commissioned with the task of witnessing to it, their witness even at best can be only secondary, and indirect and apparently very broken.'²²⁸

By relativizing the witness and ministry of the church community, its mission is said to emerge from the life of the resurrection. This means in practice that when the Christian community reaches out in love and compassion to the wider community, it does so sacramentally and so at a distance. It reflects Christ's presence rather than replaces it:

'But it is not commanded to represent, introduce, bring into play or even in a sense accomplish again its being, speech and action either reconciliation, the covenant, the

²²⁷ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 145

²²⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 269

kingdom or the new world reality. It is not commanded even in the earthly-historical sphere to take the place of Jesus Christ.²²⁹

Christian mission and discipleship, according to Barth, is action carried out in the world within the knowledge of Christ. It is a sphere of Christian knowledge where the gospel is at the heart of its action:

‘The subject-matter, origin and content of the message received and proclaimed by the Christian community is at its heart the free act and faithfulness of God in which He takes the lost cause of man, who has denied Him as Creator and in so doing ruined himself as creature, and makes it His own in Jesus Christ, carrying it through to its goal and in that way maintaining and manifesting His own glory in the world.’²³⁰

Although it cannot be verified that all the actions of *Carlisle* during the flood and farming disasters were a conscious expression of the knowledge of God as described by Barth, they do seem to have been undertaken in a spirit of service and the outcomes have resulted in tangible ecumenical relationships.

For example, the Anglicans decided to change the title of their in-house publication *The Way*, issued three times a year, to *The Cumbrian Way*. An ecumenical publication represented the start of an ecumenical partnership. From this point onwards the aim has been to work closely with the other denominations and this desire has been written into the latest diocesan strategic plan.²³¹ The working together of the churches in the ways described received recognition beyond their own boundaries. Cumbria County Council commented that they:

²²⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 836

²³⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 3

²³¹ *GD*, 14

‘demonstrated a unique way of providing tailored help and support to people returning to their homes ... not only did the churches work together but they also established partnerships with the statutory services ... Churches Together is among the ten Flood Action Groups that can provide emergency plans in Cocker mouth and Keswick.’²³²

Such an appreciation is clearly an advantage to a church which, in terms of membership, is struggling to survive.

Foot-and-mouth disease in 2001 and the floods of 2005 and 2009 were not the only disasters in the diocese to make international headlines. Another was the Cumbrian shootings on June 2, 2010. On this occasion Derrick Bird, a 52 year old taxi-driver, shot dead 12 people and injured 11 others before killing himself. Along with the Hungerford and Dunblane massacres, it was one of the worst criminal acts involving firearms in British history. The series of attacks began mid-morning in Lamplugh and moved to Frizington, Whitehaven, Egremont, Gosforth and Seascale. Among those shot dead were members of local churches as well as others from the wider communities. The Queen paid tribute to the victims and visits to the area were made by the Prince of Wales, David Cameron and Teresa May. This horrific event once more brought the church and community together in a similar way to that of the floods. Again, is not possible to say precisely what the effects of these public emergencies were in terms of parish evangelism, but it can be recorded that they made an indelible pastoral mark on numerous rural parishes in which evangelism was to take place. The good reputation of the churches in these years was recognised in the public media.²³³

²³² *The role of the third sector in helping Communities in Cumbria recover from November 2009 floods* (Cumbria County Council, November 2011) 26, 47, 50

²³³ Eg, *The Guardian*, Friday June 4, 2010

4.4 Rural Faith and Ecclesial Theology

This description of the church in action can be described as 'the emic viewpoint' which 'results from studying behaviour from inside the system.'²³⁴ Barth also viewed the action of the church from the inside and was concerned not to give the impression that theology was either abstract or denominational. When he was asked to produce lectures on Reformed theology at Göttingen, he tried to resist the legal requirement placed upon him to present only *Reformed dogmatics* because in his opinion there could only be Christian dogmatics, since the subject could not be undertaken in a vacuum:

'Thus there can be no Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed dogmatics, but properly understood, in principle, content and intention, there can only be Christian dogmatics.'²³⁵

Despite the many difficulties that each denomination or tradition has and that accompany the efforts of the churches to work together, Barth was adamant that disunity should not be justified in terms of necessity or even as part of the providence of God:

'It is not permitted even by the thought of God's providence which certainly does overrule in all this and traces of which can clearly be seen. For the matter itself (we should read Jn. 17²¹⁻²³ word by word) demands always, and in all circumstances, unam ecclesiam. ... Even under the fatherly and effective providence of God which can cause it to work for good, a scandal is still a scandal. The disunity of the Church is a scandal.'²³⁶

Not only has the unity of the various denominations been recognised by *Carlisle* in its activities but it there is also movement to formalise the diocese as an ecumenical diocese.

On November 27th 2011 the Anglicans, Methodists and United Reformed churches signed

²³⁴ Kenneth L Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior' in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed Russell T. MaCutcheon, Continuum, 1999) 28

²³⁵ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion, Vol. I*, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) 293

²³⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 677

'The Declaration of Intent' in Ambleside. This was an agreement in principle to share both their ministries and buildings within their local communities. The details of this have still to be worked out and consultations within the various denominations are underway in line with the *GD* strategy:

'Cumbria is to become a designated 'Ecumenical County'. We aim to see Anglicans, Methodists and the United Reformed Church (and other denominations) increasingly sharing resources (including buildings); ministry (including clergy); and plans for mission.' (*GD* p.11)

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that there is always the possibility of church members internalising the norms of a system. In regards to the move towards Cumbria becoming a designated ecumenical county, the parishes have voiced their concerns. The diocesan document *Strategy for Ministry*, which outlines the proposals was offered to PCCs and other parish team groupings for their comments and feedback.

The proposals set out in *Strategy for Ministry*²³⁷ are:

1. The creation of Mission Communities
2. The oversight of Mission Communities by a minister with appropriate gifts working with a ministry/leadership team of ordained and lay people
3. Increasing the number of self-supporting clergy and lay ministers, whose primary focus will be to lead local churches in mission
4. Releasing resources for outreach to those not as yet reached with the gospel
5. Doing all this together with the Methodist and United Reformed Churches and working, where possible with other existing ecumenical partners

²³⁷ Carlisle Diocese, June 2013

The aim was to have the feedback from the parishes in time for the Diocesan Synod of October 12, 2013. If the Synod approved the proposals, the process of implementation would follow immediately and the details would be worked out by ecumenical groups:

‘The motion to the Diocesan Synod in October will ask for Synod’s approval of the main principles and thrust of the *Strategy for Ministry*. Once agreed, this will set the diocesan ‘direction of travel’. Then, at local, deanery and diocesan levels we will be able to engage in the process of discussing the details, how this will be worked out locally and the next steps in implementation.’

The parish feedback form provided four questions for parishes:

1. What does the PCC/group feel are the main strengths of the draft *Strategy for Ministry*?
2. Does the PCC/group have any concerns about what is being proposed?
3. Does the PCC/group have any suggestions that might improve the proposals in the *Strategy for Ministry*?
4. Does the PCC/group have any other comments to make on the proposals within the Strategy?

The attempt at consultation by the diocese with the parishes was intended to gain approval by them for a top-down strategy but because the discussion did not start in the parishes the plan to adopt the *Strategy for Ministry* in October 2013 failed. The feedback results obtained from one PCC indicated that they considered that the consultation period, which came during the summer holidays, was too short:

‘There is concern around the time-frame insofar as the consultation only concludes on 30 September and yet Synod in October is to be asked to adopt the strategy. This hardly

allows time to fully reflect on the comments from the consultation and amend, if necessary, the proposals.²³⁸

As a corrective to the possibility of rushing through plans for unity, Barth, though an enthusiast for unity encourages *Carlisle* to face radical questions on the subject:

‘Christianity exists in Germany and Switzerland and Africa, but there is no such thing as a German or Swiss or African Christianity. There is a Church in England, but in the strict sense there is no Church of England. ... Every Church in every age has good reason to ask concerning its catholicity in this sense. Does it exist only as a kind of respectable local, regional or national tradition valued and cherished by certain circles and sections? Or as one of the instruments of the power of society or the ruling class in society? Or – as happens again and again – as a union which is cleverly tolerated or even encouraged by statesmanship to satisfy certain religious needs to buttress the morality and outlook which is desired for the well-being ... may it not be guilty of self-betrayal as a secularised church? Does it exist of its essence and in faithfulness to its essence? We can never think that we can arrive at a position where we will not be disturbed by the question.’²³⁹

This chapter has entered the debate about the possible recognition and integration of rural festivals and ‘folk religion’ with traditional Christianity. Barth’s concessions on these integrated matters, which seemed to mellow his initial aversion to natural theology, have been described as a positive theological contribution to parish mission strategy in parishes where creation and agriculture play a significant part in religious culture. This reflective stage of the Pastoral Cycle is extended in chapter five to include various recent parish mission initiatives that have been employed by *Carlisle* in order to grow new disciples.

²³⁸ Dacre PCC *Strategy for Mission* Parish Feedback Form, 2.5, September 2013, with permission

²³⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 703-704

Chapter Five – The Mission of the Diocese: Barth and Carlisle

Chapter four has viewed the world where mission in Carlisle's is conducted. Three aspects of this setting have been discussed, and reference has been made to appropriate sections of Barth's narrative theology. His creation theology encourages *Carlisle* to view the physical and cultural context of Cumbria as being the sacred provision of God; his natural theology, with its biblical concessions, allows *Carlisle* to incorporate some features of local festivals into its outreach programmes; and his theology of human action justifies the concept in *GD* that the work of mission, although it is God's mission, is divinely delegated to the various members of the church community. This chapter continues the Reflection stage of the Pastoral Cycle as it investigates the background of church history that led the Carlisle diocese to formulate the parish mission strategy published in *GD*. This takes the form of presenting cameo critiques of a decade of evangelistic initiatives that have been undertaken in the diocese. Evidence of the impact of these various traditional approaches to parish evangelism is presented under five headings in order to see if lessons learned during these events have contributed to the specifications for growing disciples in *GD*. The value Barth placed on church history and human initiative is brought to bear on the findings.

5.1 Traditional Church and Community Impact

In terms of its physical and human geography, *Carlisle's* setting, as described above, is more complex than that of Safenwil at the start of the twentieth century. Barth had one small parish in the Swiss mountains within a geographical area of 2.31 square miles with a population was well under two thousand. Cumbria is a vast county and is comprised of hundreds of small and large parishes. Agriculture and industry are common to both settings, but this is the limit of the comparison. The question under investigation is whether Barth's theology, that began life in such small surroundings, can offer help to *Carlisle* in its attempts

to advance the gospel on a vast scale? The first point to note is that Barth would not be daunted by large-scale mission, since in his scheme mission is not about what the church does but about what the church is. Also for Barth mission is a miracle, so despite the smallness and weakness of the church, Barth never anticipated that the church community would be idle. The church has an on-going mission of proclamation, despite its isolation in the world:

‘It is the community of the God who wills (1Tim. 2:4) that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. It has its faith for all others, it knows what it has to say to others. But it is so alone in the world. It has gained whole masses of adherents both in the past and to-day, but in spite of that it has no illusions. It is such a small minority side by side with and in the midst of all other societies. In relation to them and to the world it can only be a very small and modest light in this world.’²⁴⁰

Barth may see the practice of parish mission differently to that in *Carlisle* today, yet on the basis that the diocese continues to show an interest in proclaiming the gospel in obedience to Christ, Barth makes a useful conversation partner, given his reminder that the basis of the church’s constitution resides in God and his call, and not in itself:

‘Rather, the constitution and preservation of the Church rests in this, that man hears God. This is what makes it truly great and truly little. In the Church man hears God because he has spoken, and he gives ear to what God has spoken. The Church exists wherever this is done, even if it consists of only two or three persons. Even if these two or three people do not belong to select society or average respectability but to the scum of the earth. Even if these two or three people are quite disheartened and

²⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 732

perplexed as they face the question what they ought to do, not about what they have heard' ²⁴¹

For *Carlisle* this sense of smallness and weakness is the hallmark of the various attempts at parish mission that are now to be reported. The success of the ventures in terms of increased sizes of congregations is not the main storyline, but rather that they took place at all, and that numerous congregations across the diocese supported the form of mission offered to them by the diocese. In Barth's opinion, if mission events are places where the church proclaims Jesus Christ in obedience then there cannot be enough of them:

'The Church does not live an arbitrary life, however well meant it may be. It lives in obedience. The Church has, therefore, no plans and programs of its own. It is ever alert to hear commands. The Church does not have a *theme*, but a *Lord*, and messengers who inform it of His will. ... For He desires to be proclaimed because no man can ever hear enough of Him and there is not a man who ought not to hear of Him.'²⁴²

The only other major recorded empirical research, into recent church activity in Cumbria, has been The Kendal Project²⁴³ carried out by the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University.²⁴⁴ The project identified the weakness of the traditional church in Cumbria in relation to other spiritual groups. The research is well known in the area of religious sociology and has become 'a touchstone in this field'.²⁴⁵

Although Kendal is significant since it is a large town in the Carlisle diocese, the outcomes of the research carried out over a period of 21 months between October 2000 and June 2002 were mainly reporting about spirituality which existed outside the main denominations.

²⁴¹ Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans E.G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Round Table Press, Inc., 1936) 22-23

²⁴² Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans E.G. Homrighausen and Karl j. Ernst (Round Table Press, Inc., 1936) 37-38

²⁴³ <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>

²⁴⁴ Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)

²⁴⁵ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage 2007) 100

What is of interest from that study is the indication that while church attendance in Britain at the time was in decline, holistic groups were said to be growing²⁴⁶ and so was the individual quest 'that has no necessity for formal structure.'²⁴⁷ John Drane, uses the conclusions of the Kendal Project to back up his claim that, 'New Spirituality *vis-à-vis* traditional religion (in this case the churches) is worth noting here. ... this study makes depressing reading for the Church'²⁴⁸ However, not all sociologists of religion have given equal weight to the findings of the Kendal Project.

Rob Warner²⁴⁹ in his critique of the project turns to the methodology that was adopted by the researchers in Kendal. First he notes that the study failed to compare like with like. By comparing Sunday church attendance with weekly visits to 'a holistic practitioner' it failed to recognise that churches often have mid-week activities as well as those on Sunday. Also Sunday activities at churches usually include other groups such as youth work, as well as the church service. Not to have included these other church associations and those who attend them, limited the scope of the survey. Also the loose definition given to the alternative therapies suggested that most of what was on offer was 'spiritual' whereas 55 per cent of the participants did not think of therapy as spiritual.

Grace Davie argues that:

'Broadly speaking, the facts and figures confirm the national pattern: in any one week, 7.9 per cent of Kendal population are active in a congregation of some kind whereas 1.6 take part in a holistic milieu.'²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage 2007) 147

²⁴⁷ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (SCM Press, 2006) 158

²⁴⁸ John Drane, *Do Christians Know How To Be Spiritual?* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005) 17

²⁴⁹ Rob Warner, *Secularisation and Its Discontents* (Continuum, 2010) 97

²⁵⁰ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage, 2008) 147

The authors of the project see their research as revealing a momentous shift in the sacred landscape of modern Britain, but Davie thinks things might be 'more modest'.²⁵¹ Also if the researchers had carried out their work in Barrow rather than among the fairly affluent and largely white population of Kendal they might not have had the same results.²⁵²

However the data is interpreted, what it does seem to clarify is that there are tensions arising between people's personal 'spiritual' experiences and mainstream Christian tradition. The question this raises for *Carlisle* is whether traditional Christianity, as offered by local churches, will need to accommodate the modern quest for experience and feeling-based worship? Davie notes that the forms of Christianity that are doing well in Kendal are the charismatic churches. These, she reports, 'are holding up better than the liberal Protestants'.²⁵³ Just how relevant this is to *Carlisle* requires a separate study since charismatic expressions of Christianity are not referred to in *GD*.

The value of the Kendal Project to *Carlisle* is that it provides a backdrop that can capture multiple perspectives on the mission activities under observation.²⁵⁴ The conclusions of the project, which suggest that potential church members would prefer a less formal type of Christianity than that offered by traditional churches, do not seem to have been taken into account by *Carlisle* when it produced any of the mission resources offered to the parishes. What has been offered to *Carlisle* in recent times have been traditional approaches to mission. The question this raises is: how successful have these traditional approaches been? As a means of entering this forum, four parish-based evangelistic projects that have been undertaken in *Carlisle* since 1995 are now considered. The first of these four initiatives preceded the Kendal Project by several years.

²⁵¹ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage, 2008) 147

²⁵² *Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present*, ed. David Goodhew (Ashgate, 2012) 12

²⁵³ *Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present*, ed. David Goodhew (Ashgate, 2012) 148

²⁵⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (SCM Press, 2006) 170

5.2 Traditional Church and Evangelistic Initiative

The first notable parish evangelism project in the diocese that has been documented was Springboard into Action, (Springboard) in 1995. This was indebted to the wider and somewhat more controversial 'Decade of Evangelism', (the 'decade')²⁵⁵ that took place at the end of the twentieth-century:

The 'decade' though not opposed by the majority seemed to suffer from a lacklustre response in many quarters ... suggesting that many churches, individuals Christians and theologians assumed that the idea of encouraging churches to grow was impossible or unnecessary.²⁵⁶

This does not seem to have been the case in *Carlisle*.

'Springboard', which was resourced by members of the Archbishop's *Springboard Team*, was an initiative designed to:

'resource parishes and groups of churches to continue and develop outreach and follow-up in practical ways.'²⁵⁷

The title attempted to identify and carry out an evangelistic initiative that would be led by the Bishop, Archdeacons, clergy and congregations, plus three members of the Archbishop's team. The event lasted eleven days at a cost of £3,000.²⁵⁸ Each of the eleven deaneries planned a local distinctive festival. Schools were visited, local church services were held and evangelistic supper parties organised. In one deanery it was observed that there was a

²⁵⁵ *A Decade of Evangelism: Who Cares? Goals for the Parish, Deanery, Diocese, and Province*, eds. Geoff Pearson and Phil Johanson, (Grove Books 1990)

²⁵⁶ *Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present*, ed. David Goodhew (Ashgate, 2012) 19

²⁵⁷ David R. Sherwin, Jim Currin and John Thompson, *Evangelism Across the Diocese: Two Diocesan Initiatives in Evangelism* (Grove Evangelism Series 34, Grove Books, 1996) 13

²⁵⁸ David R. Sherwin, Jim Currin and John Thompson, *Evangelism Across the Diocese: Two Diocesan Initiatives in Evangelism* (Grove Evangelism Series 34, Grove Books, 1996) 14

‘cross section of church traditions represented in the congregations hosting events.’²⁵⁹ Jim Currin’s assessment of what was achieved included ‘raising the profile of evangelism and helping churches feel more confident’, and moving ‘from maintenance to mission.’²⁶⁰ Currin admitted that judging success when it comes to parish evangelism is not easy but the mission was said to have ‘put evangelism on the agenda’ and to have ‘given us a push in the right direction.’²⁶¹

What the project seemed to demonstrate was that the Anglican churches in *Carlisle* had a substantial fringe of those ‘who may attend church 1-3 times in a two-month period.’²⁶² These ‘fringe’ people, it was found, could be easily invited to the evangelistic events. Another positive reflection on this mission was that it showed that affiliation to the Church of England in the 1990s was considered in positive terms. John Drane argues that this loss of allegiance to the inherited church in the twenty-first century ‘is because culture has changed in such a way that we are less tolerant of rationalized structures’. He includes Anglicanism as such a structure.²⁶³ The affiliation to formal churches in the 1990s was said to aid the task of parish evangelism since it ‘helped to en flesh the Anglican notion of the church as a visible sign of the life giving reign of God.’²⁶⁴ In terms of getting new people through the doors, Springboard seemed to bear this out, as reference is made by Currin to high numbers attending the mission events. However, despite its ability to persuade new

²⁵⁹ David R. Sherwin, Jim Currin and John Thompson, *Evangelism Across the Diocese: Two Diocesan Initiatives in Evangelism* (Grove Evangelism Series 34, Grove Books, 1996) 18

²⁶⁰ David R. Sherwin, Jim Currin and John Thompson, *Evangelism Across the Diocese: Two Initiatives in Evangelism* (Grove Evangelism Series 34, Grove Books, 1996) 18, 19

²⁶¹ David R. Sherwin, Jim Currin and John Thompson, *Evangelism Across the Diocese: Two Initiatives in Evangelism* (Grove Evangelism Series 34, Groce Books, 1999) 20

²⁶² *Mission-Shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (Church House Publishing, 2004) 37

²⁶³ John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008) 6

²⁶⁴ John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008) 24

people to attend church events, there is no record that Springboard led to any increase in church membership, either at the time of the mission or at a later date. Access to diocesan registers for 1990-2000 does not indicate growth. Rather they indicate a continued pattern of annual decline in attendance.

Although the interest created among the fringe by this *Carlisle* project might cast doubt over John Drane's view of cultural trends, even in the 1990s, 'that 'spirituality' is in and 'religion' is out as a viable lifestyle choice',²⁶⁵ Drane may need to be heeded when he predicts that:

'if the Church's rate of decline continues to increase at the same rate that it did in the 1990s, then Christianity would be all but non-existent by 2016, with only about 0.9 per cent of the population of England attending church'²⁶⁶

What is interesting is that *Carlisle* has not allowed such a depressing prediction to dampen its enthusiasm for parish mission and evangelism, rather it has planned for more, against all the odds. Despite the apparent failure to establish new church attenders through the traditional evangelistic approach to outreach adopted by Springboard, the diocese has continued to offer more of the same in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

5.3 Traditional Church and Spiritual Renewal

In 2002, the churches in the diocese were visited by the two Bishops, the four Archdeacons and the Dean of the Cathedral. The aim was to encourage parishes to engage in the 'Healthy Churches Exercise', a vitality checklist which was being promoted by the Archbishops' initiative for evangelism. The responses received by the senior clergy from participating parishes indicated that there was a desire to do more work with children, young people and families. The title 'From Survival to Revival', suggested by the Dean, became the slogan for a

²⁶⁵ John Drane, *Do Christians Know How To Be Spiritual?* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005) 18

²⁶⁶ John Drane, *Do Christians Know How To Be Spiritual?* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005) 18

new diocesan mission strategy that would last for six years (2004 – 2009). It was a method intended to help parishes think about their goals that had emerged from the Healthy Church Exercise. The key to this way of thinking is employed in other business enterprises where there is a need to concentrate on the necessary rather than the unnecessary. In Alan Lashinsky's words, "Strategy is figuring out what not to do."²⁶⁷ Barth would, to some extent, agree with this statement. However, his way of finding out what can and cannot be done in the church requires a theological understanding of the connection between the church's local history and the history of the world in which it functions. The history of the church, according to Barth, co-exists alongside secular history and in this sense it is not sacred history:

'Church history is the history of this fellowship within world history generally. And it is one of those special elements in world-occurrence which point to divine world-governance. ... We think of its capacity for resistance and renewal. Again it is not as if the Church were in a position either to proclaim directly or to prove to the general satisfaction its own status as the communion of saints thus the lordship of God in world-occurrence which it believes and proclaims. ... Even the church belongs to its time and is under its conditions. It is not a continuation or repetition of the biblical revelation.'²⁶⁸

This understanding of the church allows for weakness and mistakes since it is a human community that displays the ambiguity of divine grace and human action. In the case of *Carlisle*, the church historian can never rise above this ambiguity, since what is observed, in all its forms, is a church that it is conditioned by the current historical situation. Barth when

²⁶⁷ Adam Lashinsky, *Inside Apple, The Secrets Behind the Past and Future Success of Steve Jobs's Iconic Brand* (John Murray, 2012) 60

²⁶⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 204-205

discussing the task of the church to proclaim and apply Scripture in given circumstances sees the historical setting and ecclesial trends to be an important part of the equation:

‘But *in concreto* they always owe their origin and persistence to the specific currents of Church life (conditioned by the general historical situation) which emanate from the concrete personality of individual preachers and the character of their congregations. ... Here at the very centre of its life the Church experiences the fact that it is in the world.’²⁶⁹

Barth sees the subject of human church history as a secondary matter, yet in its life and initiatives traces of divine action are to be found. The task is to try and read the history of ‘From Survival to Revival’ through the lens of human action and divine inspiration. The *Carlisle* plan required congregations, over time, to give attention to six areas of ministry and pastoral care.

Aspirations for six areas were registered: young people, giving, ministry, mission, discipleship and worship. Congregations were asked to select two of the six and concentrate on them for a year. It was recognised that ‘implementing an idea may take several years’.²⁷⁰ Each year parishes were asked to send representatives to a special service at the Cathedral and two selected goals were to be written down and then collected and dedicated at the service. These goals, plus aims for the following year, were then published in an Annual Report ‘Resourcing Revival’. A pastoral letter from the two bishops was sent each year to clergy, PCCs and Churchwardens encouraging them and explaining that the six leaflets, ‘about our vision ... were not intended to be statements of policy, but rather to give a structure for thinking about our future plans.’²⁷¹ These letters were all upbeat in their tone,

²⁶⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/2*, trans G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 802-803

²⁷⁰ *Bishops’ Letter to Parishes, 2006*

²⁷¹ *Pastoral Letter June, 2005*

and the responses showed that ‘energy has been released across the diocese and new ideas, activities and projects are springing up;’²⁷² ‘You will know how excited and encouraged we have been by parishes’ response.’²⁷³ This was despite the overall church attendance across the churches of the diocese continuing to decline, albeit slowly. However, it does appear that there was a bottoming out of the decline between the years 2004-2006, and this may have been attributable to this initiative.²⁷⁴

Although this was a ‘top-down’ plan, the eventual goals were managed by parish teams throughout the diocese. A ‘top-down’ plan can be made to work provided it can encourage those at the bottom to work upwards. Steve Jobs approached Apple in a similar way:

‘The Company may be top down, but the executive-team format engenders a system of managing up.’²⁷⁵

For Barth the compelling force behind Christian mission is knowledge of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was to be observed in early church history:

‘This contrast between the Church’s awareness and the world’s terrible ignorance is the motive, and the bridging of the gap between them the problem, of the early Christian mission. ... The apostle of Jesus Christ not only can but must be a missionary. ... The truth which he knows about Jesus Christ and human life compels him almost as it were automatically to speak wherever it is not yet known. It is like air rushing into a vacuum, or water downhill, or a fire to more fuel. ... It leaps all frontiers. ... This truth is the driving power behind the Christian mission.’²⁷⁶

²⁷² *Pastoral Letter July, 2006*

²⁷³ *Pastoral Letter July 2007*

²⁷⁴ Bishop’s Council residential minutes January, 2010

²⁷⁵ Adam Lashinsky, *Inside Apple, The Secrets Behind the Past and Future Success of Steve Job’s Iconic Brand* (John Murray, 2012) 70.

²⁷⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/2*, trans H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R. H. Fuller, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 607

Barth's 'top-down' approach to mission, though inspirational, can all too easily give the impression that there is little need for human leadership. However, reading Barth requires patience since correctives to many of his first impressions often come at a later date or even, as in the case of church leadership, have already been expressed on an earlier occasion. Back in 1922 he had spoken about the task of the ministry in relationship to the needs of the congregation:

'What do the people who support us – or at least tolerate us – really expect us to do? And if they begin to feel they have been deceived in their expectations, what does their growing contempt for us indicate?

Of course, they will not be able to tell us what they want offhand. We shall learn nothing from their superficial motives. If we are to understand them and their expectations of us better than they understand themselves, we must look for the motive of their motives. ... They do not need us to help them with the appurtenances of their daily life. ... But they are aware that their daily life and all the questions which are factors in it are affected by a great What? Why? Whence? Whither? ... So they thrust us into our anomalous profession and put us into their pulpits and professional chairs, that we might tell them about God and give them the answer to their ultimate question.'²⁷⁷

It would seem that the general theme of 'From Survival to Revival', which was to make God and his kingdom known in Cumbria, followed Barth's view of the minister's task, even though this might have been done unwittingly. The response from the parishes indicated substantial approval of what the plan offered. The Annual Report to the Bishop's Council in 2006 reported that the percentage of responses to the survey was some 75% of the total number of questionnaires.²⁷⁸ Resourcing Revival roadshows were taken to each deanery in

²⁷⁷ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans Douglas Horton (Hodder and Stoughton, 1928) 186-187

²⁷⁸ Carlisle Diocese: Survival to Revival Annual Stocktake, 2006.

2005 and by 2006 around three quarters of the parishes had participated in the process. Postal surveys were carried out among the clergy in 2005 and 2009 to discover the level of congregational participation in the project. In 2009 results showed that 98% of clergy reported that they understood the strategy and 92% reported that they supported it. Fig. 1 highlights the differing levels of support mid-way through project. By 2009 the percentage rise across the diocese increased substantially.

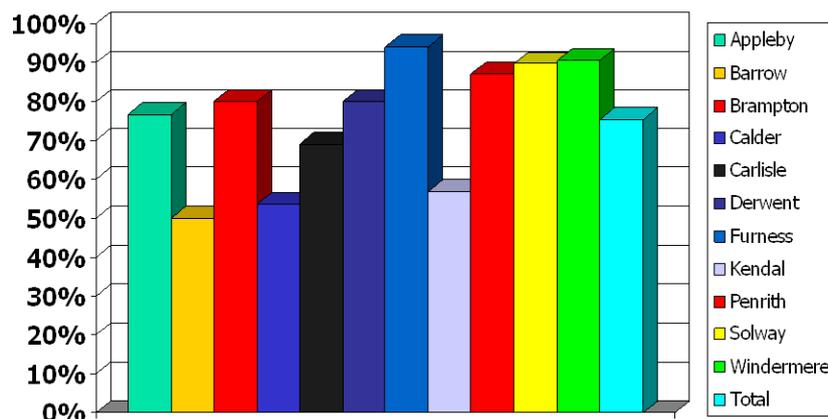


Fig.1

Source: Survival to Revival Stocktake 2006

Underpinning this strategy was a substantial effort to develop lay ministry by using a home-produced training course.²⁷⁹ ‘A Young Diocese Project’ was also introduced in which young people between 18-25 years old joined the diocese for a year to be trained on the job to work with children and young people. The diocese contributed £1000 towards the cost. The idea was to tackle the dramatic fall in church attendance by young people. Other initiatives included an investment in clergy holding the bishop’s licence, who were encouraged to participate in ‘Continuing Ministerial Development’. The publication of a ‘Manifesto for the

²⁷⁹ Amiel Osmaston, *The Anglican and Methodist ‘Called to Service’* (Carlisle Diocese publication, 2007).

Rural Church', referred to above, was intended 'to start a debate about the point of rural churches.'²⁸⁰

In April 2009 the then Bishop of Carlisle was asked to share with his staff 'my hopes for where the diocese might be in five years' time'.²⁸¹ His assessment of the Healthy Church Exercise (2003) revealed that many churches were not strong on 'Being Energised by Faith.' His address concluded with a section called 'Jesus talked up':

"Rural ministry is about drawing the whole community towards the kingdom of God, since the villagers rightly understand that the church is for everyone. Christian Faith is Jesus. If those who are becoming disciples talk more about what Jesus is doing today, then the whole community may become more alert to him."

This call to witness has a firm New Testament basis, as Michael Green explains, but it was to witness to what Jesus had done rather than to what he was doing:

'Jesus commissions his disciples to be his witnesses "of these things". What things? It is the identification of Jesus as Messiah ...'²⁸²

However, the witness or testimony of parishioners in *Carlisle* was to be about what Jesus is doing, and not only about what he has done. It is the witness of a living community, an approach endorsed by Barth when he addressed the Amsterdam Assembly in which the World Council of Churches was established in 1948:

'The essence of the Church is the event in which the community is a light shining also in the world. The Church exists in that it becomes visible to the world (whether understood by the world or not) as a living community, living in the sense that it hears and responds to God's Word, stand and delivers as a fellowship of the Holy Spirit, is on the move from baptism and goes towards the Lord's Supper. It is a question of the

²⁸⁰ *Rural Manifesto: A vision for rural churches in Cumbria*, (Carlisle Diocese publication, 2009) back page

²⁸¹ Graham Dow, *'How Might Things be in Five Years' Time?'* (Church House, Carlisle, 2009)

²⁸² Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1970) 71.

event in which this community, in the midst of the world, distinguishes itself from the world and thereby inevitably becomes offensive to the world in a particular way. ... The Church does not exist by pondering, studying, and preparing itself for this relationship with the world. The Church exists in actually accomplishing this relationship in each time with the appropriate sense of security, realism and necessity.²⁸³

5.4 Traditional Church and Ecumenical Outreach

‘From Survival to Revival’ was not in itself a parish evangelism project, but it did spawn two major parish evangelistic missions. Without the capacity of the bishops and other diocesan officials to generate support for parish-based initiatives, it is doubtful if these two top-down diocesan-wide events would have received the support they did. The first was ‘Walk Cumbria’ in April-May 2007 and the second were the ‘Out of the Blue’ Deanery Missions 2005-2008.

First-hand qualitative data related to ‘Walk Cumbria’ has been difficult to locate due to the time gap. But since, ‘A good piece of qualitative data is like a detective story without a fixed ending’,²⁸⁴ what has come to light in terms of the details of the occasion and historical reports, reviews, feedback and anecdotal memories, enables a partial picture of the jigsaw to be assembled. As the report unfolds, it will become obvious that this was a traditional model of parish mission and evangelism.

The idea for what was intended to be ‘The Walk of a Thousand Men’ was introduced by David Eler when he became both the Vicar of Buttermere and Diocesan Evangelism Advisor in 1999.²⁸⁵ This three-week evangelistic mission was eventually embraced by senior church leaders in Cumbria who ‘have a vision for a Walk mission across the whole county.’²⁸⁶ These

²⁸³ Karl Barth, *God Here and Now*, trans Paul M. van Buren (Routledge Classics, 2003) 81-82

²⁸⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (SCM Press, 2009) 30

²⁸⁵ Bishop of Carlisle: *The Year of Walk Cumbria* (Report given to Through Faith Missions, 2008) 1

²⁸⁶ Publicity leaflet. Appendix B

leaders included both the Bishops of Carlisle and Penrith (Anglican), Canon David Emison (Methodist) and the Revd. Rachel Poolman (United Reformed). The ecumenical plans for the project were drawn up by a Central Task Force of 11 clergy in which there was only one woman.²⁸⁷ This group met regularly over an eighteen-month period under the chairmanship of the then Bishop of Penrith.

At the first meeting the bishop explained that he had received a request from a woman priest who claimed to be representing other women²⁸⁸ as to whether the 'Walk of a Thousand Men' could become gender-inclusive and be renamed 'Walk Cumbria'? The issue was raised in the form of the question: What can men do on a mission walk that women cannot do? Through Faith Missions was consulted and after a lengthy debate the title was changed from 'The Walk of a Thousand Men' to 'Walk Cumbria'. What is of interest to a discussion concerning parish mission and evangelism and its context in the twenty-first century is why this debate about the inclusion of women ever had to take place at all? Precisely why this blind spot existed is unclear, but the ensuing resistance to change the title in order to include women as evangelists on a county-wide mission may have been related to a patriarchal hangover in church relations. However, it may have been an overt attempt to reinstate men into an organisation that is now dominated by women.²⁸⁹ Issues regarding the feminisation of the church or of God²⁹⁰ were not addressed by 'Walk Cumbria'. Although the voice of some *Carlisle* women was on this occasion heard, this may not necessarily continue to be the case.

²⁸⁷ *Central Task Force Minutes* (September 2005)

²⁸⁸ Personal information source.

²⁸⁹ Heather Wraight, *Eve's Glue: The Role Women Play In Holding the Church Together* (Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001) 20. Grace Davie *Europe: The Exceptional Case Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, (Darton Longman and Todd, 2002) 8

²⁹⁰ Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford University Press, 2008) 100-124

The case against fundamental gender equality appears in various guises, including what has been described as ‘the feminisation of the church’.²⁹¹ The debate is a contest between those who consider the Bible to be a complete revelation about the structure of human beings and their relationships and those who understand the Bible to be a revelation of unfinished knowledge. It is a debate Barth engaged in and wrestled with as he attempted to remain faithful to the witness of Scripture concerning the ordering of human beings. One of the difficulties that the modern reader of Barth encounters, in assessing his views on the relationship of women and men, lies in Barth’s unwillingness to allow insights from other disciplines, that are concerned with human ordering, to help the exegete of Scripture to reflect on the text. So for example, Barth says that the critical historian can offer nothing to the saga of creation as recorded in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 since the accounts are what he calls ‘non-historical’:

‘When we say this, we take seriously the fact that the Bible tells the story of creation as one which (apart altogether from its content) had no human witnesses. ... If man cannot declare where he was, then obviously he cannot declare “historically” from personal observation and understanding what took place. ... If there is no historian, even for this reason (accepting his ability to perceive and understand what took place), there can be obviously be no “history”’²⁹²

It is not just the historian who, according to Barth, cannot offer insights on the formation of human beings but theologians, who look to other science to clothe the naked text of Scripture, are making a mistake if:

²⁹¹ Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spencer Publishing, 1999)

²⁹² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 79

‘we shall think it necessary to help the narratives by clothing what we think the far too naive and scanty words of the Bible by the fullness of our own natural science with which we seek to harmonise them ...’²⁹³

By concentrating only on the narrative of Scripture and letting the text speak for itself, Barth narrows down the potential for human beings to evolve socially. In effect he restructures theological anthropology²⁹⁴ in an accumulative way by arguing that theological anthropology is not foundational but is derived from Christology. Jesus Christ is the person who makes us human. What happens in the human sphere as opposed to what happens in the sphere of animals and plants is that:

‘Man is with God because he is with Jesus.’²⁹⁵

In the area of male female relationships Barth’s doctrine of creation does not allow for advancement of society beyond the biblical norms so he writes his theology ‘as though nothing had happened’²⁹⁶ For Barth the biblical norm is inequality:

‘As the attitude and function of the man and those of the woman must not be confused and interchanged but faithfully maintained, and as on the other hand they must not be divorced and played off against each other but grasped and realised in their mutual relatedness, so they are not to be equated, nor their relationship reversed. They stand in sequence. It is in that man has his allotted place and woman has hers ... man and a woman are an A and a B, and cannot therefore be equated.’²⁹⁷

Barth saw this inequality of the sexes affirmed throughout both the Old and New Testaments and so had little patience with the emergence of feminism in his day. However,

²⁹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 64

²⁹⁴ John Webster, *Barth* (Continuum: London and New York, 2000) 95

²⁹⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, trans H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R.H.Fuller, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 136

²⁹⁶ Karl Barth, *Theological Existence Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933) 9

²⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation: III/4*, trans A.T. Mackay, T.H.L. Parker, H. Knight, H.A. Kennedy, J. Marks, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International) 168-169

this dogmatic assertion did not mean that Barth was not open to correction. His theology was always provisional, if only to say the same thing again in a different way. He was aware of the fact that other voices apart from his own needed to be listened to:

‘ The theology of any period must be strong and free enough to give a calm, attentive and open hearing not only to the voices of the Church Fathers, not only to favourite voices, not only to the voices of the classical past, but to all voices of the past. God is the Lord of the Church. He is also Lord of theology. It may always be that we have especial need of quite unsuspected (and among these, of quite unwelcome) voices in one sense or another.’²⁹⁸

Most feminists view Barth’s patriarchal view as detrimental not only to the church but to society as a whole. However, the reason for the resistance of Through Faith Missions to drop the title of the ‘Walk of a Thousand Men’ was not because it wanted to reinstate patriarchy but probably so that it could rebalance the gender gap in the churches. Peter Brierley and other statisticians have provided evidence that women outnumbered men in the United Kingdom’s churches and that the proportion of men in church congregations is falling. Data for 2005 indicated that men constituted 37.7% of Sunday churchgoers – down from 42.9% in 1980, 41% in 1990 and 38.7% in 2000.²⁹⁹

‘Walk Cumbria’ took place over three weeks in May 2007. The first week reached out to coastal communities in the west, from Silloth down to Millom. The second week concentrated on the central and southern regions from Kendal to Barrow.

The final week covered the eastern front of Cumbria, Appleby-in-Wesmorland, Brough and Kirkby Stephen. Sixty-two teams, comprising a total of four hundred and seventy trained

²⁹⁸ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (SCM Press, 2001) 3

²⁹⁹ *UK Christian Handbook: Religious Trends 5*, (edited by Peter Brierley . (Christian Research, 2005) 2.21

team members, were based with churches for either four or eight days, with some members staying for two weeks.³⁰⁰

Through Faith Missions appointed experienced area leaders: Daniel Cozens, Roger Murphy and John Hibberd, who were all full-time evangelists with the organisation. Also there were associate team members (all men) who came from different parts of Britain. About three hundred people attended the nine preparatory briefings.³⁰¹ There were sixty-three ecumenical mission centres.³⁰² Numerous prayer groups (Community Prayer Initiatives) were organised³⁰³ and well attended.

‘The Walk’, as the mission became known, began with a Commissioning Service and ended with a Thanksgiving Service. The walkers carried the minimum of items: no mobile phones, no more than £1 in cash and wore distinctive blue sweatshirts with a Walk Cumbria logo. They walked from village to village, stopping at pubs to chat to people and also engaged in door-to-door visiting. They slept on floors in village and church halls and were fed light meals by parishioners. Separate Spearhead Teams ventured into ‘remote places otherwise untouched by the main mission centres.’³⁰⁴ Other teams visited primary and secondary schools or spoke at coffee mornings. The cost was £13,670 of which £7000 was paid to Through Faith Missions and the balance paid for administration of the event.³⁰⁵

Interpreting the results of this evangelistic mission can only be given in terms of impressions³⁰⁶ because of the limited historical source material that now exists. This consists of the Through Faith Missions’ Newsletter for July 2007, the Ambleside feedback

³⁰⁰ Through Faith Newsletter, July, 2007

³⁰¹ *Central Task Force Review*, July 2007, para 6

³⁰² Through Faith Missions Website 2007

³⁰³ *Central Task Force Review*, July 2007

³⁰⁴ *Central Task Force Review* July 2007

³⁰⁵ *Central Task Force Review* July 2007

³⁰⁶ Ambleside feedback para 1

sheet, the Bishop's Report to Through Faith Missions 2008 and the review conducted by the Central Task Force. Comments are therefore limited to issues that seem directly related to the impact of this traditional style mission on parish evangelism. Was the experience a good one? Did it produce converts? Did it open up opportunities for future evangelistic initiatives? What insights can those engaged in parish evangelism today learn from the experience of those involved in this piece of work in 2007?

All four documents include several positive remarks about the commitment of faith expressed by the walkers and the outgoing nature of mission. It was also noted that the walkers were able to 'rise to the occasion' when they were asked to debate Christianity in non-church environments.³⁰⁷ However some negative comments were made about 'outmoded traditions' such as sleeping on church-hall floors which seemed unnecessary in the twenty-first century; the poor quality of the literature given to enquirers; the lack of involvement from Catholic and Liberal traditions; inadequate follow-up and the need for better orientation to local culture.³⁰⁸ It came to light after the event that the walkers had been given leaflets about local culture produced by Social Responsibility for Cumbria. However, leaflets alone were considered to be an inadequate preparation for those engaging in parish evangelism in *Carlisle*.

The Central Task Force Review was a critique of the different responses to this style of mission in urban and rural communities:

'There had been some very good response in some places but not in others. Urban areas had sometimes proved very hard going, whilst some smaller rural communities had been greatly moved and encouraged.'³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Ambleside feedback para 4

³⁰⁸ *Task Force Review* 4.3

³⁰⁹ *Task Force Review* 7.5

The Bishop was eager to underline the importance of the hospitality aspect of the mission:

‘most, I think, really enjoyed the whole experience being in glorious surroundings and receiving the excellent Cumbrian hospitality – this all helped.’³¹⁰

These reflections on Walk Cumbria from the *Carlisle* side, though not unduly negative, contrast sharply with the report on ‘The Walk’ published by Through Faith Missions in July 2007.³¹¹ This eleven page report, besides including very positive reflective comments from both bishops, other denominational leaders, the Bishop of Lancaster and the Through Faith full-time evangelists, also describes with enthusiasm the numerous successful activities that took place over the three-week event which was about “Bringing Jesus to homes, to pubs, to shoppers, to young people ...” (p.8). What is of significance in this interpretation is that the publication speaks of many coming to faith:

‘Our team of nine led 26 people to Christ over the week.’ (p7); ‘we saw 59 people respond in the week! The vicar said, ‘Your men have done in one week what would have taken me three years’ (p.8); ‘People of all ages responded to the Lord and the follow-up is ongoing’ (p9).

However, in contrast the *Carlisle* assessment was that:

‘two to three people professed faith – many more entered the debate.’³¹²

The Central Task Force Report, produced by the eleven clergy responsible for the launch and oversight of ‘The Walk’, made no mention of any converts. It could just be that the report from Through Faith Missions had either not been seen or read. Instead all that was reported was that ‘There had been some very good response in some places but not in others.’³¹³ To add to this rather mild comment is the rather depressing fact that the

³¹⁰ *Task Force Review 4*

³¹¹ *Over the hills and everywhere ...* (Through Faith Missions Newsletter, July 2007)

³¹² Ambleside Feedback, 1.5

³¹³ Ambleside Feedback, 7.5

diocesan record of church attendance for 2007 shows decline in church attendance not growth. The reason for this could be that all the new converts joined the other participating denominations. No increase in church membership or attendance figures were recorded by *Carlisle* either immediately after the event or in the year after it had taken place.

It is difficult to imagine Barth's response to 'Walk Cumbria' and its aim to see people converted. The nearest model is probably his reaction to Pietism during and after his time in Safenwill. The heart of his debate was concerned with subjective religious experience which he saw as having an in-built capacity to exchange the reality of God for the voice of the human heart. Pietism was individualism:

'In its basic form, in so to speak the original Pietist, it is *individualism*. ... The one who fights and conquers here is the man who has discovered himself or in himself that ultimate reality, related to God; who thus knows no object which is not in the first place really within him and which must therefore, if he sets himself against it, be brought in, be made inward, be transposed to where it originally and authentically belongs.'³¹⁴

Converts or no converts, Carlisle did not give up on parish mission. St Paul in the Acts of the Apostles sometimes experienced little church growth despite the effort he put into mission, 'A few men became followers ...' (Acts 17:34) the reason for which was probably due to the content of his preaching rather than to his method of presentation:

'the call to conversion inherent in the Christian critique was – at the very least- socially and politically dangerous ...'³¹⁵

The call to conversion was certainly made by many of the evangelists during 'Walk Cumbria'

³¹⁴ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (SCM Press, 1972) 100

³¹⁵ C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age*, Oxford University Press, 2009) 41

but the issue of people being reached rather than becoming converts seems to have been left in the air.

5.5 Traditional Church and Deanery Partnership

At the same time as 'Walk Cumbria' took place, arrangements were well underway for the 'Out of the Blue' Deanery Missions. These were launched as the Bishops' Deanery Weeks 2006 – 2008. All three of the internal documents that reported on Walk Cumbria make reference to the parallel Deanery Missions 'Out of the Blue'.³¹⁶ By the time the Bishop of Penrith gave his report to the Through Faith Mission team he noted that it was 'five down – four more next year.'³¹⁷ It appears that 'Walk Cumbria' was intended to prepare the ground for the 'Out of the Blue' Deanery Missions, although some of these missions had taken place before 'The Walk'. The main difference between the two initiatives was that the first was ecumenical and the second was Anglican. The decision to keep them Anglican was based on a desire by the Bishop of Carlisle to tap into the deanery network across the diocese and also to give the rural parishes the responsibility for organising their own programmes. Bob Jackson asks the question: 'Can anything good come out of a deanery?' Jackson notes that although for many the Deanery Synod is composed of '33 Anglicans with nothing better to do all waiting to go home. However, this is not the case everywhere, and in some areas deaneries fulfil a useful function.'³¹⁸ *Carlisle* aimed to fulfil a function through the week-long 'Out of the Blue' Deanery Missions.

What is important, as far as evaluation is concerned, is whether the Deanery Missions that followed 'Walk Cumbria' were able to build on the recorded lessons of that mission? These were: the value of expressing personal faith; the outgoing nature of mission; the ability to

³¹⁶ Ambleside feedback para 3; Task Force Review para 9

³¹⁷ Bishop of Penrith *Report on Walk Cumbria* Page 6, used with permission

³¹⁸ Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (Church House Publishing 3rd imp, 2003) 92

rise to the occasion when debating Christianity; the avoidance of outmoded traditions; the type of literature given to enquirers; the involvement of Catholic and Liberal traditions; the differences between urban and rural communities; and the importance of Cumbrian hospitality. The only way in which to try and interpret this information is to focus on the limited preserved data about the deanery missions. This includes printed materials produced at the time, feedback reports; and some personal recollections.

There are eleven deaneries in the Carlisle diocese and nine³¹⁹ participated in the week-long 'Out of the Blue' Missions which were led alternately by one of the two bishops. Only Barrow deanery in the south and Carlisle deanery in the north did not take up the offer of a mission. This is of interest since it was reported during 'The Walk' that 'Barrow was tougher than other parts of Cumbria.'³²⁰ In some ways this not surprising, since Barrow was identified earlier as being one of the most deprived districts in the county. Carlisle city also has its complexities, not least the urban sprawl of social housing and industry. There is conjecture as to why two deaneries decided not to participate. No reasons are recorded.

Each mission used the same publicity format, but produced a localised programme.³²¹ The cliché 'Out of the Blue' was selected because of its ambiguity and its potential for encapsulating both the randomness of human experience and the unexpected revelation of Jesus Christ to the world. Although Barth probably never used this expression, the theological sentiments behind it can be found in his early understanding of the gospel:

'Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the Gospel. ... In this name two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, the one known and the other unknown. The known plane is God's

³¹⁹Calder September 2006; Brampton September 2007; Derwent October 2007. The six others, Furness, Appleby, Penrith, Solway, Windermere and Kendal took place in 2008

³²⁰"*Over the hills and everywhere ...*" Through Faith Missions Newsheet, 9

³²¹Appendix C

creation, fallen out of its union with Him and therefore the world of the 'flesh' needing redemption ... This known plane is intersected by another plane that is unknown ...³²²

The seasoned³²³ and contemporary³²⁴ use of the phrase 'Out of the Blue' was considered to protect it from the monotony of over-use.

Each deanery gathered together a planning group responsible for organising a programme of events to which church members would be asked to invite their friends. Publicity included a prayer card, posters and a programme. There were regular prayer-meetings and also two Mission Support Evenings provided in each deanery under the title 'Getting Ready – how to share your faith and keep your friends – preparing our congregation to welcome new people'. Many of the events during these missions took place outside church buildings in venues such as pubs, village halls, restaurants, homes and schools. Both bishops were invited to conduct Sixth Form forums in local schools. The one led by the Bishop of Carlisle at Keswick School produced questions about science and religion, history and Christianity and the existence of God.³²⁵ All the mission events included an address from a bishop.

The publicity, for all the missions, cost in the region of £15,000. Some events, such as those which included a meal, had a charge but this was done on the basis of 'buy one get one free' in order that church members could invite guests without a charge. A youth programme was organised in each deanery by the diocesan Youth Officer in conjunction with local youth workers.

³²² Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 29

³²³ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Penguin Classics, 2003) 337; Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, (Atlantic Books, 1990) 238, 475; L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, (Penguin Books 1970) 279

³²⁴ Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (Pan Books, 2008) 71; John Boyne, *The Absolutist*, (Doubleday 2012) 42, 126; Graeme Orbree, *The Flying Scotsman* (Birlinn, 2004) 35

³²⁵ October 2007

A month after³²⁶ the final mission, a deanery mission reunion was held at Rydal Hall, the Diocesan Retreat Centre. Over a hundred people attended and engaged with numerous workshops and seminars. There was also an opportunity for participants to share their reflections on the missions. Using this feedback along with the evaluations made at the time by two deanery synods,³²⁷ the following can be reported:

1. All the events published in the programmes took place and none had to be cancelled. This suggests that local knowledge of what might work in Cumbria was useful.
2. Tickets for many of the events were eagerly purchased. This suggests that Cumbria still has a 'fringe' that will respond to church invitations.
3. The youth meetings were all well attended. This suggests that local teenagers are interested in events organised by churches.
4. Feedback from the secondary and primary schools was positive and the input from the bishops was appreciated. This suggests that opportunities for the clergy and others to go into some schools to discuss Christianity still exist in Cumbria.
5. There was widespread agreement that the Bishops spoke well.³²⁸ This suggests that some bishops know how to interest an audience. Good examples of this were debates about science and faith conducted in the Sixth Form Forums.

Things could have been even better if:

1. Minutes of the planning meetings had been circulated more widely before the missions.

³²⁶ November 2009

³²⁷ Brampton and Derwent Appendix C

³²⁸ In the Brampton deanery the bishop gave 23 different talks

2. The finances (excluding those for the publicity) had been more formal with treasurers and mission accounts.
3. Better use had been made of the follow-up literature.
4. Having to pay for tickets, even on a 'buy one get one free' basis, limited the number of events people could afford to attend.

The question as to whether the deanery missions resulted in new people joining the churches can be summed up by comments made in the evaluation by Brampton Deanery:

'If a business had a campaign to get more customers, you would have to ask at the end if you have got any, and if not why not? ... Three thoughts, 1) Existing congregations did not invite many non-members 2) We could have been more consistent about distributing literature for 'follow-up' groups 3) There may also have been value in 'up-
ing' the general challenge.'³²⁹

There is no evidence that any church received new members, but there was no procedure in place to record this outcome. What was recognised was that many existing members 'had their walk of faith revitalised.'³³⁰ The diocesan church attendance statistics published in 2009 indicate that there was a bottoming out of decline but whether this was due to the impact of 'The Walk' and 'Out of the Blue' cannot be ascertained. There is no record of any converts as a result of these intensive mission weeks. During the week of the Calder mission, the Bishop offered to baptise adult converts in the lake during the final service but there were no candidates. This could have been because any new converts may have been already baptised or simply because the offer was only made at the commissioning service and not at any other of the week's events.

³²⁹ Brampton Deanery Mission – evaluation and reflections (26/9/07) para. 2

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, para.3

There is every reason to believe that some of the lessons learned during Walk Cumbria were heeded. These included:

- the outgoing nature of mission

Not only did each mission hold most of the meetings in secular venues but they also targeted particular groups within their communities. For example: over one hundred men attended a men's evening at the local golf club;³³¹ thirty-five men attended a curry evening in Ulverston;³³² fifteen couples attended a Valentine's supper in Coniston;³³³ twenty couples attended a couples' meal in Greystoke;³³⁴ over one hundred women attended the women's supper in Brampton;³³⁵ forty teenagers turned up for a youth event in Lanercost;³³⁶ over fifty people attended a tea-dance in Workington;³³⁷ a youth concert with Paul Field at William Howard School, Brampton attracted around one hundred and twenty;³³⁸ and over two hundred attended a music concert at the Civic Hall Cocker mouth. Also in Cocker mouth, thirty turned up for 'Saturday papers and breakfast'.³³⁹

- the ability to rise to the occasion when debating

This was demonstrated by the two bishops in the sixth-form debates in the schools and during an evening called 'What God Delusion?' addressed by the Bishop of Carlisle and attended by members of the Richard Dawkins' Society in Keswick.³⁴⁰

³³¹ 13th September, 2007

³³² 12th February, 2008

³³³ 14th February, 2007

³³⁴ 14th May, 2008

³³⁵ 14th September, 2007

³³⁶ 14th September, 2007

³³⁷ 10th June, 2008

³³⁸ 15th September, 2007

³³⁹ Cocker mouth October 20th 2007

³⁴⁰ 5th June 2008

- Avoiding of outmoded traditions

These missions were contemporary in that they involved regular members of congregations across the generations working and planning together. The various working committees, although chaired by local clergy, were made up people from various walks of life. The imagination and willingness to cater, publicise and invite others resulted in many events being sold-out prior to the events. The choice of secular venues no doubt contributed to their popularity.

- involvement of Catholic and Liberal traditions

It is difficult to make an assessment on this matter but it can be reported that commissioning services took place at Holy Trinity Kendal and at Arthuret, neither of which are in the evangelical tradition. The only dissent that was noted, took place in Workington where the parish priest refused to give permission for a series of Saturday afternoon evangelistic open-air meetings to take place in his parish.³⁴¹

- the difference between rural and urban communities

Although some of the deaneries have pockets of urban development (Workington, Whitehaven, Cockermouth, Kendal) most parishes are rural. Since each deanery planned its own experimental programme, the distinctions between urban and rural mission were not obvious. However, In terms of on-going mission different approaches are necessary, as extracts from two interviews with clergy who had moved from rural to urban parishes make clear. The first is from Chris Casey who moved from a parish in Penrith to Mirehouse near Whitehaven:

‘I have an acute awareness of the need for social engagement here in Mirehouse. This was less of a concern in Penrith. As part of our evangelism this year we will hopefully

³⁴¹ 19th October, 2007

see initiatives for those with long-term mental health/unemployment issues. We have the largest in the area.’³⁴²

The second interview was with Garry Greegen who moved from rural Scotby to be a vicar in Barrow:

‘The sheer size of the area covered by the South Barrow Team with an adult population of 24,500 (with children nearer 29,000) bears no comparison to Scotby with its adult population of 1,900. Other factors relate to the high levels of social and economic deprivation. ... In South Barrow there is a real need to develop people’s confidence in Christ and in being a Christian.’³⁴³

- Importance of hospitality

This was in evidence in all the missions where events were catered for by locals and included family and harvest suppers

- literature given to outsiders

*Why Jesus?*³⁴⁴ was chosen to be the main booklet to be on offer to enquirers during all nine missions but this was rarely advertised by the speakers, as was noted by the Rural Dean, ‘there could have been more use of ‘Why Jesus?’ throughout the week.’³⁴⁵

- expressing personal faith

It is not possible to report on this apart from the general impression that church members were eager to promote the missions - as the summary from the two deaneries that provided feedback suggests:

‘It is appreciated that many of the people who came to the church-hosted events were church members, and the week stirred many people. One example is the Friday night “any questions”. Feedback included the comments “fantastic evening”, “moral booster” and “thank you to Bishop Graham for his openness and generosity”.

³⁴² 26th July, 2012 quoted with permission

³⁴³ 28th July, 2012 quoted with permission

³⁴⁴ Nicky Gumble (Alpha International, 2008)

³⁴⁵ Brampton Deanery Mission – evaluation 26/9/07, para. 2

Feedback from the schools has been positive. The opportunities that presented during the week to meet sixth forms is something that the staff would like to build on. Indeed in Keswick, we (ministers from the Clergy Fraternal) are offering ourselves to the school, and hope that the visits, as part of the mission, to schools will be a springboard for further work.³⁴⁶

‘There is a wide feeling that the Deanery Mission has done a great deal of good for the Deanery at a variety of levels, and has given us a basis for future ideas of what could be done as a deanery. It has been a particular encouragement to people from smaller parishes to be part of something bigger. It has been a great effort and we have experienced the rich blessing of God through it.’³⁴⁷

Karl Barth had experience of at least two evangelistic missions, one of which took place during his time as Pastor of Safenwil. Besides Barth’s local village church there was also a pietistic community called ‘Albrecht’s Brethren’ that met in a chapel.³⁴⁸ From time to time the community invited Evangelist Vetter to come and preach in the village for a week. Although Barth did not dislike Vetter, he thought the evangelist did more harm than good:

‘Now the heavy bombardment that we had for a whole week has stopped, and we creep out of our dugouts and tunnels, since Mr. Vetter set out this morning for a town on the Russian border, and we could let the ark very quietly sink down and quietly come to rest, the ground beneath this flood having long ago become visible ... This psychologizing in its worst form, just a describing of “Christian” experiencing ...’³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Derwent Deanery Mission Feedback, November 8th 2007

³⁴⁷ Brampton Deanery Mission Feedback, September 18th 2007

³⁴⁸ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 67

³⁴⁹ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 39

A more high profile evangelistic encounter was with Billy Graham at the Basel in 1960. Barth thought Graham to be a 'jolly good fellow'³⁵⁰ but found his preaching most uncomfortable:

'I was quite horrified. He acted like a madman and what he presented was certainly not the gospel. ... He preached the law, not a message to make one happy. ... We must leave the good God freedom to do his own work.'³⁵¹

However, though Barth and Graham understood Christian mission in somewhat different ways, in 1962 the two met again in America and Barth 'enjoyed a period of conversation together.'³⁵²

Despite Barth's criticism and suspicion of certain evangelistic missions his overriding aim was to subject this activity, along with other church activities, to theological self-examination over the task of talking about God:

'The Church produces theology in this special and peculiar sense by subjecting itself to self-examination. It puts to itself the question of truth, i.e., it measures its action, its talk about God, against its being as the Church. ... Theology follows the talk of the Church to the extent that in its question as to the correctness of its utterance it does not measure it by an alien standard but by its own source and object.'³⁵³

What has taken place in this chapter has been an attempt at this theological self-examination recommended by Barth.

Although Barth was not as enthusiastic as *Carlisle* is for parish missions, due to his suspicion that such initiatives might have a hidden potential for manipulation and might attempt to do God's work for him, at the same time he did believe in the need

³⁵⁰ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 446

³⁵¹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 446

³⁵² Gregory G. Bolich, *Karl Barth and Evangelicalism* (Inter Varsity Press, 1980) 178

³⁵³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 4

for human faith and conversion. He was also committed to the idea of local churches reaching out to the wider community:

‘The royal freedom of his faith is to stand as a brother or a sister, to stand with other brothers and sisters in the possession granted to it and the service laid upon it. If faith is outside the Church it is outside the world, and therefore a-Christian. It does not have as its object “the Saviour of all men, and specially of them that believe.”³⁵⁴

In response to the question set by this thesis - can Karl Barth’s Canonical Narrative Theology make a contribution to parish mission and evangelism in the mainly rural diocese of Carlisle? - it can be said, at this stage, that Barth, by his constant requirement that *Carlisle* submit its strategic plans to Scripture, has opened up the debate about the validity of human mission within the boundary of God’s mission. The contribution of Barth so far is primarily in the areas of reflection and observation. What is now required is to test some of Barth’s narrative theology practically. Therefore, the final chapter now looks back over what has been mapped out from Barth’s theology and attempts to use it to augment the ‘Five Marks of Evangelism’ presented in *GD*. In order to avoid presenting an abstract account, the application is rooted in a typical fragile rural parish church (St Andrews, Dacre) situated seven miles from Penrith. The reason for approaching the ‘five marks’ in this way is to avoid having them tailored to situations quite different from those that exist in the countryside:

‘It will not do in our mission to assume that evangelism and the routine of worship in the countryside can or should be a straight transfer from urban, let alone suburban patterns; some of the malaise and frustration that are felt in rural churches have to go with this, and the expectations that are brought from elsewhere, as well as expectations formed by the past.’³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 751

³⁵⁵ Rowan Williams, *Theological Reflection*, in *Changing Rural Life: a Christian Response to Key Rural Issues*, eds. Jeremy Martineau, Leslie J. Francis and Peter Francis (Canterbury Press, 2004) 255

Also St Andrews Dacre is an example of a rural church which bears the marks of:

‘the deeply layered life of the inherited church’³⁵⁶

This means, that over the centuries, as a typical rural inherited church, it has had to maintain its witness in a variety of situations. The challenge that *GD* presents to St Andrews, Dacre is whether it is able to adapt to the changes in parish evangelism and the environment required for a surge in the growth of new disciples? If, according to Davidson and Milbank, traditional churches such as this might respond theologically to a renewed conviction:

‘that the Bible must shape our understanding of the world at the deepest level’

And that:

‘one of the consequences ... of the birth of ‘narrative theology’ ... [is] a new awareness of how the Faith is embodied in the way of Christian community lives’³⁵⁷

then perhaps Barth’s theology and his method, considered in chapter six can trigger creative thinking and practice in this rural context. The chapter enters the Action point of the Pastoral Cycle.

³⁵⁶ Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For The Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (SCM Press, 2010) 9

³⁵⁷ Andrew Davidson and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (SCM Press, 2010) 18-19

Chapter Six – Evangelism in the Parish: Carlisle and Barth

Chapter three conducted a conversation between Barth and *Carlisle* about the three pre-suppositions that underpin the diocesan plan, '*Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 - 2020*': Gospel, Ministry, and Mission. It has been demonstrated that Barth's narrative theology has much to say about all three subjects. His main argument is that the Gospel is God's gospel brought to us in concrete form by Jesus Christ; the Ministry is God's ministry demonstrated by the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ; and the Mission is God's mission accomplished through Jesus Christ by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Even so, Barth says that as Christians we are, by grace, called by God to proclaim his gospel and also to be part of his ministry and to engage in his mission. The church, though human and sinful, has a divine purpose and function in the world in every generation. This function is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. This proclamation takes many forms as it binds together doctrine and ethics in practical service to the wider community. The church is the place where people live in a dynamic relationship with God and are themselves subjects of the Gospel:

'The Church *is* when it takes place, and it takes place, in the form of a sequence of human activities. In these human activities as such it can be studied from the very beginning of our era by all those who have the opportunity and give to it the necessary attention. It is a phenomenon of world history which can be grasped in historical and psychological and sociological terms like any other. There is, there takes place, a gathering and separation of certain men to this fellowship. This involves – in various degrees of strictness or looseness – an ecclesiastical organisation and constitution and order. In this gathering and separation there takes place a cultus, teaching, preaching, instruction, theology, confession and all in definite relationship to the political and

economic and social conditions and movements, to the scholarship and morality of the surrounding world.³⁵⁸

Chapters four and five considered the ways in which *Carlisle* could identify with Barth's theological description of the church, and showed how the two experiences match up. However, there could be a tendency for *Carlisle*, because of its eagerness for practical action, to make the church an independent community which goes forward with its work without reference to God's calling and initiative. Barth's, contribution to *Carlisle*, at this point, is to draw the church back into the divine boundary by explaining that it is the work of the Holy Spirit which creates the church's genuine human setting.

6.1 Proclamation - a rural parish

The task of this final chapter, which enters the Action stage of the Pastoral Cycle, is to try and discover ways in which the divine message which has been delivered to the church can be creatively heralded in the rural parishes of Carlisle, with the help of the Holy Spirit. This exercise will be undertaken by allowing Barth to interrupt an on-going conversation about *Carlisle's* 'five marks of evangelism' (GD p. 10). The challenge Barth presents to *Carlisle* is how to produce relevant concrete action for local evangelism out of his doctrinal, ethical, ecclesial and social thinking? In order to provide a human identity for this final section of the project, parish evangelism is viewed through the lens of St Andrews, Dacre, which exhibits most of the features identified by Sally Graze as having the characteristics of a typical Anglican rural church:³⁵⁹

- Sunday services
- hymn singing

³⁵⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 652

³⁵⁹ Sally Graze, *Mission-shaped and Rural: Growing Churches in the Countryside*, (Church House Publishing, reprint 2007) 25

- small congregations
- older people
- teaching mainly through sermons
- worship based mainly on the written word
- clergy
- historic church building

Saint Andrews Dacre, Penrith



Fig. 2

‘The ecclesiastical and civil parishes of Dacre are coincident, covering an area of some eight square miles extending from Ullswater on the south-eastern boundary to the western outskirts of Penrith. They enclose the villages of Dacre, Stainton, Newbiggin, Blencowe and Soulby which, together with smaller hamlets and scattered farms, have a combined population of just over 1200 people. Although there are five “townships” (as they used to be called, and are so designated on surviving milestones) there is only one Anglican Parish Church, St Andrew’s, situated in Dacre.’³⁶⁰

The age of the church has not been precisely identified but the earliest known vicar was Nicolas of Appleby who vacated the living in 1296. Various additions were made to the

³⁶⁰ Guidebook to St Andrews Parish Church, Dacre (Dacre PCC, 2008) 4

building in the thirteen and fourteenth centuries and then it remained unaltered until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when extensive restoration took place. The building (Fig. 2) is open daily and is a tourist attraction because of its beautiful setting in the Lake District National Park and also because of several historic features which include Norman arches and windows, a chained Bible of 1617, fragments of two cross shafts from the Viking period, an ancient font, four stone 'Dacre Bears' from the fifteenth century, and an Elizabethan Communion Cup (1583).

St Andrews Dacre is one of hundreds of church buildings in the diocese and *GD* considers these to be a valuable asset and would like to see them equipped to serve communities.

'Significant (50 per cent?) increase in **church buildings** equipped and used for multipurpose service within the community. Making good use of our buildings (we have about 350 of them!) is an important part of our stewardship.' (*GD* p.9)

However, St Andrews is situated in a small village with no young families and so, in the main, caters for an aging population. The Sunday congregation averages around thirty adults and no children attend on a regular basis. The registers show a gradual decline in attendance since 2008.

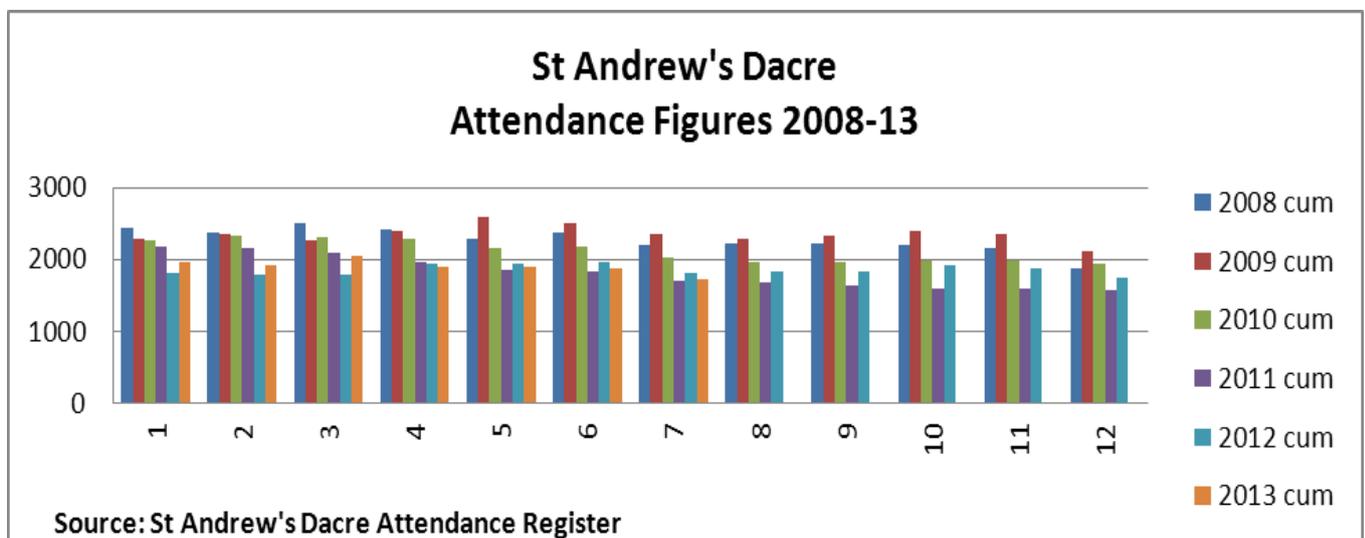


Fig.3

The chart (Fig.3) shows the cumulative monthly church attendance figures for Dacre between 2008 and 2013. The figures on the vertical axis are total persons attending, based on normal Sunday services, and exclude weddings, funerals, baptisms and festival services. The axis along the base represents months of the year. The overall chart therefore gives an indication of how attendance has varied both over the years and through the months of the year. The key trends are firstly, there has generally been a decline of between 15% and 20% over the years between 2008 and 2012. However, Dacre has probably achieved a more consistent attendance than many other rural churches in the diocese. Secondly, there is a monthly variation where attendances dip in the summer, but this is not a significant variation and does not vary year on year. These figures need to be viewed with a degree of caution since there are factors that distort comparisons such as the fact that some months have four Sundays in one year and then five in the next. Also, if in one year there was a normal service on a particular Sunday then that would be included, but if the following year there was a special service on that Sunday then it would be excluded.

Besides the small ageing congregation in Dacre, there is also a monthly 'fresh expressions' service of worship at Stainton School. This Café Church, which began in 2007, is a joint venture with Stainton Methodist Church and attracts younger families. The attendance figures (Fig. 4) are shown to fluctuate from year which is mainly due to children leaving once they move from primary to secondary school. Consideration is being given to the possibility of holding the Café Church on Saturdays twice a month. Also a joint venture of a Children's Holiday Club is planned for autumn 2014.

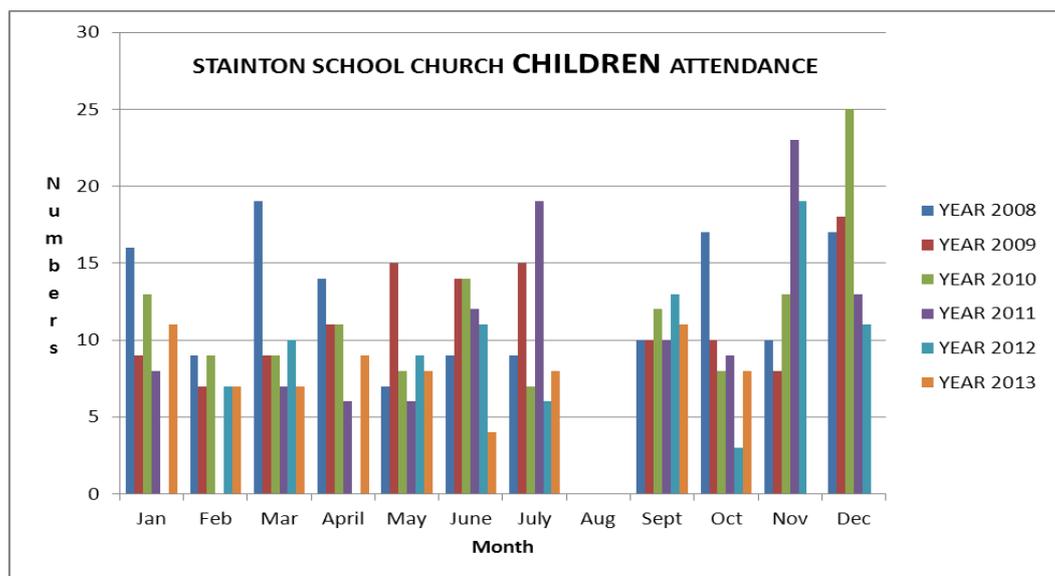
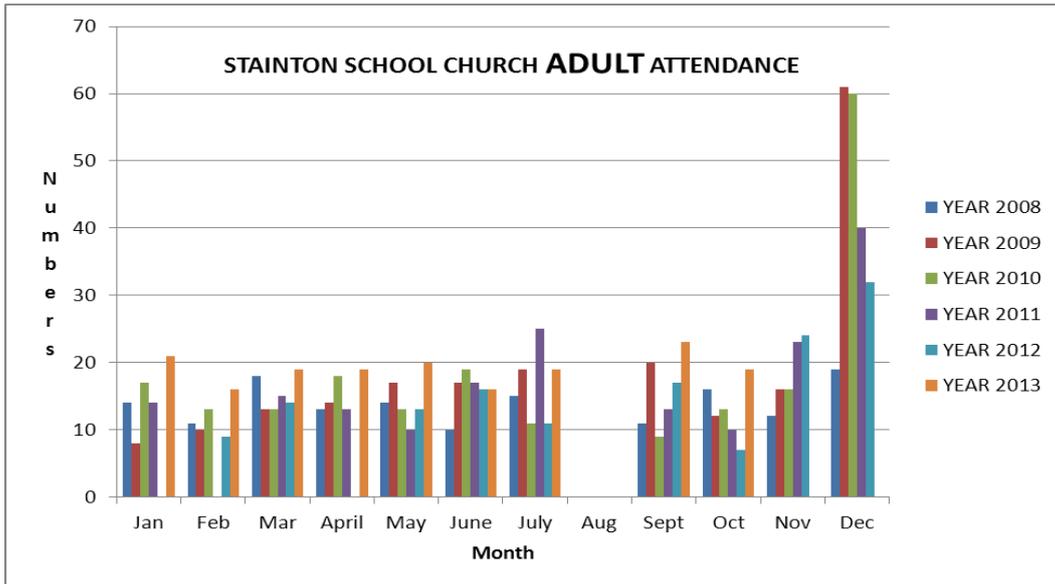


Fig. 4

Copies of *Growing Disciples* are to be found at the back of St Andrews church and the document was initially read by members of the PCC. However, though the PCC is familiar with the document a survey relating to the goals of the congregation³⁶¹ revealed that only one person out of thirty-six who completed the survey form had read *GD*. No respondents suggested that evangelism should be a priority. The reason why evangelism did not seem to feature in the consciousness of this particular rural church is unclear although it can be

³⁶¹ *What Are Your Priorities?* July 2012

noted that *GD* was introduced when the church was facing an interregnum. In order to find out if the response about the task of evangelism might have been more positive if the church had had an incumbent I carried out a sample survey among rural clergy concerning the 'five marks of evangelism' listed on page ten of *GD*. The 'five marks' are said to be:

- A significant increase in Church Attendance (both on weekdays and Sundays); especially an increase in children and young people
- A Mission Action Plan for each church and mission cluster, locally tailored and including plans for work with children, young people and schools.
- A Process Evangelism course (eg Exploring Christianity, Alpha, Emmaus Nurture course) run annually in each mission cluster
- At least two people in each benefice who feel confident to think of themselves as 'parish evangelists'. One in every ten Christians has evangelistic gifts, usually undiscovered.
- All church members equipped to tell others about their life as a disciple of Jesus (eg (Lost for Words course).'

As the process of unpacking the ideas provided in *GD* for their implementation in Dacre, it can be said at the outset that Barth would be encouraged by *Carlisle's* aim to bring the members of the church who want to engage in parish evangelism, back to the Bible:

'Jesus said to his followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:19' (*GD* p.10)

Barth would also support *Carlisle's* idea that local Christians should go out into the world and call people into discipleship:

'They are to make disciples by calling them, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and therefore in appeal to the authority of God to which they know that they themselves are subject, to true conversion, to the forsaking and forgetting of their

former way, to a new beginning, to the state of hope, to prayer for the Holy Spirit. In short to the baptism which is then to be administered to them. ... In all forms of its ministry it must be assumed, therefore, that He is risen and therefore must be confident in His lasting presence.³⁶²

In general, it can be said the substance of the 'five marks of evangelism' as set out in *GD* can be underpinned by reference to Barth's narrative theology and this is demonstrated below. However, if the 'five marks of evangelism' are to become more than good ideas they need to be acted upon in the parishes. For this to take place the clergy and congregations need to embrace them. Clearly the congregation at Saint Andrews have not done this. In order to find out what some clergy and PCCs thought about these 'five marks', a simple survey was carried out two years after³⁶³ the launch of the strategic plan.³⁶⁴ From a random sample of 35 clergy who were contacted personally, 26 completed survey forms were returned. The aim of the survey was to find out what priority parish clergy and PCCs gave to the 'five marks of evangelism'. The replies indicated that 16 PCCs had read and discussed page ten of the strategic plan. Ten clergy said they had read it themselves but had not discussed it with their PCCs. The survey-form asked the participants to list, in order of priority, the 'five marks', and the results indicated that some clergy and PCCs had a different priorities to those in *GD*:

- Church Attendance – 2 out of 26
- Mission Action Plan – 4 out of 26
- Process Evangelism – 13 out of 26
- Parish Evangelists – 0 out of 26

³⁶² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 860-861

³⁶³ June 2012

³⁶⁴ *Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 - 2012* was launched at a clergy day conference May 2010

- Tell Others – 17 out of 26

It would require more than a simple survey in order to discover with more clarity the reason why this particular group of clergy ordered the list of priorities in the way they did. However, the sample does indicate that these rural clergy were not willing to give equal weight to all the ‘five marks’ and have different priorities to those projected by the senior clergy who drafted the plan (Fig. 5).

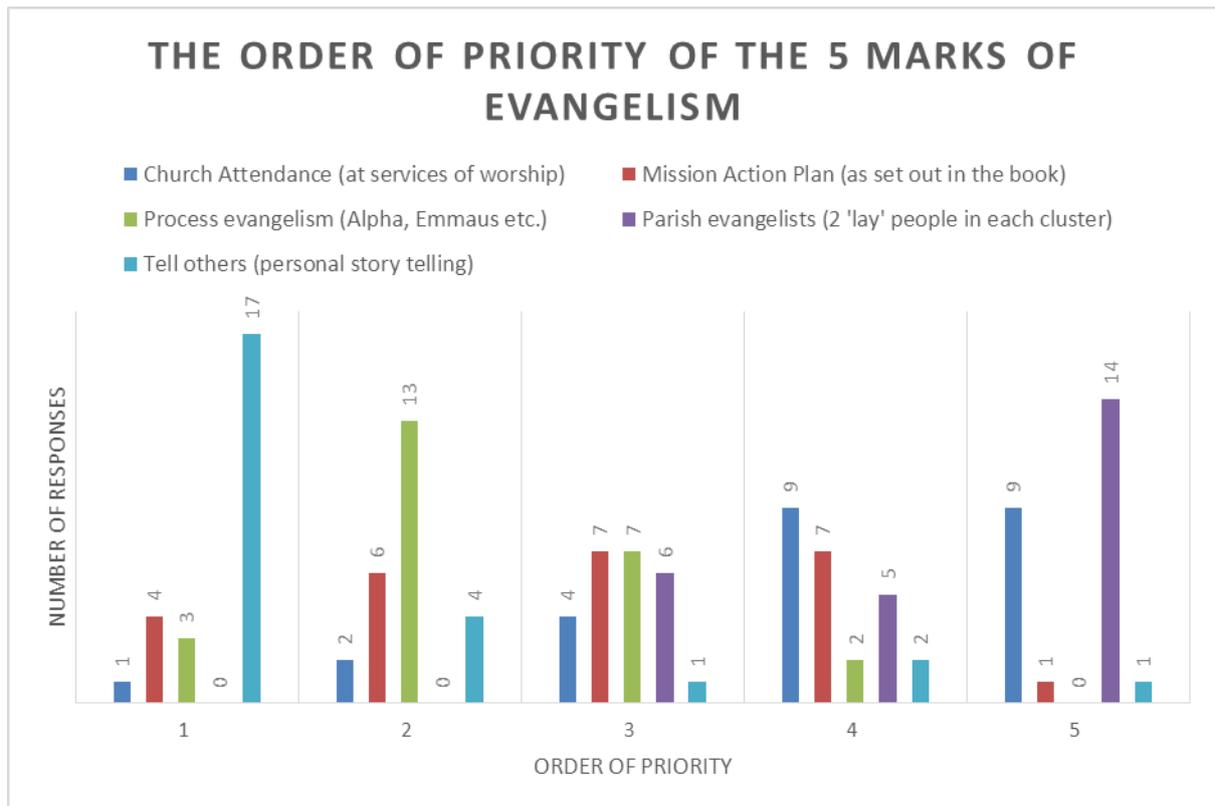


Fig. 5

6.2 Church Attendance and a Worship Experiment

By placing Church Attendance as a priority for parish evangelism the document highlights the need for parishes to address a major concern:

‘Several enormous issues to be addressed (p.4) Church attendance has been steadily declining for more than a century; decline in the attendance of children and young people has been particularly sharp.’ (GD p.5)

Since the term 'membership' varies its meaning from domination to domination *GD's* description 'attendance' is a much preferred measure since its meaning is clear whether it applies to Sunday or midweek attendance:

'Membership is often higher in absolute terms than attendance, and will include more of the elderly in the population who may not be able to get to church so easily.'³⁶⁵

In terms of membership and attendance Brierley's research show that in the United Kingdom church membership was down between 2005 and 2010 in Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches³⁶⁶ and attendance at Anglican churches in *Carlisle* fell from 18,100 at the turn of the twenty-first century to 16,300 in 2009. Nor is *Carlisle's* concern over the lack of young people attending church an isolated problem since it is reflected across the whole of the United Kingdom:

'It is obvious that the numbers of those under 45 shrink rapidly from 50% in the year 2000 to 37% by 2010 and to 27% by 2020, if the present trend continues. ... Half the Church of England parishes have no work among young people.'³⁶⁷

It is not the task of this research to undertake an in-depth review of church attendance in *Carlisle* but rather to show that the diocese's concern about falling attendances are grounded on evidence. In particular the concern about the downward trend being largely due to the absence of young people:

'... many teenagers left the church in the 1980s and many children under 15 in the 1990s. Twenty and thirty years later there is a dire absence of those in their 30s and 40s, and no sign of younger replacements. Unless this circle can be broken, the church will survive only as a group of increasingly elderly people, both living longer and, because of their generational habit, continuing to go to church regularly, every week ...

³⁶⁵ *UK Church Statistics 2005 – 2015*, ed. Peter Brierley (ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2011) 0.2

³⁶⁶ *UK Church Statistics 2005 – 2015*, ed. Peter Brierley (ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2011) 0.2

³⁶⁷ *UK Church Statistics 2005 – 2015*, ed. Peter Brierley (ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2011) 14.3

A 2009 Church of England survey found “very nearly half of the adults in core congregations are 65 or over.”³⁶⁸

What has to be taken into account as far as *Carlisle* is concerned is the rural nature of the diocese. In places of low population the number of potential attenders is limited to the size of the inhabitants. Dacre church is set within a parish of five villages which together have less than two thousand residents. However, all thirty-six of those who responded to the 2012 survey said that increasing church attendance should be a priority, suggesting that this congregation unlike the clergy surveyed are more in tune with the goals set by the diocese. Turning to Barth for advice about how to secure an increase in church attendance in a rural church such as Dacre, and those represented in the above survey, does not at first glance appear to be promising. Although Safenwil, like the combined villages of Dacre parish, was small (247 houses containing 1625 inhabitants) with a school and one church building, it was only semi-rural.³⁶⁹ However, Barth did experience declining congregations and often had to preach to virtually ‘gaping empty pews’.³⁷⁰ Yet on festival days he did preach to a full church,³⁷¹ though in general the bulk of the population did not go to church. On reflection he concluded, that at this time in his ministry, he had little to offer the non-churchgoer:

‘Do you know, that I looked out of the window before the second sermon and saw how Safenwil people went about strolling happily instead of coming to church again and I understood them very well, although theoretically I thought they ought to hear about sinners and the joy of heaven. I simply cannot as yet tell them – and who knows

³⁶⁸ *UK Church Statistics 2005 – 2015*, ed. Peter Brierley (ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2011) 14.3

³⁶⁹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 60

³⁷⁰ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 64

³⁷¹ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914 – 1925*, trans James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 30

whether I ever will? – that they *must* hear. In the meantime they have full right to go strolling in their shirt sleeves.³⁷²

Despite attracting only small congregations Barth, as noted above, gave great attention to his sermons and other talks. Often he spent several days preparing to preach and also to teach his Confirmation classes. Over the years, he revised his Confirmation course eight times.³⁷³ It was Barth's diligence in sermon preparation and other teaching opportunities that caused him to investigate the content of the Christian Faith and to also attempt to apply the gospel message, first to himself, and then to those who attended his church. Even before he preached his way through Romans his eagerness to be able to communicate effectively was already evident. Early correspondence with Thurneysen in January 1916 confirms this attitude:

'... How have you come through the festive season? On the 25th I preached on "Glory to God in the Highest" on the 26th on "Remembering and Pondering" (Luke 2:19), this morning on "Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today, and Forever", and tomorrow it is to be: The Child Grew" (Luke 2:40). The sermon on remembering and pondering seemed to me to come out the most powerfully, while the Christmas sermon, unfortunately, was feeble, though it seemed very fiery on paper. ... Sometime we should discuss our sermons in detail. I feel we should not evade the question: What impression do we make?'³⁷⁴

The 'five marks of evangelism' are intended to help local churches to make an impression:

'If we ourselves are truly growing as disciples, then we should be helping others to know Jesus and become His disciples.' (GD p.10)

³⁷² *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth and Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914 – 1925*, trans James D. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 32

³⁷³ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans John Bowden (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) 64

³⁷⁴ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth – Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914 – 1925*, trans James G. Smart (John Knox Press, 1964) 35

What seems to confuse the situation in terms of impressions is that *Carlisle's* Baptism and Thanksgiving figures, which are above the national average (Fig.6 and Fig.7), are not reflected by an increased church attendance.

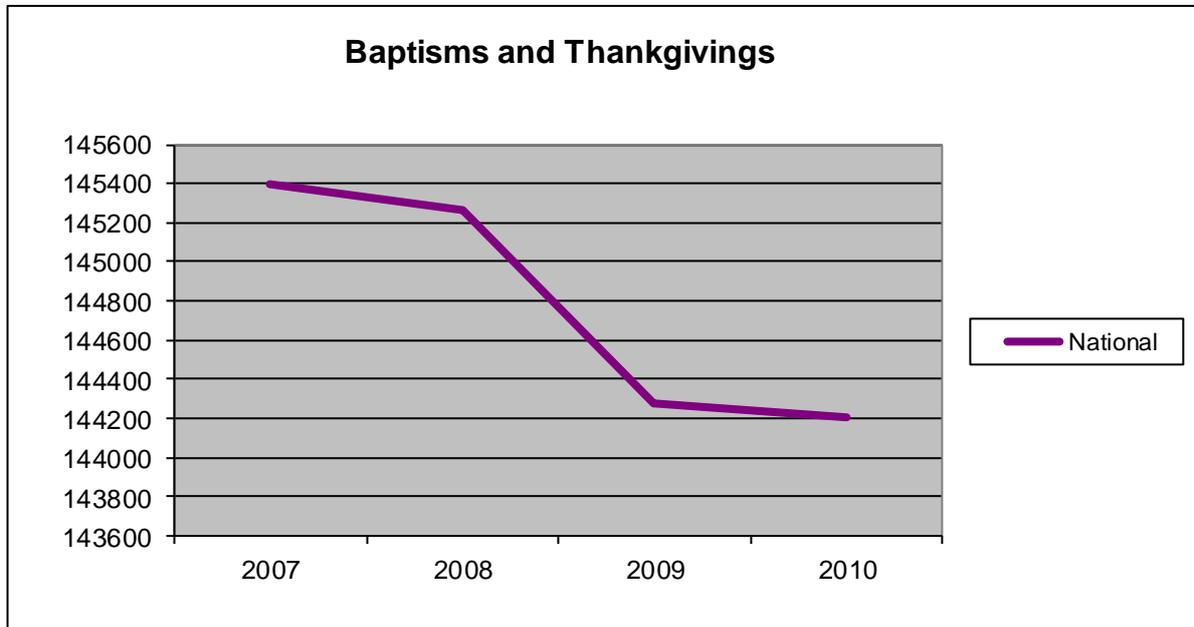
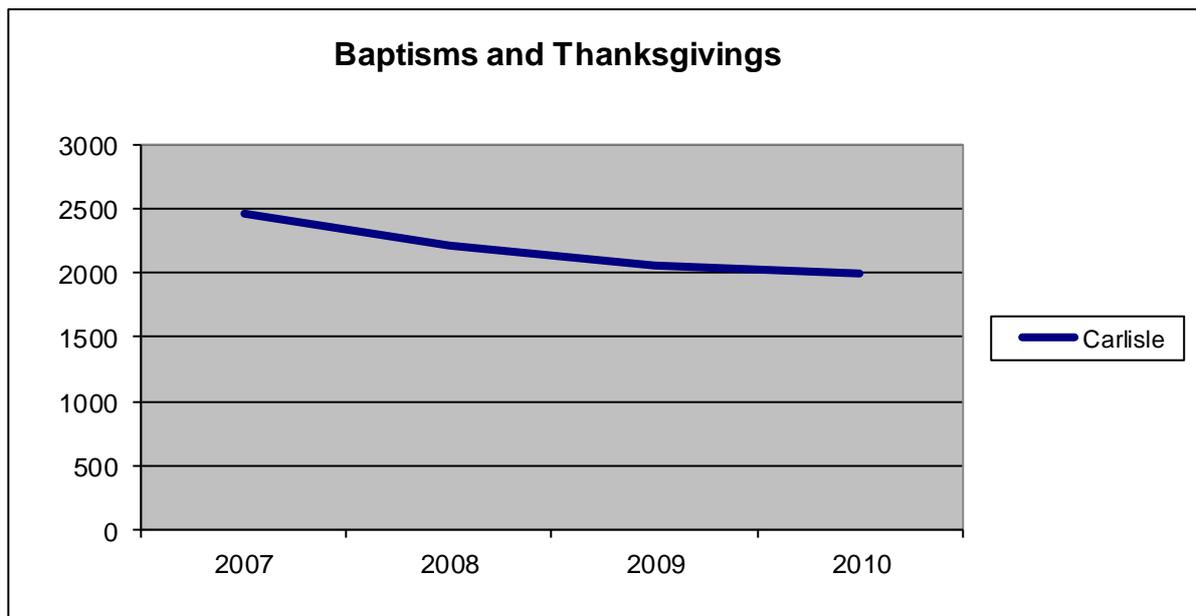


Fig. 6



Source: Church of England Statistics Fig. 7

One clergyman when commenting on the polarisation that seems to exist between people's faith and the traditional aids to discipleship including baptism and church attendance said:

“This week I met 3 different couples to prepare them for a service of baptism for their children ... all 3 couples said they were definitely living under the authority of Christ but they did not feel the need to pray, or read the Bible, or go to Church!”³⁷⁵

This comment raises the possibility that Grace Davie’s ‘believing without belonging’³⁷⁶ may be detected in Carlisle as it is elsewhere. If this is the case church attendance figures should not be coterminous with levels of belief.³⁷⁷ Even so, it is of importance to parish evangelists to know this since it may indicate that the biblical concept of equating baptism with conversion and ‘making disciples’ may now need to be thought of as a double rather than a single task.

In this sense, the new ‘believing without belonging’ mentality may be nearer to Barth’s later Neo-Zwinglian sacramental theology than to his earlier theology of it. However, even in his Romans II the mere participation sacraments, is no guarantee of fellowship with God:

‘The Jewish sacrament of circumcision – and this is true of every other sacrament – is no longer fellowship with God: it remains still – and here, surely, under the wrath of God, Zwingli and the liberals are right – only SIGNIFICANT of fellowship with God. ... Circumcision is, then, equal to uncircumcision, faith to unbelief, and blessedness to godlessness.’³⁷⁸

The reason why Barth’s dialectic is brought into play over the issue of sacraments in Romans is in order to show that the church, which belongs to revelation, is where the distance between God and people can be made space for God to speak and act:

‘In the Church humanity becomes conscious of itself and is manifest as religious. And then suffers because God is God.’³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Vicar of Brampton, in personal communication to the author, 30th August 2012

³⁷⁶ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford Blackwell, 1994)

³⁷⁷ Rob Warner, *Secularization and It’s Discontents* (Continuum, 2010) 50

³⁷⁸ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 74

³⁷⁹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 362

However, Barth is not altogether negative about the sacraments since he recognises that baptism is a sign of grace:

‘Baptism is an occurrence belonging to the concrete world of religion. And why should we not remember it? For sin, the wilful and conscious dishonouring of God with which we are concerned, is also a concrete fact ... baptism is a sacrament of truth and holiness; and it is a sacrament because it is the sign which directs us to God’s revelation of eternal life and declares, not merely the Christian ‘myth’, but – the Word of God. It does not merely signify eternal reality, but is eternal reality.’³⁸⁰

For the early Barth ‘sacramental determination’ in all its concreteness, was what sustained the children of God. However, in his later theology of baptism he denies the sacramental status of water baptism and the inappropriateness of infant baptism. Spirit baptism is the divine act of grace. Water baptism is a human decision:

‘In depicting the life for which the Christian as such is liberated and to which he is summoned, we shall hardly find, outside the Lord’s Supper, any other form of human decision and act in respect of which one may state with such comparative precision and comprehensive validity in what it consists and what has to be done. Christian baptism has as such a perceptible form, visible to all, in a way which does not apply to an inner conviction, a thought or a mere feeling. It is an action which copies and reflects, but it is still an action ... even in the case of immersion, it is more properly the indication of such a washing. There is no true effective “putting away the filth of the flesh” (1 Pet. 3:21).’³⁸¹

The baptism fragment is above all an affirmation of human autonomy.³⁸² Barth in this late reflection on the place and significance of baptism in the Christian life is a polemical protest against the idea that the sacraments are an immediate means of grace. Although his

³⁸⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 192

³⁸¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Fragment IV/4*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 130

³⁸² John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) 160

doctrine of baptism in this fragment may not harmonise with all that the New Testament has to say about baptism³⁸³ it does show that Barth was trying to protect the theology of grace becoming the possession of the church and so causing it to be self-centred. Barth's aim in making a clear separation between water and Spirit baptism was to provide the local church with a theology that widened the boundary beyond its own community. The church by recognising that water baptism of itself was not the completed goal of the evangelistic enterprise would be in a position to reach out to everyone, baptised or not:

The task that faces rural congregations, such as the one at Dacre, is not only how to attract more church attenders but also to engage effectively with any group of new people and to set before the congregation the gospel that includes baptism, but is more than baptism. How can a rural church proclaim the next step of baptism? Working on the probability that any new group of church attenders in *Carlisle* will be already baptised the church needs to find human methods of making a church service more engaging. *Carlisle* already promotes 'Back to Church Sunday' (*GD* p.8) an event which is intended to attract back to church those who for one reason or another have left or simply drifted away.

The New Sunday Experience is a suggested practical method that might bring people back to church. It operates according to Barth's idea of the two spheres of reality: The Mystery of God and The Puzzle of Life. The event as outlined below provides space to explore these two subjects in the context public worship. The target audience could be compiled from the baptismal registers and attractive invitations for the occasion are easy to design. The model is for Sunday worship but this could be easily adapted for a midweek or Saturday service.

The morning programme is in three parts: 1 hour (10 - 11am) 'All Age Worship' during which The Mystery of God is explored; Option Groups (11.15am - 1pm) where The Puzzle of Life is

³⁸³ John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) 162

encountered; Lunch (1 - 2pm) where contact with neighbours is experienced. The event is flexible and people can decide to come to all or any of the parts of the programme. Easy planning is made possible because the congregation and their contacts sign up in advance. In principle the event in a small way uses Barth's polarisation of God's transcendence and human existence as a practical and possible framework for public worship in a traditional rural setting.

- Barth and the experience of God

The attempt in chapter one, to justify introducing Carlisle to Barth, discussed the potential value for *Carlisle* of his dialectical approach to theology. The New Sunday Experience adopts Barth's theological reason for polarising God and human beings and applies in practice. Barth's dialectical theology was an attempt to deliver theology from the tendency to reduce it to some form of anthropology.³⁸⁴ In the opening pages Romans II Barth begins, as he intends to go on, by making a clear distinction between God and ourselves. It is this distinction that is at the heart of the first part of the New Sunday Experience. The time of congregational worship provides an opportunity for a concentration on the mystery of God. By viewing the gospel through the lens of God it can convey to new people who attend church that this gospel is for them as well as for the regular congregation. According to Barth, the gospel unmasks both the new and the regular church-goer just as it did for the Jew and the Gentile in Romans:

'For there is no respect of persons with God. The observable superiority which one man has over another is only his *person*, his mask, his form, the part he takes in the play. To their fellow men it is only this mask which distinguishes one man from another. ... God

³⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) viii

does not regard the mask. Even before Him the righteous man does not play the role of the righteous man ... in either case the man himself, is searched out and known.'³⁸⁵

This theological focus on God also, according to Barth, frees the evangelist to consider the whole congregation as recipients of revelation:

'If there be men who do the law without processing it, and who receive it by doing it, they are then law unto themselves. The living water fashions its own course, and the visible pre-eminence of the inhabitants of the canal is destroyed. ... The religion and the experiences of the characters in the novels of Dostoevsky have presumably their counterparts in many other forms of religion and of experience; but those who *have the law* – even if it be the Gospel! – have no occasion to regard such men as objects of missionary enterprise, or to speak of them in superior fashion as people possessed of 'elementary forms of religion'. ... God can and does give to the Gentiles.'³⁸⁶

The first part of New Sunday Experience is intended to provide space for a creative time of conversation and experience of God in his mystery. The second part provides space for a conversation about the puzzle of life.

- Barth and the experience of life

The exploration into the life experiences of the congregation is provided through interactive focus groups. Here human interests, experiences and skills are discussed. This aspect of the experience follows Barth's theological understanding of what in Romans he calls 'the riddle of the world' (p.43). Barth's doctrine of creation and anthropology places the human being in a structural and ontological relationship to God:

'If we do not keep before us the living and trustworthy basis in God Himself, then either we cannot assert at all that His preservation of the creature is directly and eternally

³⁸⁵ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London Oxford University Press, 1963) 63

³⁸⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London University Press, 1963) 67

effective, that no being can perish, or else we can do so only in the form of a hazy sunrise. It is the God who abides by the election of His creature, whose goodness overflows because it is in fact grounded in His election of grace, it is this God who sees to it that no creature can dissolving into nothingness.³⁸⁷

Barth's insistence that the only way to define what it means to be human is by reference to the biblical God may not seem to be a promising start for a conversation with new people who come to church, since it could appear that Barth may want to ignore all that is now known about people from a variety of disciplines other than biblical theology. Barth, however, is neither out to eliminate either human knowledge or human beings. Rather, he incorporates a human freedom in the election of God, a freedom that allows a person to be loved by God and answer a human 'yes' to the 'Yes' of God. This biblical understanding of the people who join part two of the Sunday programme means that the topics delivered in the forums do not need to be directly evangelistic since the subjects are autonomously valid. The inner task of the occasion is to cross frontiers and to open up the circle to those who may appear to be dormant people of God. The fact they have bothered to join in a church service is to be seen as a positive sign:

'It gives us every reason and confidence to go after this concealed and dormant people of God in the world. Clearly this is his part in its awakening in the determination of every elect person. He is called in order that he himself may be the one who calls within the world. It is not for him to know or to decide the result of his call. The actual opening up of that circle will always take place exactly in the area which corresponds to the eternal free will of God.'³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/3*, trans G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 72

³⁸⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, II/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight, R.A. Stewart, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 418

By placing the Christian faith at the centre of his anthropology Barth opens up possibilities for human beings as well, as at the same time, noting the potential for failure. The second part of the New Sunday Experience provides opportunities for a sharing of experiences that people have today. The church context of these events creates a positive environment where Christians display their interest in practical anthropology:

‘Neither do church and theology need to crawl off into a religious corner where sullenness and resignation about humanity reign in relation to the many difficult problems which confront the human today on small and large scale. Rather on the basis of faith’s experience of true human existence in the midst of the world of disorder and injustice, the Christian community and individual Christians are always in the process of setting out anew in order in order to stand up concretely for true human existence in the midst of human injustice.’³⁸⁹

- Barth and the experience of neighbours

The third part of the programme is the provision of lunch which is intended to be an extension of the human experience touched upon in the focus groups. By eating together the group engages in an opportunity to get to know each other as neighbours in a different way than by listening or discussing. During in his detailed debate about creation ordinances for relationships, *Freedom in Fellowship*,³⁹⁰ Barth moves beyond the structured relationships that exist between men and women and the immediate family to an unstructured relationship between ‘near and distant neighbours’. Although there is a natural bond of fellowship within the human family that has form and is irreversible (eg. parents and

³⁸⁹ Wolf Krötke, *Humanity and the Human Person in Karl Barth’s Anthropology*, (trans, Phiilp G. Ziegler) in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 174

³⁹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/4*, trans A.T. Mackay, T.H.L. Parker, H. Knight, H.A. Kennedy, J. Marks, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 285-323

children) in the case of neighbours the relationship is spontaneous and reciprocal. This is a sphere of freedom:

'There is obviously no special form of the command of God in respect of the existence and relationships of peoples. It is presumed that man takes part in these when the command of God is issued. ... But there is no content of the command relating directly and specifically to the fact that he finds himself in this sphere, nor can he find in the fact that he is summoned and must obey any particular directions that which is required of him as the will of God. He can only make it his aim to apply to this sphere all that he knows or thinks he knows of the divine command in other respects, and practice in praise of God and love to his neighbours.'³⁹¹

Although The New Sunday Experience is intended to provide an imaginative basic framework by which a congregation and non-church neighbours can explore together the mystery of God and the puzzle of life, it can be no more than an introduction to these subjects. However, it is a place where this conversation can begin. Relationships formed. Initially can be a one-off event in a rural setting or a monthly part of a local 'Cluster'³⁹² or deanery programme. It is intended to be a stepping stone towards increasing church attendance but provides no guarantee that new attenders will become converts or regular churchgoers. The pressure, especially on rural churches, to grow numerically should perhaps be balanced by Lesslie Newbigin's observation that the New Testament shows little interest in numerical growth, 'there is no evidence anywhere that the salvation of the world

³⁹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/4*, trans A.T. Mackay, T.H.L. Parker, H. Knight, H.A. Kennedy, J. Marks, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 303

³⁹² A 'Cluster' is the name given in the Carlisle diocese to groups of parishes in a local area who work together. Dacre is part of the Ullswater Cluster

depends on the growth of the church.³⁹³ What this ignores is that the The Acts of the Apostles makes special mention of the numerical growth of the church (Acts 2:41; 6:1).

The New Sunday Experience was incorporated into a weekend mission programme at Holy Trinity Carlisle³⁹⁴ and also at St John's Upperby.³⁹⁵ In both parishes church members brought neighbours along and the congregations. The Café Church (in Dacre parish) is considering using the method as a 'one off' experiment.

6.3 Mission Action Planning – a theological approach

The second mark of evangelism listed in *GD* is:

'A Mission Action Plan for each church and mission cluster, locally tailored and to work with young people and schools.'

Only four of the 26 clergy, who responded to the sample survey considered Mission Action Planning as a priority. Two placed it as the least important and the rest considered it as generally important. Why so few considered it to be important can only be conjectured. It could be that for busy clergy to have to produce a Mission Action Plan (MAP) could be yet another demanding task. Alternatively, the suggestion that clergy are not accomplishing what is required of them by the diocese, could be received negatively.

In order to help parishes follow this initiative a free copy of *How to do Mission Action Planning*³⁹⁶ was provided. MAP was the second of three new initiatives introduced by the Bishop of London, David Hope, in 1993. Every church in the diocese was asked to produce and implement the three MAP concepts: Mission, Action, and Plan. These three aims were

³⁹³ J. L. Newbiggin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids MI, 1997) 140. Quoted by David Runcorn in *The Road Less Travelled: Spiritual Paths in a Missionary Church* (Grove Books, 2008) 18

³⁹⁴ September 2007

³⁹⁵ October 2009

³⁹⁶ Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How To Do Mission Action Planning: A Vision-Centred Approach* (SPCK, 2009)

intended to be renewed every few years in order that direction and vision could be maintained in local churches across the diocese:

‘A Mission Action Plan is a document which outlines the mission activities that a local church is going to do in the coming months, and years. It is built on a clear sense of God’s ‘vision’ for the church – what God is calling the church to be and to do. So MAP provides exactly what it says on the tin – and action plan for mission. ... What we are talking about here is strategic planning – something which businesses, schools, hospitals and most other organizations have to address every year.’³⁹⁷

The appointment in 2013 of Tim Montgomery as Bishop’s Adviser for Leadership and Mission for the Carlisle Diocese follows the example of both London and York where a paid Parish Ministry Development Officer was employed to lead the programme forward. This appointment is intended to avoid this second ‘*mark of evangelism*’ falling by the wayside for lack of leadership investment in MAP:

‘Most of us are now engaged in the Mission Action Planning process and are sorting out the priorities to focus on in the coming months.’³⁹⁸

Carlisle seems to have grasped that a top-down *MAP* initiative will not work by itself, but the reality is that not all rural churches in the diocese are eager to implement such a plan. The sample survey showed that only four out of twenty six parishes considered *MAP* to be a priority and Dacre church have not implemented *MAP* as part of their mission programme. However, at the last meeting of the Ullswater Cluster³⁹⁹ the four clergy who represent the cluster congregations agreed to discuss how best to introduce *MAP* to their

³⁹⁷ Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How To Do Mission Action Planning: A Vision-Centred Approach* (SPCK, 2009)

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³⁹⁸ Tim Montgomery, *Growing Disciples: Vision and Action*, Autumn 2013

³⁹⁹ June 3 2014

rural congregations. The apparent general neglect of *MAP* may suggest that the diocese may not have considered that it is possible to go forward in parish mission without such a plan:

‘It would be wrong, however, to imagine that these top-down *MAP* initiatives work by themselves. The realities are far more complicated than that. In fact, those parishes I have found that have refused to join in the *MAP* exercise appear to have a rather better growth trend than the majority that have joined in! It is now probably time for someone to research the impact of *MAP* on parish life in a sample of churches both in London and other dioceses ...’⁴⁰⁰

Barth’s theological contribution to this section about planning for church growth is an encouragement to try to human methods

‘Growth is an image taken from the organic world Its use does not mean that the communion of saints is an organism, any more than the use of that of building denotes that it is an edifice. ... The secret of the communion of saints is that it is capable of this expansion and engaged in it. That human planning and speech and faith and love and decision and action are also involved according to the divine will and order is also true. This is not compromised by the reference to the secret of the growth of the community. ... It produces new saints by whose entry it is enlarged and increased. Of course we are not told, even by the parable of the seed, that it will become constantly greater in this way so that all living men may eventually become Christians. What we are told is that it has the supreme power to extend in this way, that it does not stand therefore under serious threat of diminution, and as a subject which grows *per definitionem* it has an astonishing capacity even for numerical increase.’⁴⁰¹

However, Barth’s encouragement about the local churches right to engage in planning for growth is tempered here, as elsewhere, by an insistence that any confidence in human

⁴⁰⁰ Bob Jackson, *The Road to Growth: towards a thriving Church* (Church House Publishing, 2008) 100

⁴⁰¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 645

plans, or church order, must not be attempted without a clear commitment and reliance on Christ as directed by the Holy Spirit through his voice in the Bible:

‘But we must be more precise and say that the voice which has to be heard is that of Jesus Christ as attested in Holy Scripture. It is in the form attested there that He is the Head, the living Lord, of the community. It is His Spirit as active in His attestation by the prophets and apostles that the Holy Spirit, the power of His commanding and controlling with the requirement of obedience. It is concretely to Scripture that the community has to listen. ... It has to listen to the Bible.’⁴⁰²

The pragmatic problem facing *Carlisle* is how to ensure Barth’s stipulation that local church planning is grounded and sustained by Jesus Christ who is the head of the church? There seems to be little doubt that this is the desire of the diocese. The confidence in God’s grace to see sustained growth is boldly affirmed:

‘But we are confident that, with God’s grace, a combination of good leadership and clear vision at every level will result in sustained growth.’ (*GD* p.4)

One way in which to underpin and advance this leadership and vision could be through appointment of voluntary **Deanery Theologians**. Their task would be to stimulate biblical theological thought that would ensure that initiatives such as MAP are seen to be more than ‘a good idea borrowed from the world of business.’⁴⁰³

One of the tasks of deanery theologians would be to explore with parishes how to keep Christ and his purposes at the centre of all mission-planning. This idea has been discussed with the Bishop of Carlisle and he has encouraged its exploration. A questionnaire about the suggestion was issued to the Cumbria Theological Society in 2010. Eight positive responses

⁴⁰² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/2*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Y&T Clark International, 2004) 682-683

⁴⁰³ Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How To Do Mission Action Planning: A Vision-Centred Approach* (SPCK, 2009)

were received from affiliated theologians. However, only one said that they understood that practical theology is a particular field of theology. This is probably due to practical theology being a relatively new discipline:

‘It specifically deals with Christian life and practice within the Church and in relation to wider society. Such a restrictive definition, however, is comparatively recent, stemming from the academic and cultural changes of the past three hundred years. ... In recent decades there has been a revival of interest in practical theology.’⁴⁰⁴

An introduction to both the ‘five marks of evangelism’ and to Barth’s theology of mission, as presented above in chapter three, could provide a useful biblical basis for this enterprise. With this theological knowledge in place deanery theologians would be able to guide deaneries into discussing other related subjects that were of less concern to Barth than they are to modern parish evangelists such as: secularization and apologetics.

- Secularization

To suggest that Barth was not interested in the subject of the church and secularization would be misleading since he was constantly aware of the context in which the church had to engage in proclamation:

‘Throughout the world, the Church is concerned today with the problem of secularization of the modern man. It would perhaps be more profitable if the Church were at least to begin to become concerned with the problem of its own secularization. Secularism surely reigns where interest in divine revelation has been lost or bartered away for the interests of man.’⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian thinking in the service of the Church and society* (SPCK, 2006) 1

⁴⁰⁵ Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans E.G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936) 15

Barth's suggestion here, that the church is not untarnished by secularization, might be a healthy reminder to *Carlisle* that not only that church mission is human as well as divine, but also that secularism is not just part of the identity of the world but also of the church as well. *GD* might need to recognise that secularization affects 'us' as well as 'them'. The rather limited view of secularization mentioned above could be addressed by the deanery theologians:

'Church attendance has been steadily declining for more than a century. ... Cumbria is not immune from the blight of secularist consumerism.' (*GD* p.5)

The idea that religion is just one factor among many in the complexity of human life stretches back to the social thought of Max Weber (1864 – 1920). Weber was interested in the relationship between religious idea and commitments and other aspects of human activity, especially the economic characteristics of human behaviour within society:

'The essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social behaviour (sic).'⁴⁰⁶

More recent sociologists of religion turn to Weber's contribution in three ways: showing that the subject of religion and the world is contingent and variable; that the gathering of data is important; and that the erosion of religion leads to secularization.

First Weber's understanding, that religion and the world is a contingent and variable one, is outlined in his comments on the relation of Islam to other religions:

'Islam was not brought any closer to Judaism and to Christianity in decisive matters by such Islamic developments as the achievement of great scope through the rise of theological and juristic casuistry, the appearance of both pietistic and enlightenment schools of philosophy (following the intrusion of Persian Sufism, derived from India, and

⁴⁰⁶ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans Ephraim Fischhoff (Methuen and Co Ltd: London, 1963) xx

the formation of the order of dervishes (*which* shows strong traces of Hindu influences).⁴⁰⁷

This theme is developed by Gilles Kepel who argues that three of the world's major religions are making a come-back despite having experienced acute decline since the 1960's. In their desire to overcome the process of secularization there has been a return to fundamentalism. The quest has been to reverse the trend of religion being absorbed into secular society. The key to this reversal is to return to the pre-modern texts of scripture. In order to make his case Kepel starts by reviewing Weber's premise that religious intellectuals view society through their own lens. In this case they do not fight against the secular ethic, which they say does not exist, but consider that in the final analysis the modernism produced by reason without God has not succeed in creating values. Weber's theme of the relationship of the world to religion is a thread woven into Kepel's research.⁴⁰⁸

The second contribution from Weber is the gathering and documenting historical, geographical and cultural sources through which to come to an understanding of religion and society is now common practice in this social science discipline. Weber's chapter on the Religion of Non-Privileged Classes is produced from information gathered from China, Germany, Greece, India and Israel. It is religious, historical, cultural, ethical and intellectual. He provides example after example of practices and beliefs to make his central case:

'the human mind as it is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material need but an inner compulsion, to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to be taken up a position toward it.'⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans Ephraim Fischoff (Methuen and Co Ltd: London, 1963) 217

⁴⁰⁸ Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, trans Alan Braley (Polity Press, 1995) 4

⁴⁰⁹ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans Ephraim Fischoff (Methuen and Co Ltd: London, 1963) 221

Grace Davie, in a similar way, examines the nature of European religion within a global context.⁴¹⁰ Her conclusion, that Europe increasingly looks like an exceptional case when it comes to matters of faith, is achieved by the careful examination and analysis of appropriate data collected from around the world. She is therefore able to challenge the conviction that as the world modernises it will necessarily secularise. Her method mirrors the practice of Weber.⁴¹¹

Weber's third contribution concerns the gradual erosion of religion in modern societies which leads to the secularization is probably one of the most debated topics in recent studies. Steve Bruce questions the view of those commentators, social scientists and church leaders who try to minimise the effect of secular social change on religion. He elaborates on the work of Weber in order to silence the critics of secularisation theory.⁴¹² By drawing on a range of international examples Bruce attempts to move Weber's debate about secularisation forward.⁴¹³ By highlighting these aspects of secularization and discussing the implications for parish mission deanery theologians could provide parish evangelists with important tools in their endeavour to implement Mission Action Planning.

- Apologetics

Another subject that deanery theologians could start to unpack for parish evangelists is that of apologetics which according to Alister McGrath has as the task of creating a dialogue for faith:

⁴¹⁰ Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case – Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007)

⁴¹¹ Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case – Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007) 19,25,64,70,157

⁴¹² Rob Warner, *Secularisation and Its Discontents*, (Continuum, 2010)

⁴¹³ Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Blackwell Publishing, 2010) 2,5,6,7,29,37,38,42,76,107

'The chief goal of Christian apologetics is to create an intellectual and imaginative climate conducive to the birth and nature of faith.'⁴¹⁴

The central question for apologetics concerns the relationship between the gospel and culture. Which of these ultimately drives the apologetic enterprise? Reference was made above to Barth's seemingly ambivalent attitude to the role of culture and apologetics in mission and evangelism and his restriction of the subject to the confines of Scripture. So could following Barth in this important area of mission become an embarrassment? ⁴¹⁵ However, a closer examination of Barth shows that he did not dismiss culture and the messages it brings to human beings, out of hand. The words spoken by culture do not, according to Barth, contradict the true Word of God Jesus Christ, they are to be recognised for what they are:

'Does Jesus Christ speak through the medium of such words? The answer is that the community which lives by the one Word of the prophet Jesus Christ, and is commissioned and empowered to proclaim this Word of His in the world, not only may but must accept the fact that there are such words and that it must hear them too, notwithstanding its life by this one Word and its commission to preach it.'⁴¹⁶

Deanery theologians could explore this subject through Barth's theology even if the decision is then taken to depart from the answers he provides. A weaving in and out of Barth could provide a useful structure for this debate.

Of particular interest to theologians in *Carlisle* would probably be the work of William Paley (1743-1805) who was at one time Archdeacon of Carlisle. Paley made a significant contribution to the natural theology debate by his mechanical proof for God through the

⁴¹⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Bridge Building* (IVP, Leicester, 1994) 9

⁴¹⁵ Timothy Gorrige, 'Culture and Barbarism: Barth amongst the Students of Culture', in *Conversing with Barth*, eds. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) 40

⁴¹⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/3.1* trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T International, 2004) 114-115

'argument from design'. His research was conducted and written up during a prolonged time of illness. His book *Natural Theology* was dedicated in 1802 to Shute Barrington the Bishop of Durham. Paley argues for the existence of an intelligent Creator by gathering together multiple 'proofs' which range from the succession of plants and animals to the intricate structure of the human skeleton, muscles and especially the eye. His observations led him to compare creation with a watch that required a maker unlike a stone which, of itself, shows the observer nothing of design. His conclusion was that:

'The existence and character of the Deity, is, in every view, the most interesting of all human speculations. In none, however, is it more so, than as it facilitates the belief of the fundamental articles of *Revelation*. It is a step to have it proved, that there must be something in the world more than what we see. It is a farther step to know, that, amongst the invisible things of nature, there must be an intelligent mind, concerned in its production, order, and support.'⁴¹⁷

Paley saw natural theology as an intelligent first step of revelation that did not answer all human questions but was its observations were an import contribution to truth.

Although Alister McGrath makes the positive point that Paley's work was read by Charles Darwin,⁴¹⁸ Richard Dawkins says Darwin was only impressed by the argument when he was an undergraduate:

'The young Darwin was impressed by it when, as a Cambridge undergraduate, he read it in William Paley's *Natural Theology*. Unfortunately for Paley, the mature Darwin blew it out of the water. There has never been a more devastating rout of popular belief by clever reasoning than Charles Darwin's destruction of the argument from design.'⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ William Paley, *Natural Theology* (London: Longman and Co, 1846) 266

⁴¹⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Blackwell Publishing, 2001) 250

⁴¹⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Bantam Press, 2006) 79

Barth approached Darwinism from the point of the theologian and in his assessment of the *'The Phenomena Human'* he said:

'The 19th century was one of unparalleled obscurity because it was a time when in the very act of leaping forward to a realisation of his possibilities man became unknown to himself. ... Darwin did not make it this. But because it could not see real man for all his possibilities it had to have its Darwin, and the scientific and theological anti-Darwinians were necessarily powerless against him. Darwin and his followers had the advantage that the voice of the century spoke through them, and no anti-Darwinian theory could prevail against it. ... If a man does not know himself already, long before his attention is directed to these phenomena, he will be blind though he sees.'⁴²⁰

If deanery theologians were provided by The Cumbrian Theological Society this would be a means by which the society could prove the value of theological study to parish mission. All too often theology exists in the abstract rather than the concrete sphere of the church.

6.4 Process Evangelism - a conversational method

The third mark of evangelism listed in *GD* is:

'A 'Process Evangelism' course (eg. 'Exploring Christianity', 'Alpha', Emmaus Nurture course') run annually in each mission cluster.'

Just 3 out of the 26 clergy in the sample survey placed process evangelism as a first priority for parish evangelism. A similar survey on this topic carried out in 2010 indicated that over 50 churches in the diocese used this type of course.⁴²¹ Most of the replies in 2010 indicated a familiarity with more than one course (Alpha 89%, Emmaus 59%, Christianity Explored

⁴²⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/2*, trans H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R.H. Fuller, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 89-90

⁴²¹ Questionnaires 'Can You Help Me?' were offered to clergy who attended the 2010 annual Carlisle clergy conference. 55 clergy who said they held courses took the questionnaire and 27 completed forms were returned.

33%, Start 19%, Simply Christianity 7%, Saints Alive 4%, Own course 11%, Diocesan course 4%). Telephone interviews with all the clergy respondents revealed that 94% of rural churches had only used their selected course once. Three reasons for this limited use were conveyed:

- gathering enough people together to make a course viable
- the length of the course
- and the difficulty of finding speakers.

However, by placing Alpha as a main process evangelism course, *Carlisle* mirrors the nationwide findings.⁴²²

Alpha is a highly successful attempt to bring Christianity to non-church members and so is to be respected by those who wish to see churches grow. It is arguably one of the most recognisable and successful process evangelism courses available both in the United Kingdom and overseas. In July 2001 a television documentary, hosted by David Frost, attracted over a million viewers. The question is why do some churches take to Alpha and others do not? Research undertaken by Stephen Hunt⁴²³ indicates that there are several reasons why Alpha is popular and also why it is not so. The positives include:

- it produces converts
- it is relevant to post-modern people
- the language used bridges secular and church culture
- ecumenical standing
- its homogeneous unit-principle

Negative reactions to Alpha include:

⁴²² Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, *Evangelism – Which Way Now? An Evaluation of Alpha, Emmaus, Cell church and other Contemporary Strategies for Evangelism* (Church House Publishing, 2003) 33

⁴²³ Stephen Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era*, (Ashgate, 2004) 21-89

- its charismatic element
- concessions to the general cultural drift
- confusion over its use in Roman Catholic churches
- says little about the social gospel
- fundamentalist in tone

Although there has been no in-depth analysis into *Alpha's* use in *Carlisle* what is interesting is that the negative reactions gleaned from the survey undertaken do not appear in Hunt's research. For *Carlisle* the problems include:

- rural churches find it difficult to gather enough people for a course
- a course of ten sessions is too long
- finding lively speakers who can interpret the Alpha gospel

Since none of the reservations raised by *Carlisle* are overtly critical of Alpha this may suggest that if these three issues could be addressed in a new process evangelism course that is specifically designed for use in rural traditional churches then then the target set by *GD* (A 'Process Evangelism' course in each mission cluster) might be met. **ENCOUNTER** takes these three practical matters into account.

The name **ENCOUNTER** comes directly from Barth's writings where he uses it to describe what it means to meet with God and what it means to relate to other people. In *Romans* the reader encounters questions about God, the gospel, Christ's Resurrection and human life:

'The world remains the world and men remain men even while the Gospel is being received. ... The Resurrection, which is the place of exit, also bars us in, for it is both barrier and exit. Nevertheless, the 'No' which we encounter is the 'No' – of God. ... The barrier marks the frontier of a new country, and what dissolves the whole wisdom of the world also establishes it.'

'Even the unbeliever encounters God, but he does not penetrate through to the truth of God that is hidden from him ...'

'He is fully aware that, though the words *by faith only* open the door to the peace of God, the door is also closed with the same words. He himself has entered by the door of faith. Yet he carefully defines his manner of entrance as *by him*, that is by Jesus Christ our Lord. This means he has encountered faith, not in the course of a steady growth in experience, but through the action of God upon him, and in the vision of the crucified and risen Christ.'⁴²⁴

For Barth the encounter with God's Word of grace was established at the very beginning of Creation:

'Thus the creature in its totality was allied to this living, divine Person, being wholly referred to it for existence and essence, its survival and sustenance. It came into being as the work of the Word of God corresponding to His utterance. So originally and intimately was it disposed for the grace of God! Encountered by this Word of grace, it encounters just the wisdom, kindness and power without which it could not be at all. Encountering the creature, this Word really comes into its own.'⁴²⁵

Barth establishes both the encounter of God with people and the subsequent encounter of humans with each other by making it clear that anthropology and Christology are distinct subjects despite the fact that God became human in Jesus Christ. Under the heading the '*Phenomena of Man*' he says:

'Our answer to the question of the nature of man Jesus could not be more than a foundation. Anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology. We remember that between the man Jesus and ourselves there stands not only the mystery

⁴²⁴ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 38,43,118,153

⁴²⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/1*, trans J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, H. Knight, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 110

of our sin, but primarily and decisively the mystery of His identity. It is impossible to understand ourselves in this identity. We are here confronted by the irremovable difference between Him and us.⁴²⁶

It is this encounter with Jesus Christ that ENCOUNTER attempts to facilitate. Barth says that such an encounter is possible in general life because encounters already take place among human beings:

‘That real man is determined by God for life with God has inviolable correspondence in the fact that his creaturely being is a being in encounter – between I and Thou, man and woman. It is human in this encounter, and in this humanity it is a likeness of the being of its Creator and a being in hope in Him.’⁴²⁷

Taking its lead from Barth’s narrative theology, ENCOUNTER spends time on both anthropology and Christology showing how, though distinct, the two subjects are bridged by the Incarnation. The invitations to the course indicate that that the sessions will explore both the Mystery of God and the Puzzle of Life. Since this is the same form and content as is used for The New Sunday Experience, an ENCOUNTER course could be offered to new people who attend church.

ENCOUNTER is designed to meet the three requests by the rural parishes:

- it can be used in deanery clusters

It was used in three deaneries as a follow-up to the ‘Out of the Blue’ missions.⁴²⁸

- it is a short course consisting of five sessions

The five sessions cover the topics: It’s my life; Out of your mind; No wonder; Easier said than done; Believe it or not.

⁴²⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III/2*, trans H.Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R.H. Fuller, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 71

⁴²⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, III/2*, trans H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R. H. Fuller, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 203

⁴²⁸ Brampton, Penrith and Windermere

Each session, by the use of questions on the worksheet, affirms the value of human knowledge about science, literature, films, and other aspects of life and knowledge experienced by members of the group in the human sphere. The second part of the evening explores knowledge about Jesus Christ as provided by John's Gospel. It is explained that this is revealed knowledge unavailable outside the Bible: 'these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name'. (John 20:31).

- the course does not require a speaker

The format of the course is designed to be a self-discovery exercise and the leader's handbook explains how each session should be organised. In the first part of each of the sessions the group is encouraged to engage in a conversation about their lives, interests, and experiences. In the second part of the evening the group is divided into small groups where a discussion takes place about pre-selected passages from John's Gospel, a copy of which is provided for everyone. At each session group has the same heading but a different passage(s): session one, Things Jesus Did; session two, People Jesus met; session three, What Jesus said; session four, Why Jesus died; session five, How do I find faith? By this method non-church people discover for themselves the art of Bible-reading. They study a text in small groups and then share their conclusions. Three simple questions about Jesus Christ are answered. In session one about the things Jesus did the questions are: What did Jesus do in this passage? Who did he do it for? What do you think about what he did? After the study the small groups report back their findings to the rest. The participants are then encouraged to read John's Gospel when they return home.

ENCOUNTER attempts to reflect some of the insights found in Barth's commentary on John chapter one.⁴²⁹ Though this commentary did not avert his plans to retreat to a rural parish in Switzerland, he found in St John 'astonishing things that previous exegesis had missed.'⁴³⁰ Barth's explanation of the passage in John 1:35-51 gives a flavour of ENCOUNTER especially in regards to Jesus' treatment of Nathanael. Having decided that Jesus' miraculous knowledge about this enquirer, though interesting, is not really the matter to ponder, Barth moves on to say:

'We would do well to insist on this fact that Jesus comes first, on his primacy in principle in establishing the relationship with the disciples. This is the issue in the knowledge of Jesus depicted here. It is the same primacy as is later reflected in the saying in 15:16: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." ... As the Evangelist portrays it, knowing Christ is a decision which is either taken or not taken, but which, when it is taken, is taken with all its implications. ... Recognition of the Messiah comes directly from above or not at all. It is also to the point to say expressly (as the passage does) that historically considered it is both the beginning and the goal.'⁴³¹

The aim of part two of each ENCOUNTER session is to demonstrate that for faith to flourish revelation is required. The purpose of John's Gospel is introduced as being a source of revelation. By this method non-church people are able to contribute their views and question what is being said. As with the section on The Puzzle of Life it is the conversation of

⁴²⁹ Karl Barth, *Witness To The Word: A Commentary on John 1: Lectures at Münster in 1925 and at Bonn in 1933*, ed. Walter Fürst, trans by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986).

⁴³⁰ Karl Barth, *Witness To The Word: A Commentary on John 1: Lectures at Münster and at Bonn in 1933*, ed. Walter Fürst, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) x.

⁴³¹ Karl Barth, *Witness To The Word: A Commentary on 1 John: Lectures at Münster and Bonn in 1933*, ed. Walter Fürst, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) 145-153.

the group, rather than confrontation by the leader, that guides the discussion. The Gospel of John sets the agenda.

ENCOUNTER is intended to capture the essence of Barth's understanding of the process of proclamation. 'Encounter' is a common word used by Barth to describe what happens when people encounter faith. This concept is found in his early works and then developed graphically in his *Church Dogmatics*. When God comes to us by the revelation of His mystery we are linked to God by 'an effective encounter.'⁴³² God is always a mystery⁴³³ but he does reveal himself in this mystery to his people in the Old Testament but more directly in the New Testament in Jesus of Nazareth who, at a high point is 'my Lord and my God' (John 20:23).⁴³⁴ Barth sees this 'unveiling' of God in the sphere of human understanding as an encounter that is always God's decision.

ENCOUNTER courses have been held both in urban⁴³⁵ and rural⁴³⁶ parts of Cumbria and also one at Carlisle Cathedral. Attendance ranged between ten and twenty participants. Some feed-back has been received⁴³⁷ but it is too early to know if a less confrontational approach to process evangelism will prove to be as successful in producing converts as Alpha has been. This question this raises concerns whether converts are to be seen as the main evidence of successful evangelism? Jim Packer thinks not:

⁴³² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/I*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 331

⁴³³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/I*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 321

⁴³⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/I*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 318

⁴³⁵ St. Elisabeth's Harraby, Carlisle

⁴³⁶ Parish Church Ambleside, Saint Andrews Dacre, Stainton Café Church

⁴³⁷ Appendix D

‘the way to tell whether in fact you are evangelizing is not to ask whether conversions are known to have resulted from your witness. It is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message.’⁴³⁸

Barth’s ambiguous comment leaves the same question open:

‘the unbeliever encounters God, but he does not penetrate through to the truth of God that is hidden from him.’⁴³⁹

Two ENCOUNTER courses have been held in Dacre parish, one at the parish church and one at the Café Church. In both cases process evangelism was new to those who participated. The outcome in both cases was a request for further meetings in order to find out more about how to encounter Christ today. Barth in his *Ethics as a Task of The Doctrine of Reconciliation*⁴⁴⁰ describes encounter with God as a ‘pilgrim theology’:

‘Special ethics has to consider and indicate the sovereignty of the divine commanding, but also its constancy, the faithfulness of God to himself and to man; the uniqueness and singularity of each individual act of human obedience or disobedience, but also the continuity of human being, attitude, and action; the event-character of every encounter of God with man and man with God, but also the fact that this event takes place in the history of God and this man but also with all other men. His encounters with men are individual yet not on that account isolated points.’⁴⁴¹

The response that concerns ENCOUNTER is the same response that concerns Barth.

⁴³⁸ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Inter-Varsity Press, reprint 1977) 41

⁴³⁹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 43

⁴⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments: The Christian Life*, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley (T&T Clark International, 2004)

⁴⁴¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments: The Christian Life*, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley (T&T Clark International, 2004) 5

6.4 Parish Evangelists and Witnesses – team training

The fourth and fifth mark of evangelisms in *GD* is expressed in the form of goals:

‘At least two people in each benefice who feel confident to think of themselves as

‘parish evangelists’

‘all church members equipped to tell others about their life as a disciple of Jesus’

These goals are made to sound possible since it is pointed out that ‘one in ten Christians has evangelistic gifts’. However, though none of the clergy questioned placed parish evangelists as a priority mark of evangelism, seventeen did place ‘tell others’ as a priority. So it seems appropriate to link the two subjects together in an attempt to find out parishes might respond to the final two challenges.

Precisely where the statistic of ten per cent of Christians having the gift of evangelism comes from is left undisclosed. Barry Osborne in his critique of rural evangelism says it is a researched statistic, but he does not reveal who did the research.⁴⁴² Presumably it is included in order to alert clergy and congregations to the fact that, as in other areas of church life, there is an untapped source of energy and skill related to evangelism within the mission clusters. It is presumed that such people would be lay rather than ordained. In either case it might worthwhile to note that evangelists often have heavy demands laid upon them.

From the 1970’s to the present day books about evangelism tend to scold the church for neglecting the vital task of sharing the gospel with family, friends and neighbours. For example Michael Green, writing forty years ago about evangelism in the early church, does not directly attack the modern church for its impotence in evangelism but, in comparison

⁴⁴² Barry Osborne, *Rural Evangelism in the 21st Century* (Grove Books, Evangelism Series, 76, 2006) 13

with his findings in the New Testament and early church history, the church today is shown to lag behind its predecessors who made evangelism a priority:

‘This is a permanent reminder of the Church’s first priority. Evangelism was the very life blood of the early Christians.’⁴⁴³

John Stott is equally upfront about the failure of the modern Western church to grasp the importance of evangelism in the task of ‘mission’. In a review of public comments about evangelism since 1910, where the plight of millions neglected by a church that has failed to make evangelism a priority, Stott, quoting the Lausanne Covenant, a document drafted by participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974, owns the critique that:

‘We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole church’.⁴⁴⁴

In more recent times comments by those concerned with the subject of evangelism have been less confrontational to the church. The Mission-Shaped Church report of 2004 hardly uses the word ‘evangelism’ and where it does it equates it with culture and relationships.⁴⁴⁵

Booker and Ireland in their assessment of the various approaches to modern parish evangelism, follow this same concept as they take into account the complex patterns of social change. They are eager to point out that, ‘The last few years have been an almost unprecedented period of Christian creativity.’⁴⁴⁶ However, their main conclusion is that since the Decade of Evangelism the church has begun to understand that evangelism is a much longer process than it was once thought to be.

⁴⁴³ Michal Green, *Evangelism In The Early Church* (Hodder and Stoughton,1970) 280

⁴⁴⁴ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Intervarsity-Press, 1975) 36.

⁴⁴⁵ *Mission-Shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (Church House Publishing, 2004) 12, 38, 43, 51-2, 53-5, 64.

⁴⁴⁶ Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, *Evangelism - Which Way Now? An Evaluation of Alpha, Emmaus, Cell Church and other Contemporary Strategies for Evangelism* (Church House Publishing, 2003) 186.

Barth was equally cautious about suggesting that evangelism was a straight forward or simple exercise. In a discussion about The Act of Faith he describes how the Christian faith being a free human act it involves three aspects of knowledge on the part of the potential convert: an acknowledgement of sin; recognition of Jesus Christ as attested by Scripture; and a witness who confesses Christ publically. These intelligent responses should follow when a member of the local church reaches out to those outside of its boundaries:

‘Above all, the necessary summons to confession is concretely given by the existence of others who, according to their confession in the world, are likewise caught up in the act of faith by the existence of the Christian community. It is not on the basis of his own discovery and private revelation, but by the mediatorial ministry of the community which itself is the school of the prophets and apostles, that a man comes under the awakening power of the Holy Spirit and therefore to faith.’⁴⁴⁷

Barth anticipates that the witness of the Christian community will lead to church growth:

‘If it is not possible for a man of the world who has come to faith, and can live by faith to deny himself, then in face of the world – his world – he can only be, very humbly but very courageously, a confessing Christian in the confessing community.’⁴⁴⁸

Barth’s expectation that the local church will spontaneously want to reach out to the wider community evangelistically seems to meet with a similar expectation in *GD*. So why would parish clergy in Carlisle be less than enthusiastic over this ‘mark of evangelism’? It could be due to a lack of information about how ‘lay’ evangelists would fit into the overall mission strategy of the benefice or deanery. If this is the case then some sections of the 1999 report of a Working Party of the Anglican House of Bishops on the subject is worth consideration.

⁴⁴⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 778

⁴⁴⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 779

The report examined the place of the word 'evangelist' in the Bible and Christian history. They wanted to make a contribution to an area of church life where 'very little theological work had been done.'⁴⁴⁹ Chapter three of the report reflects on some of the reasons why, perhaps, the church has had difficulty in encompassing the ministry of the evangelist.⁴⁵⁰ The report narrows its focus by considering the word 'evangelist'.

The word is only used three times in the New Testament: Acts 21.8 'Philip the evangelist'; Ephesians 4.11 'The apostles, prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers'; 2 Timothy 4.5 'do the work of an evangelist.' The message of 'good news' brought by the evangelist, has its roots in the Old Testament. In the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures:

*'it is cognate both with euangelion (good news), used in 2 Samuel 4.10; 18.22,25, and with euangelizesthai (to proclaim good news), used most significantly in Isaiah 40-66, where the good news that God is coming to save his people is carried into effect by the messenger's proclamation (40.9; 52.7; 60.6; 61.1). This use of the Greek euangelizesthai to translate the Hebrew basar (to bring good tidings) helps us to understand that in the New Testament, too, the euangelion is the message of salvation and that the evangelist is the messenger who proclaims good news.'*⁴⁵¹

The chapter then pays attention to the people to whom the evangelist proclaimed the gospel. It was to both the Jews and the Gentiles that the evangelists went:

⁴⁴⁹ *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists*. A report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops (Church House Publishing, 1999) xi.

⁴⁵⁰ *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists*. A report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops (Church House Publishing, 1999) 26-46.

⁴⁵¹ *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists*. A report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops (Church House Publishing, 1999) 28.

‘What is quite clear is that the work of an evangelist embraces easily both Philip’s proclaiming to those outside and Timothy’s reminding by encouragement and warning, of those within.’⁴⁵²

Although the New Testament presents a rounded picture of evangelist who work both inside the church as well as outside of it the authors of the report found that the bad press that modern evangelists seem to receive from the media works against an easy acceptance of the office:

‘In the media he (it is usually a he) is depicted as a loud insensitive, over intense (sic), humourless and manipulative. It is the image of a pushy salesman. It is not an attractive picture.’⁴⁵³

However, the evangelists they met up with around the country were said to be humble men and women who did not match the caricature. Their comment that, ‘Only as the Church rids itself of these inaccurate pictures can it fully use the ministry that is vital to its wellbeing’⁴⁵⁴ seems to be an important point of opportunity for *Carlisle* as it encourages the establishment of lay evangelists in the parishes. One possibility of achieving a more balanced idea of the modern evangelist’s task could be to place such people in a **Together Team** where there would be some form of accountability. Teams could be formed by members of larger churches and could visit, at invitation, smaller churches for a weekend (Friday evening to Sunday evening). The team could be specifically trained to engage in sensitive evangelism and encourage other churches to do the same. These Together Weekends would locate the evangelists in settings where they could explore their

⁴⁵² *Good News People Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists. A report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops* (Church House Publishing, 1999) 33.

⁴⁵³ *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists. A report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops* (Church House Publishing, 1999) 48.

⁴⁵⁴ *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists. A Report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops* (Church House Publishing, 1999) 49.

evangelistic desires and skills. In order to test out this idea a Together Team from a lively semi-rural congregation in the Brampton deanery was gathered, trained and conducted two Together Weekends in the diocese.⁴⁵⁵

Theologians, whether they function in the parish or in the deanery, have, according to Barth, the task of reflecting on the proclamation to be undertaken both by those who are ordained and those who are not ordained. This reflection is not proclamation but it is its presupposition and its goal.⁴⁵⁶ According to Barth, proclamation is an important aspect of church work in the same way that public worship, social work and the education of young people are. Even proclamation itself is human speech in and by which God himself speaks like a king through the mouth of a herald.⁴⁵⁷ According to Barth, more is required it is than the mere reading of Scripture or the repeating and paraphrasing the actual wording of the biblical witness. The task of proclamation is the task of the church. However, this proclamation is never confined to the existing church since God is in control:

‘Hence it can never be the case that the Word of God is confined to the proclamation of the existing Church or of the proclamation of the Church as known to us, or to talk about God in this known Church which claims to be proclamation. Church proclamation itself, in fact, regards itself only as service of the Word of God, as a means of grace in God’s free hand. ... we have still to remember that the question what God can do is a very different one from that of the commission laid upon us by the promise given to the Church.’⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Holy Trinity Carlisle (2007) and St John the Baptist Upperby(2009)

⁴⁵⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/1*, trans G.W. Bromlley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 51.

⁴⁵⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 52

⁴⁵⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I/1*, trans G.W. Bromiley, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (T&T Clark International, 2004) 54

This clarification, by Barth, that insists that it is God who is in control of proclamation rounds off an unfinished theological investigation into the practical possibilities for parish evangelism. The ‘five marks of evangelism’ can be no more than a human guide to what is required in the rural parishes of *Carlisle* if people are to be attracted not only to the church but to Christ. Their presentation has enfolded them in the canonical narrative theology of Karl Barth. But theology itself, as Barth recognised, can be no more than a servant of the church. Theology is a witness to the truth not the truth itself. This thesis is offered to the church in *Carlisle* in the same spirit. It is offered with the hope that Barth’s insight into what should be at the heart of parish mission, evangelism and discipleship will be at the heart of the rural church:

‘Evangelism and the cultivation of fellowship may be very desirable. ... It is necessary that the Church face, and face ever anew, the questions which the modern development of psychology and education propose to it. What is pastoral care? What is Christian education? And the Church must not attempt to escape the necessity of remembering what the missionary activities in its midst are saying: A world engulfed in a sea of misery is waiting – not for the Church but – to become the Church itself. It is waiting to hear because God has spoken. It is waiting to hear what God has spoken.’⁴⁵⁹

As the argument has unfolded by weaving in and out of both *Carlisle’s* mission theology as presented in *Growing Disciples Vision and Strategy: 2011 – 2020* and Karl Barth’s narrative theology it has become apparent that the thesis has embarked an unfinished project. Each chapter is ripe for expansion and the final outcomes are no more than a small contribution to parish evangelism in the rural setting. However, the intention throughout has been both to defend the existence of traditional Anglican churches and to offer hope for the village church as it struggles to survive as witness to God in the midst of constant change and challenge.

⁴⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *God In Action: Theological Addresses*, trans E.G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936) 23-24

Conclusion

This practical theology thesis is based on the interpretation of two narratives: the recent mission strategies of the Carlisle diocese and the canonical narrative theology of Karl Barth. In simple terms both narratives tell a story and the two stories have been approached sympathetically in order to try and bring about a productive conversation. *Carlisle's* story has been presented in the form of an account of the various mission initiatives that have been presented in the last decade to the hundreds of, mainly rural, parishes that are spread across Cumbria. Barth's story is his interpretation of the Bible's witness to God. The main reason for the exercise has been to see if Barth's theology can both underpin and invigorate *Carlisle's* various plans of action and so protect them from remaining more than just a collection of good ideas that might all too easily be ignored or become dated. Although not every theme written in the latest mission strategy can be found in Barth the central themes are there and have been introduced to *Carlisle*. These include: the Gospel of God, the Ministry of the congregation and the Mission to the world.

Reading Barth has meant coming to terms with his continual revising, correcting and amplifying his first thoughts. Complex though this task has been it has given the conviction that Barth can contribute to a certain amount of fluidity and mobility to the debate about parish mission and modern discipleship in rural Anglican parishes. The fact that Barth was engaged in 'pilgrim theology' has created space in the discussion about the value of his eagerness to have Jesus Christ at the centre of church life and mission.

However, this raises the question, as to whether Barth's Christocentric approach is an overstatement of the biblical narrative. By making all revelation saving revelation does Barth restrict the potential for pre-evangelism, in the form of apologetics, in the parishes? The potential for natural theology to become an independent subject was of great concern to

Barth as his debate with Brunner displayed. Yet in rural parishes concentration on the land and creation is seemingly part of the culture of the countryside and Barth's concession that biblical glances towards creation as in passages such as Psalm 19 do not bridge the gap completely between his theology and *Carlisle's* local theology. This is an area that requires more detailed research if *Carlisle* is going to become comfortable with Barth's narrative theology. There are, however, several good reasons why Barth should appeal to *Carlisle*.

First by placing the knowledge of God at the centre of his theology Barth puts his figure on a crucial area of thought that all too easily gets left in the background once diocesan mission strategies are activated.

A second reason for *Carlisle* to consult Barth is that his dialectical method of polarising the mystery of God and the puzzle of human life provides parish mission practitioners with a sharp theological tool with which to open up creative space for conversations about the meaning of Christianity. Barth's refusal to allow God to become an object in human thought was intended, among other things, to secure the divine initiative in the process of faith. So to introduce this way of thinking about God into the melting pot of *Carlisle's* mission plans should result in a clear focus on the activity of God as well as the mysterious mode of his nature.

A third reason for *Carlisle* to go to Barth for mission insights is because he believed God, though transcendent and mysterious, is actively present in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit. Without the agency of the Holy Spirit it would be impossible for the church to engage in mission since the unique transcendent God is not naturally accessible to the human knowledge and life. God's sphere is not our human sphere therefore once we begin to appreciate this we can understand why it is fruitless to try and make God an object. By submitting ourselves to his mercy we experience the work of grace in our lives.

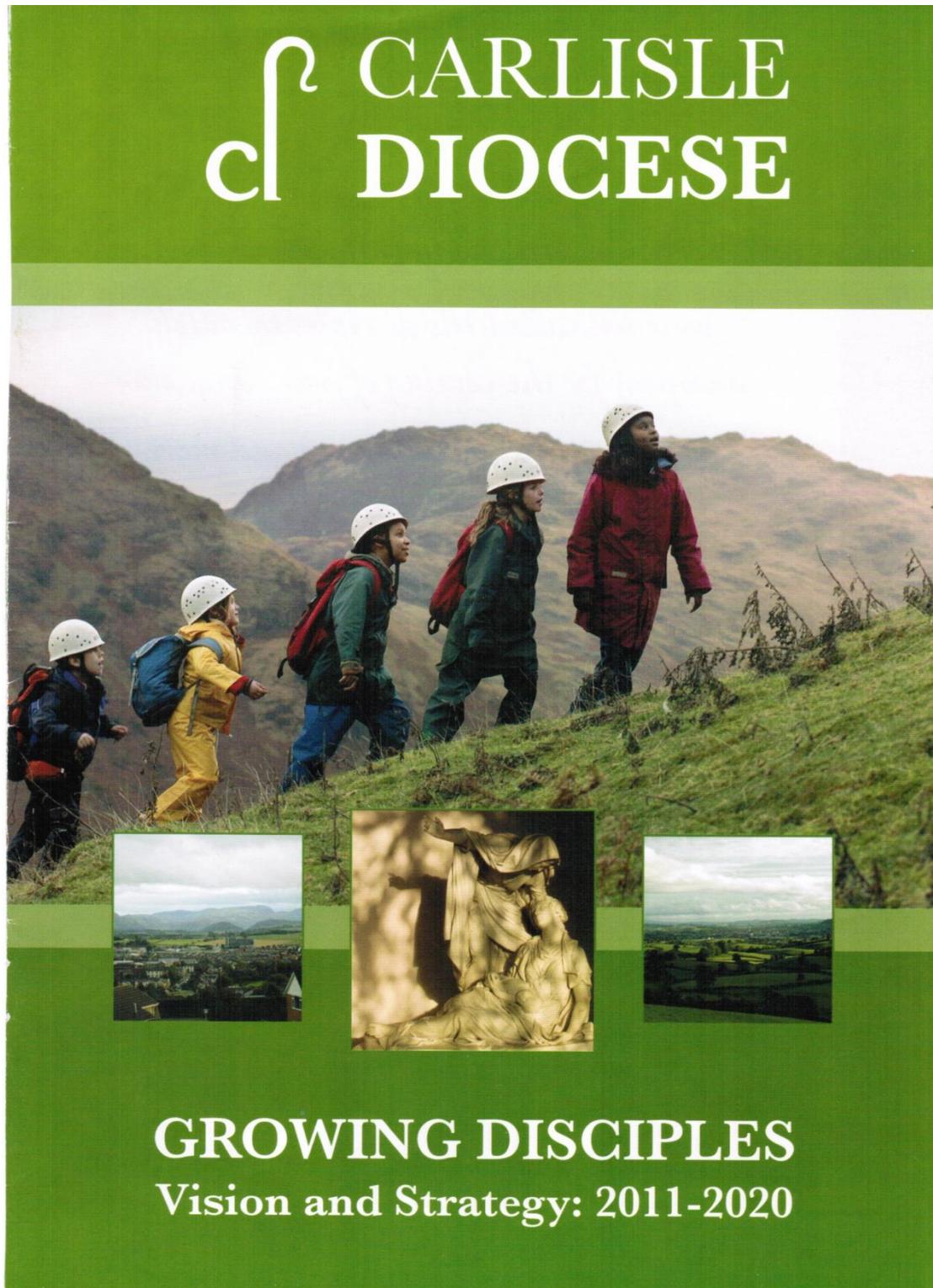
A fourth good reason why *Carlisle* can look to Barth is because he is a churchly theologian. Despite his many questions and criticisms of the church he remained within its boundaries and made it his life-long ambition to help the church understand that though weak and frail its members might be, they are loved and by God and have a most valuable human function in concrete communities.

By conversing and connecting with Barth in these and other ways *Carlisle* can be sure that enthusiasm for parish mission and the task making of modern disciples will be instructed and nourished. If the suggestion that deanery theologians be recognised and authorised to assist parishes to think through the various modern problems related to parish and deanery mission will mean that the task Barth began in his day and context can be continued, even if this is only in a modest way.

The thesis has deliberately attended to the life and needs of traditional form of church because it is this form, with its many variations, that makes up the majority of *Carlisle's* parishes. Others are working creatively to promote 'fresh expressions' of church and it is hoped that some of the resources offered here will find their way into those quarters. However, this thesis is deliberately designed to offer hope to the small and often elderly committed congregations in the diocese of *Carlisle*.

APPENDIX TABLE

- A. Growing Disciples
- B. Walk Cumbria
- C. Out of the Blue
- D. ENCOUNTER



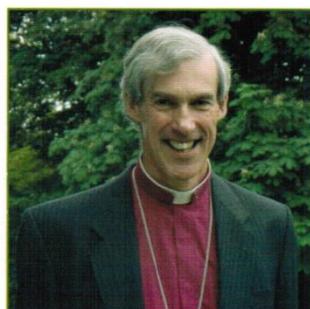
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This document sets out our Vision and Strategy for the next ten years.

We hope you will read it carefully and prayerfully, and that it will help us to grow together as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle



FIVE MARKS - EVANGELISM

Jesus said to his followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

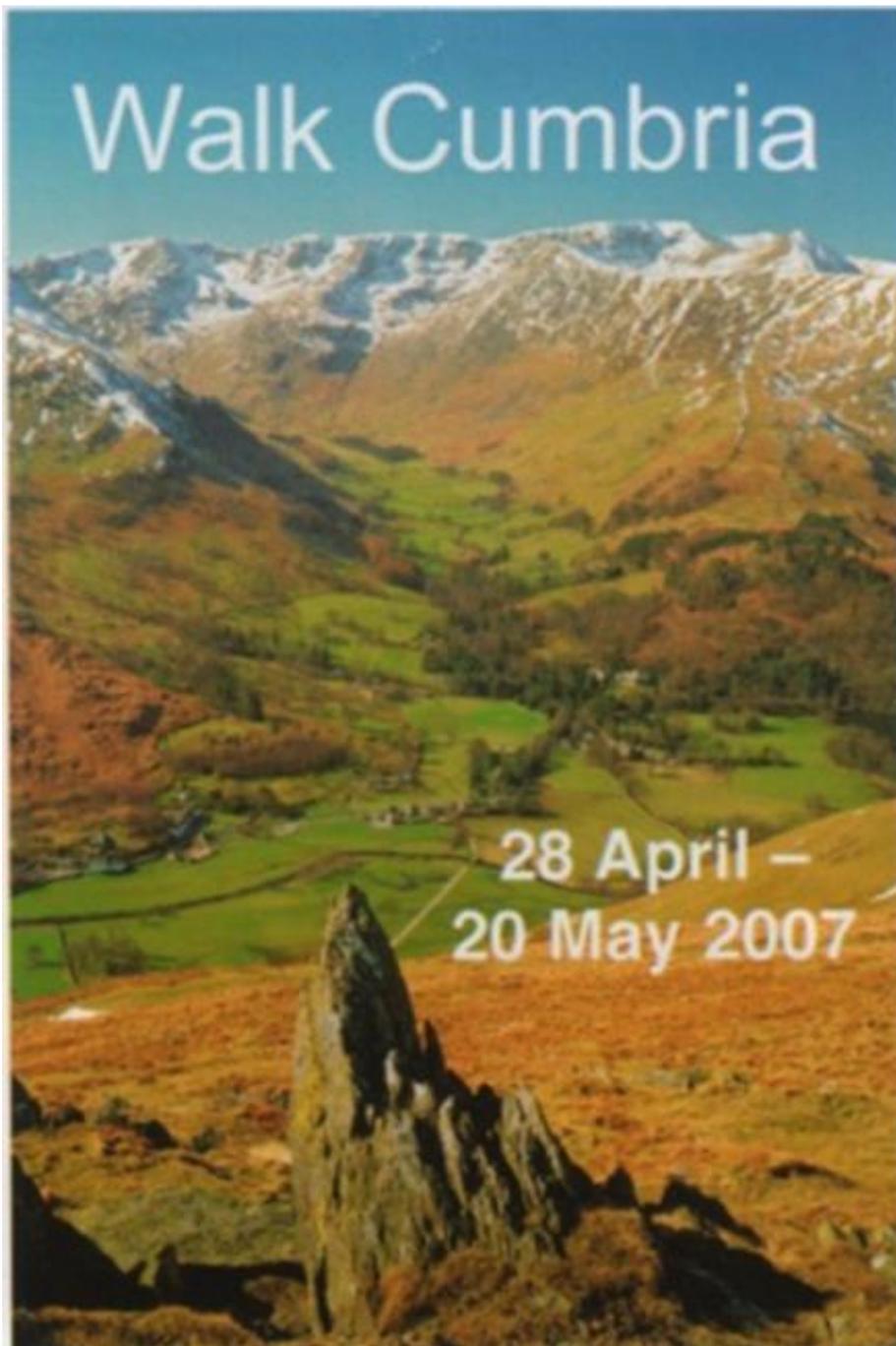
Matthew 28:19

If we ourselves are truly growing as disciples, then we should be helping others to know Jesus and become His disciples. Here therefore are some ways in which our churches could engage more in outreach and evangelism:

- A significant increase in **Church Attendance** (both on weekdays and Sundays); especially an increase in children and young people, and people aged 20-45
- A **Mission Action Plan** for each church and mission cluster, locally tailored and including plans for work with children, young people and schools.
- A '**Process Evangelism**' course (eg 'Exploring Christianity', 'Alpha', 'Emmaus Nurture course') run annually in each mission cluster.
- At least two people in each benefice who feel confident to think of themselves as '**parish evangelists**'. One in every ten Christians has evangelistic gifts, usually undiscovered.
- All church members equipped to **tell others** about their life as a disciple of Jesus (eg the 'Lost for Words' course).



APPENDIX B



**FEEDBACK ON WALK CUMBRIA
AMBLESIDE 2007**

WHAT WENT WELL?

- the spirituality of the walkers –great to see committed believers – lot of sacrificial giving of so much time and effort
- persisted in doing stuff right through the week
- took on board all the arrangements we had made
- managed to gear the presentation to the 'shape' of the audience

WHAT WENT LESS WELL

- the walkers were poorly prepared in understanding the type of community to which they were coming. It surprised them how hard the evangelism was. SUGGESTION – that in future the walkers should visit the area they are to work in
- connected to the above is the fact that the actual team was only selected a short time before the event – again – I think more advanced planning would help you
- the printed material needs to be more contemporary
- sleeping on the floor in a church hall – this seemed to be a Walk Cumbria policy. Why? It leads to difficult organization – and tired walkers. We could have accommodated more .
- walkers having a tiny budget. Not helpful if you evangelise in pubs and cannot get someone a drink – those being evangelized end up paying and it can look as if you are on the scrounge.

INVOLVEMENT

As expected all the keen folk from the church –few of the nominal churchgoers came along – we worked hard at this but it did not fit the bill....we did much better at this in 2008 with an Anglican deanery mission. Difficult to know jnust why – perhaps it was because the deanery mission meetings had a stonger local cultural theme.

MEETINGS

Structured meetings went very well – e.g. one on Creation – one on 'Where is God when it hurts' – numerous small coffee mornings very good . Quite a good reception at primary schools – more mixed at secondary – perhaps the team needed more of a debate style and contemporary presentation of the gospel.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

2-3 people professed faith – many more entered a debate...I suspect it paved the way for future work – particularly the deanery mission a year later when others became interested and started attending Alpha and similar courses.

OVERALL

A definite help for the cause of Christ – more forward planning strategically with a focus on the actual area to which the walkers go – get rid of outmoded traditions.

DR ANDREW ROTHERAY (ST MARYS AMBLESIDE)

WALK CUMBRIA 2007

Minutes of the final (Review) meeting of the **CENTRAL TASK FORCE (CTF)** held at Holm Croft, 13 Castle Road, Kendal on **Tuesday 10th July 2007** following lunch at 1.00 p.m. (by kind invitation of Bishop James).

Present: Rt. Rev. James Newcome (Chairman)
Rev. Alan Bing (Rector of Ulverston)
Rev. Paul Dunstan (Methodist District Representative)
Rev. Colin Greaves (Cumbria Prayer Network)
Rev. David Gregg (Secretary)
Rev. Ian Hardcastle (St. James, Carlisle)
Rev. David Harkison (United Reformed Church)
Rev. Tim Harmer (Kendal Deanery Missioner)
Rev. John Hibberd (Through Faith Missions)
Rev. David Opie (Baptist Churches Representative)
Rev. Sue Wilson (Priest-i-c of Haversham and Milnthorpe)

1. **Opening Prayer**, with a strong note of thanksgiving, was led by Bishop James.

2. **Membership of Central Task Force**

2.1 **Ecumenical input etc.**

John Hibberd remarked that this CTF had been a very good one with which to work from a TFM viewpoint. David Gregg commented that, although there had been good Roman Catholic participation in places, the lack of distinctive input to the CTF from Catholic and Liberal traditions needed to be acknowledged with some regret.

2.2 **Sub-groups**

Bishop James particularly wished to record the contribution of the Prayer Group, Publicity and Communications Group and other 'ad hoc' sub-groups as "brilliant". "They got on and *did* it" he said.

2.3 **Archive**

The Secretary raised the question of preserving appropriate 'archive' material from the Walk. He agreed to lodge such material with the **County Archivist** in due course, in relation to Churches Together in Cumbria.

Action: David Gregg

2.4 **Final Report**

John Hibberd said that the next **TFM Newsletter** would contain 6 to 8 pages on Walk Cumbria, and would be sent to all the participating churches in Cumbria, as well as the regular recipients.

Action: John Hibberd

2.5 **Administration**

Grateful thanks were expressed to **Pat Eastwood-Jones** (Bishop James' Secretary) for her able and willing servicing of the CTF; to **Jackie Gregg** for processing the agenda and minutes and general secretarial support and to **David Gregg** for his ministry as secretary.

3. **Prayer**

Colin Greaves reported that a **summary report** on the Prayer aspects of the Walk has been circulated, and that **ongoing activity and networking** is being pursued. "**Community Prayer Initiatives**" are to be promoted. Grateful thanks for **Colin and Chrissie Greaves** leadership in prayer were expressed, with the observation that "the County has been much

prayed over.” David Gregg particularly commended the **Strategy** they had devised, and the efficacy of **Prayer Walks** that had been held.

John Hibberd said that the prayer preparation for Walk Cumbria had been **the best for any walk mission** that he had experienced.

4. Strategy

4.1 List of Ministers

John Hibberd commented that there had been an accurate **preliminary list** of ministers, augmented through the internet in respect of independent churches, with good **follow-up information** about changes.

4.2 Preliminary Visiting

It was felt that **the preliminary visiting** had been generally very good, but **follow-up**, which is the real key, had been a bit patchy. David Gregg drew attention to the problem of expectation concerning local **“Churches Together” groups** taking an initiative, causing some individual ministers to hang back. Was there some way of an initial approach to such groups to be made, in addition to individual ministers? John Hibberd said that TFM was also pondering **how much information** to seek initially, with perhaps a simpler indication of intent to begin with. Sue Wilson alleged a problem of a **time-lag** between the preliminary visiting and the actual walk, and Paul Dunstan said there was a need to ensure a **build up of momentum**. It was suggested that a **regular e-mail** for those who had signed up might be a useful element in future walks.

4.3 Recruitment and briefing of Walkers

John Hibberd said that recruitment **had been a challenge** for such a large ‘Walk’. There was a strong possibility, however, of recruiting **future walkers** as a result of ‘Walk Cumbria’.

Paul Dunstan said that comments from Methodist Churches had included the need for **better ‘orientation’** for incoming walkers re local culture. John Hibberd said that leaflets from Social Responsibility re Cumbria were circulated to all walkers.

Ian Hardcastle reported a particular difficulty in Carlisle with **the problem of ‘walking’ imagery**. (i.e. Urban areas = ‘Walking’ is not for us!) John Hibberd said that hopefully TFM’s new DVD would help with this.

Bishop James said that there had also possibly been some confusion in places, arising out of the previous two **‘Bishops’ Walks** across the county.

5. Publicity/Communications

5.1 Website

It was felt that the website had been operative **too late** to be very effective. John Hibberd reported that the **final newsheet** would be posted, then the site would be **closed down** (? In September).

5.2 Local media publicity

“Disappointing” and “Patchy” were the prevailing comments, although “Radio Cumbria” coverage had been good. The Solway area had had some Border TV exposure. It was agreed generally that we had ‘missed some tricks’.

5.3 “Vestments”

It was agreed that (in the end!) these had been very good, and that the **‘hoodies’** were particularly appreciated.

5.4 Leaflets

Again there was a general commendation of all the literature, and particularly the general publicity leaflet for public use.

6. **Preparatory Events**
John Hibberd stated that about 300 people had attended the **9 briefings**, and that **Daniel Cozen's tour** had been generally well-attended and much appreciated. Bishop James said that he felt that **barriers to Mission/Evangelism** had clearly been broken down to a certain extent.
7. **The 'Walk' Itself**
 - 7.1 **Commissioning/Thanksgiving**
These were held to have been generally OK, although John Hibberd commented that some had over-run, but that **the final event** was very encouraging. David Gregg commented on a failure to commission (or even to feature) **the Spearhead Teams**, which might have provided some much needed cohesion. Sue Wilson said that the events she attended were **"inspiring and uplifting"**.
 - 7.2 **'Walk' Office**
John Hibberd described this as **excellent**, especially the phone communication and broadband connection.
 - 7.3 **Church Leaders involvement**
John Hibberd asserted that, from a TFM point of view, this was **"the best we've ever had!"**
 - 7.4 **Spearhead Teams**
It was generally felt that these had made **very good engagement** everywhere, with many opportunities taken in remote places otherwise untouched by the main mission centres.
 - 7.5 **Overall Impressions**
There had been some very good response in some places, but not in others. **Urban areas** had sometimes proved very hard going, whilst some **smaller rural communities** had been very greatly moved and encouraged. The importance/significance of **follow-up** was widely acknowledged, and the function of Walk Cumbria **"kick-starting" the local mission** was enthusiastically affirmed. The very positive **impact on local ecumenism** was also warmly averred. The **'two-day' missions** had been a successful innovation, with the possibility of teams 'coming back for more'. The question was raised about the suitability of **the booklet 'Knowing God personally'**. Paul Dunstan thought it was mostly suited for a de-churched readership, but might not be the best choice in relation to the final question of the survey. John Hibberd acknowledged this, and said that TFM were planning a leaflet of their own devising to replace it.
8. **Finance**
It was reported that the **C of E diocese** had so far remitted £4005.84 to TFM, and that the **Methodist District** had contributed £3000.00. John Hibberd reported that the cost to TFM of travel, literature, mailings, website etc. resulted in **total outgoings** of £13,670. Bishop James stated that the shortfall would be met, and Dave Harkison expressed the hope that the **U.R.C.** would contribute to this. In addition the individual participating mission centres and churches were being encouraged to give gifts, by way of **thank-offerings**, to TFM, and some had already done this.
9. **Follow-up**
Ian Hardcastle said that 'Walk Cumbria' had led to a **change of perception** about evangelism (e.g. re door-to-door visiting) and a **change of priorities** to some churches. The input of the team members, working alongside the local people, had been particularly inspiring.

APPENDIX C

The Revd. Bryan Rothwell

Rector of the Parishes of St. John's-in-the-Vale, St. Mary's, Threlkeld and Wythburn
Chaplain and Warden of the Carlisle Diocesan Youth Centre
Rural Dean of the Derwent Deanery

08 November 2007

Revd. John Reeves
The Vicarage
Irthington
Carlisle
CA6 4NJ

Dear John

Firstly I would like to thank you personally for the part you played in our Out of the Blue Deanery Mission. Following so closely after Walk Cumbria, I felt like we had an uphill struggle getting some enthusiasm from the local churches, and yet the events that were planned were very encouraging.

At our Chapter meeting yesterday, my colleagues also wanted to pass on their thanks to you and to Bishop Graham (I have written to +G with our thanks). We had a brief review of the programme, and all were encouraged by yours and the Bishop's ministry. It is appreciated that many of the people that came to the church – hosted events were church members, and although not many outsiders came along, the week has stirred many people. One example is the Friday night "Any Questions". Feedback included the comments "fantastic evening", "morale booster" and "thank you to Bishop Graham for his openness, gentleness and generosity".

Another outcome of the week, is the encouragement to follow up the week with similar events in the future, as a basis for parish outreach. For example, the "Hot Potatoes" evening in Threlkeld was a very positive experience for those who came along, and is something that could be repeated. The "Coffee and Croissants" at which you spoke, was an imaginative and helpful event, which could be developed. It is a shame that the Keswick event did not take place.

Feedback from the schools has been positive. The opportunities that presented during the week, to meet with the sixth forms, is something that the staff would like to build on. Indeed in Keswick, we (ministers from the Clergy Fraternal) are offering ourselves to the school, and hope that the visits, as part of the mission, to the schools will be a springboard for further work.

If you would like any further feedback, or a more detailed review of the week, please let me know.

With every blessing,



The Revd. Bryan Rothwell, The Rectory, Threlkeld, Keswick CA12 4RT
Telephone: 017687 79714 E-mail: bryan.rothwell@btinternet.com Mobile: 077088 67000

Brampton Deanery Mission – evaluation and reflections from the Rural Dean and Lay Chair

The following reflections are intended for the benefit of all involved, partly in the hope that they will be helpful for other Deaneries. There has been widespread agreement that the Mission has been successful and enjoyable at a number of levels and we are grateful for the efforts put in by so many people, especially Bishop James, John Reeves and the Deanery Planning Group.

New Christians?

If a business had a campaign to get more customers, you would have to ask at the end if you have got any, and if not, why not. So we need to begin with reflecting on this basic question. The Castle Carrock group does seem to have gained in momentum, but overall the answer has to be ‘no new customers yet’ – although some may still come through later (some people are doing John Reeves ‘Encounter’ course). Why not? Three thoughts:

- Existing congregations did not invite many non-members, although there were a few who were on the fringe.
- There may also be a value in actually ‘up-ing’ the general challenge, perhaps by having a couple of the ‘Together’ team in a separate room for anyone who wanted to chat about what God was doing in their life.
- We could have been more consistent about distributing literature for ‘follow-up groups’ and also the ‘Why Jesus?’ and ‘Living Faith’ booklets.

Nevertheless real positive points:

- A number of folk have said their walk of faith has been re-vitalised or encouraged
- There has been some very good cross-parish co-operation (especially amongst the planning group and worship group) and a growing sense of there being a value in working as a Deanery
- Most of the events were sell-outs or had very good attendance (no event was a disaster!) and hopefully those who came would be enthusiastic to invite others to similar events if they were part of a spread-out programme of Deanery events
- Widespread agreement that Bishop James had spoken very well and been widely appreciated (in total 23 separate talks were given during the week)
- Visits to three primary schools and one secondary school and a Day Centre were much appreciated
- A feeling that much spiritual work has gone on that will come to fruition in time.
- The prayer preparation co-ordinated by Richard Hicks had been a real strength
- The generous giving that had made subsidised meal-based events possible was greatly appreciated.
- The early decision to have a separate planning group which incorporated at least one representative from each benefice was vindicated. We had sought to learn from the Calder Mission and, as far as possible, get Deanery ownership of the week.
- The closing ‘Songs of Praise’ had the best attendance we have ever had for a Deanery act of worship – 4pm on a Sunday afternoon with every benefice having someone picking a hymn had clearly worked well – a large number of ‘Why Jesus?’ booklets were taken after this service.
- Having some events in secular venues (e.g. the restaurants/pubs) will hopefully have created a positive image of the church for the staff who work in them.
- Each incumbent was present at at least two ‘Out of the Blue’ events

General Lessons learnt

- Although communication before the mission was fairly good, details of the planning could have been circulated more widely in the Deanery, especially to key players in the Deanery (e.g. Lay Chair) with agendas and minutes being circulated and an open invitation to attend.
- There really should have been a Mission account and Mission Treasurer and more thought given to ticket sales, paying bills, inviting donations, etc.
- Better use of literature could have been made (“Why Jesus?”, “Living Faith”, literature on follow-up courses)

- We need to work still harder at congregations being more 'invitational'
- There is a problem in having a 'week' of mission, in that whenever you have it, a number of folk are likely to be away, especially outside of school holidays amongst the (60 – 70) age range. In future it may be better to spread a Deanery programme of outreach during a year
- We should have organised a formal 'Vote of Thanks' at each event to the local organisers and helpers

A few specifics learnt (other than above)

- Quality meal-based events are popular, and were the best events to invite people who don't go to church to come along to (although the film evening was also very successful at this level)
- The Barn Dance needed a meal to allow for 'chat'
- The Commissioning Service was widely appreciated but could possibly have benefited from more discussion (e.g. spread of sitting/standing elements, the nature of the commissioning)
- Changes to early publicity (e.g. Harvest Supper ceasing to be a supper!) need to be more clearly flagged up
- 'Targeted' events can reach their target! e.g. farmers, 'Lord of the Rings' fans
- The 'Paul Field' evening could be repeated now that more people know what he is like
- More advance planning could have been done on who would introduce/close different events. In the end it was good that a spread of people did this, but it could have been planned more in advance – also guidance given so that people knew who was doing such things and where they were from.
- We should have had a sign at the fun morning in Brampton outside the Moot Hall saying what was going on.

Nevertheless, real positive points:

Conclusion

There is a wide feeling that the Deanery Mission has done a great deal of good for the Deanery at a variety of levels, and has given us a basis for future ideas of what could be done as a Deanery. It has been a particular encouragement to people from smaller parishes to be part of something bigger. With hindsight there would be some tweaking of different aspects of different events, but it is still to be celebrated that every event went well, and was attended by a good number of people, including a few complete sell-outs. Our gratitude goes to our Deanery Planning Team, Bishop James, John Reeves and countless others who helped in a myriad of ways from making tickets to singing, from hosting to booking venues, from promotion of events to clearing up afterwards, and many other tasks. It has been a great effort and we have experienced rich blessing of God through it.

Colin Randall (Rural Dean)

John Lee (Lay Chair)

26/9/07

The Parishes of Croglin, Holme Eden, Wetheral & Warwick

Web Site: www.edenchurches.co.uk

Rector:

Rev'd Colin Randall
The Vicarage
Warwick Bridge
Carlisle
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Tuesday, September 18, 2007

Dear John,

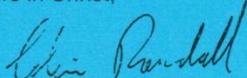
Last week's "Out of the Blue" week was wonderful. Some of the plus points that have been noted are:

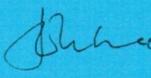
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- There has been some very good cross-parish co-operation (especially amongst the planning group and worship group) and a growing sense of there being a value in working as a Deanery
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- Having some events in secular venues (e.g. the restaurants/pubs) will hopefully have created a positive image of the church for the staff who work in them.

There is a wide feeling that the Deanery Mission has done a great deal of good for the Deanery at a variety of levels, and has given us a basis for future ideas of what could be done as a Deanery. It has been a particular encouragement to people from smaller parishes to be a part of something bigger. It has been a great effort and we have experienced rich blessing of God through it.

Please accept our deep gratitude for all that you did during the week.

Yours in Christ,


Rural Dean


Lay Chair

Derwent Deanery

“Out of the Blue” Deanery Mission – 14th – 21st October 2007

Notes from a meeting held on 9th July 2007 at Crosthwaite Sunday School

Present: Roger Peck, Tony Rockey, Bryan Rothwell, Wendy Sanders, Richard Armstrong, Peter Campion, Ken Kitchin, John Reeves, Susan Leighton

Apologies: Stuart Penny, Stanley Wilkinson, Peter Vivash

- | | Action |
|--|--|
| 1. Aim: To introduce people to Jesus Christ (from the Calder Deanery) To so present the Christian gospel to our contemporary communities in such an astonishing and relevant way that women, men and young people be eager to turn to Him, worship Him, follow Him and in turn encourage others to do the same. To prepare the Deanery’s congregations to welcome new believers and members. (Brampton Deanery) The aims give the working group a point of reference for planning the mission | |
| 2. Prayer: It was agreed to set aside two evenings for prayer. Sunday 2 nd September @ Dean 6pm Sunday 7 th October @ Crosthwaite 6pm (to follow briefing of people who might be involved in “Together Team” see below) Encouragement is given to all parishes to keep a focus on prayer in the lead up to the mission, and encouraged to use the prayer cards already distributed. | Ken Kitchin & Stuart Penny arranging services |
| 4. Faith Sharing: Contact to be made with those who were involved in the Lost for Words courses prior to Walk Cumbria and others with relevant experience with a view to involving them. Briefing to be done with John Reeves at 4.30pm on 7 th Oct at Crosthwaite Centre, followed by refreshments and service in Crosthwaite Church (see above) | Need someone to write to people – letters to be distributed by clergy. |
| 5. Programme Details of the activities being planned need to be sorted as soon as possible, and passed on to Bryan Rothwell for inclusion in the programme, which John Reeves will arrange to be printed. Bryan is on holiday from 30 th July, therefore information is needed by 23 rd July Information required: Date, time and venue Type of event Whether tickets are being sold (suggest buy-one-get-one-free), cost and contact name and number for details, tickets etc. It is suggested that tickets/invitations have a map/directions printed on the back for people who may be travelling to an event | All |

5. Draft Programme:

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| Saturday 13th | Opening Night "The Myth of the Great Delusion" Skiddaw Hotel? 7.30pm | All – to make the arrangements, and forward confirmation of details to BR for coordination of printing of Publicity |
| Sunday 14th | Sunday Breakfast at Wild Strawberry, Keswick, looking at the Sunday Papers 10.15pm Service in Crosthwaite Church with Boarders 3pm St. Mary's Threlkeld (John Reeves) Harvest Service 8.15pm N-joy, Cockermouth | |
| Monday 15th | Lorton Harvest Supper, Yew Tree Hall | |
| Tuesday 16th | 11am Cockermouth School 6 th Form Forum 7pm Hot Potatoes, Threlkeld Cricket Club | |
| Wednesday 17th | Afternoon in Bridekirk ANKOW, Cockermouth | |
| Thursday 18th | Lunch in Wheatsheaf Hotel, Embleton & afternoon visits "A Reet Good Neet" Ullock Village Hall 7pm | |
| Friday 19th | Afternoon visits (Christ Church, Cockermouth area) "The Myth of the Dawkins Theory" (All Saints Rooms?) | |
| Saturday 20th | Ceilidh | |
| Sunday 21st | 10.30am Cockermouth Parish Service and Lunch | |

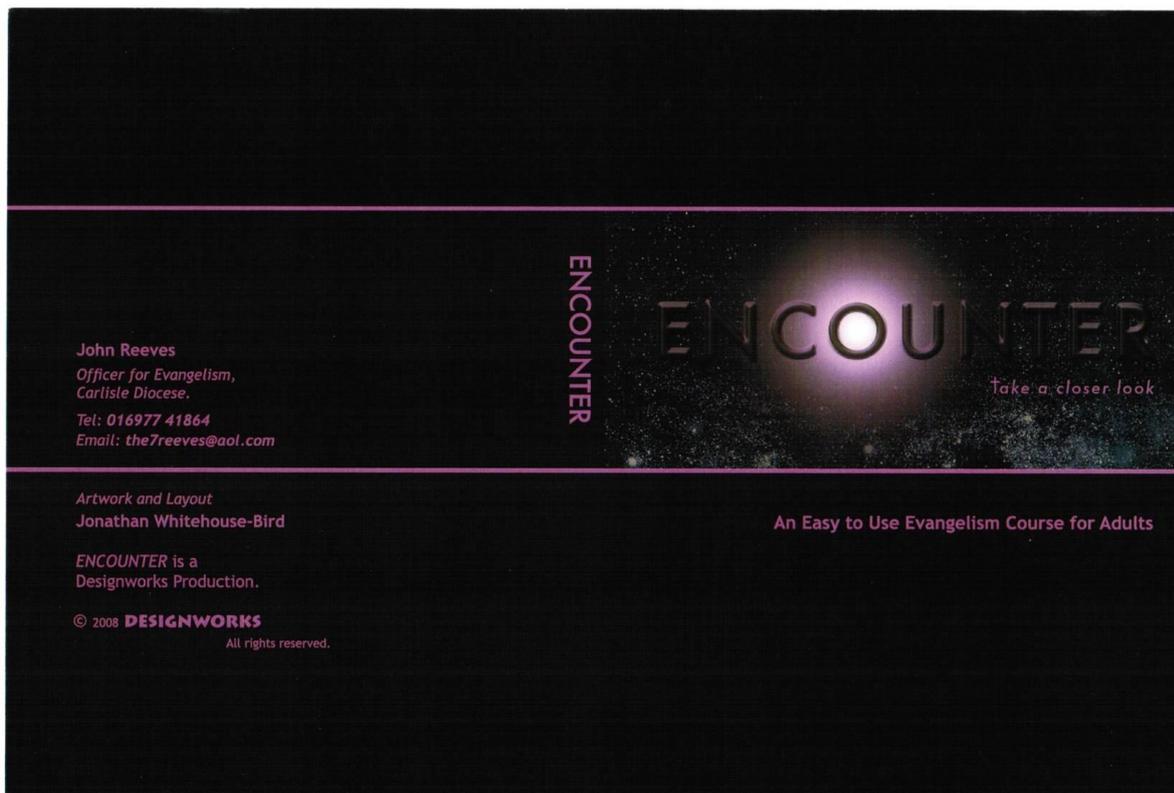
7. Schools:
Bishop G is keen to be involved with secondary schools, 6th form discussions, assemblies. Arrangements to be made with Keswick School and Cockermouth School
- Stuart Penny
Tony Rockey

8. Finance
John Reeves has secured finance for the publicity, some additional funds may be available, but it is assumed that each event will be self financing (either financed by the relevant church organising the event, or by ticket sales)

9. Hospitality for +Graham
The Bishop will need accommodation during the week, if you can offer hospitality for all/part of the week
The Bishop will also need help with transport to the various events
- Let Bryan know if you can offer hospitality/transport

10. Follow up after the mission
John Reeves reminded us of the need to organise follow-up after the mission

APPENDIX D



ENCOUNTER

† Take a closer look

Session 1 - It's My Life

We have one life this side of eternity and most of us aim to get the best out of it. For many people life is a puzzle and, try as they may, they fail to make sense of it. D.H.Lawrence said, "It is a weird thing to be a person" (*The Trespasser* p41).

The twin aim of *ENCOUNTER* is:

- An exploration of life - the search for meaning.
- An exploration of faith - the search for God.

The Puzzle of Life

Try and answer as many of the following questions as possible:

1. Why have you come along to *ENCOUNTER*?
2. What is/was your job? If you're still studying what career would you like?
3. Over the years have you had a change of career? Yes/No.
If 'yes' from what?

to what?...and why?
4. Do you have a hobby or special interest?
5. Do you listen to music? What kind?
6. Do you read books? If 'yes' what type? (history, novels, science, fiction etc.)
7. Select one subject over which you have had a change of attitude over the last few years?
(e.g. racism, war, money, religion, politics, relationships, medical research, the media, abortion etc.)
8. What caused the change concerning the subject you mention in Question 7?
(new information, personal experience etc.)
9. If you watch TV, which programme do you consider to be the best and why?
10. If you had one wish in life what would it be?

The Mystery of God

Christianity teaches that our knowledge of God is not natural knowledge. It's given to us deliberately by God through the process of revelation. This means that what is hidden is uncovered for us.

God's primary revelation is Jesus Christ and knowledge of Him comes to us through the 66 books that make up the Bible. The 4 Gospels in the New Testament provide us with a graphic picture of Christ as a human being and also as God the Son.

St. John's Gospel was written and preserved in order that we might believe, "*that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in His name.*" (John chapter 20 verse 31 - page 58).

In each session we will look at several characteristics of Jesus Christ as presented in John's Gospel.

- 1 - The things He did
- 2 - The people He met
- 3 - The comments He made
- 4 - The reason He died
- 5 - The result of His resurrection

1 - The things He did

John chapter 11 verses 32-44 page 33

1. What did Jesus do in this passage?

2. Who did He do it for?

3. What do you think about what He did?

ENCOUNTER COURSE FEEDBACK

Ambleside, 20 Oct (taster) and 3 Nov – 1 Dec (course)

Leader - John Reeves

14 responses (not all questions were answered each time)

1. What was good about the course?

Working as a group (x9)

Studying St John's Gospel in more detail (x4)

John Reeves' helpful manner (x4)

Informal atmosphere (x3)

Meeting others (x2)

Fellowship (x2)

Thinking about faith issues (x2)

Looking at Jesus' teaching in a different way

Discussing the Bible

Self-discovery

Completing sheets

Venue

2. What could have been improved?

More time on part 2 in each session (x6)

Some people are diffident about sharing personal things in part 1 of the sessions, small groups might help this (x2)

Give sheets out in advance

More about the Holy Spirit

Slow to start

Notes available on the important points made

The course might be too dependent on John Reeves (another leader might have fewer anecdotes etc)

"Nothing bad about it"

3. Would you recommend Encounter to a non-Christian friend?

Yes (x11) – of whom two added:

"Not full on and can be related to"

"Proves reality of Jesus as Lord and makes one want to find out more"

Maybe (x2) – of whom one added:

"Course works best if some of the group already know each other"

4. Would you be interested in another course if it was available?

Yes (x8) – one of whom likes short courses

Yes, depending on what it was (x2)

Nick Hallam, Dec 2009

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