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## Abstract

Ian Peter Enticott

### **The Church of England's Use of Liturgical Texts from the Perspective of Ritual Performance and Flow.**

For the Degree of Master of Arts  
University of Durham  
AD 2000

The Church of England makes extensive use of liturgical texts. These texts were never intended simply to sit on the page, but to be used or performed. This thesis examines the Church of England's use of its liturgical texts by applying criteria from the disciplines of both sociology and theology. Chapter One identifies the various ways in which this study could be approached. The methods of literary criticism, historical analysis and empirical study are all investigated. These are, however, of limited value for exploring what makes 'good' worship. I therefore follow an interdisciplinary study. Chapter Two looks at the nature of ritual performance from the perspective of sociology. I explore the areas of ritual, flow, symbol and performance by making reference to the works of Rappaport, Victor Turner, Csikszentmihalyi, Flanagan, Schechner and others. Chapter Three moves to an examination of the theology of ritual performance. Various authors from Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions are cited in an examination of the theological implications of the use of symbols and symbolic language. Fellowship (Koinonia) is linked with Turner's notion of *communitas*, and the link between music and word is examined. Chapter Four applies the insights from chapters two and three to examine some of the texts in use in the Church of England. The use of the Peace, and the development of the Eucharistic Prayers are investigated, and the use of symbol is explored with particular reference to the service of Baptism. Chapter Five looks at the possibilities for new directions in worship in the Church of England with particular reference to the Commentary in the Service of the Word. Sociological insights must be applied to the study of liturgy in order for the new texts being produced to meet people's needs in bringing them through worship to an encounter with God.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S USE  
OF LITURGICAL TEXTS  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
RITUAL PERFORMANCE AND FLOW

IAN PETER ENTICOTT

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Submitted for the degree of Master of Arts

University of Durham

Department of Theology

AD 2000



17 JAN 2001

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For Michael Vasey - a mentor and friend.

#### DECLARATION

I declare that all the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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## CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 Introduction

Human beings are infinitely complex. This complexity is readily apparent in their religious behaviour. Ritual activity is displayed in all its variety throughout the world, not least in the worship of the Christian church. Much of this worship is governed by the written word. This thesis is concerned with texts for use in Christian worship and how far these liturgies engage with insights gained from a sociological perspective.

With the proliferation of new services as the authorisation of the text of the Alternative Service Book 1980 draws to a close, it is a good time to examine the Church of England's use of its liturgical texts. Liturgical texts have been at the heart of Anglican identity since the Church of England was formed. The Act of Uniformity of 1549 and its successors ensured that the identity of the Church of England was tied up with its liturgical forms of worship. It is only since 1965 when the Church Assembly (later General Synod) was given the power to authorise new forms of liturgy that experimentation became possible (Perham (ed.), 1993, p.24). This coupled with the development of Word Processors and the Internet has provided endless opportunity for writing and disseminating new forms of liturgy. The ease of producing materials for use by an individual congregation has also changed the way people view liturgical texts. Britain today has a highly literate society and it is generally assumed that churchgoers will have no problem being presented with a book of words from which to read commonly spoken texts.

It is important to remember that, as Raymond Chapman points out, 'liturgy is essentially something to be spoken, not a written text except for convenience and help to memory' (Chapman, p.17). So the issue of how the text is *used* arises. It is not just what is written in the official text, but how the liturgy is *performed* that matters. This is the aspect of *ritual performance* that sociologists observe in Christian worship. Ritual performance has to do with the observation of certain social acts, which may be described as religious, of which the Christian religious ceremonies are only one variety. This is one of the perspectives that will be pursued in this thesis to throw light on the Church of England's use of its liturgical texts.

There is a wide variety in the way the official texts of the Church are used. This variety is an expression of the rich complexity of human beings, changing, adapting, and reforming rituals to suit their own tastes and aesthetic appreciation. The texts that are authorised therefore have to be able to be used in a wide range of situations, and by those of varying degrees of churchmanship and styles of worship.

Worship can be defined as ‘God’s enjoyment of us and our enjoyment of him’ (Kendrick, p.22). It is ‘not just a matter of what happens between set hours on a Sunday’ (op.cit., p.31). Worship, then, involves an encounter with God. So, the way in which the liturgical text is used and performed is a means to an end. As far as Christians are concerned that end is to meet with the living God. This meeting with God may be defined as the experience of one or more of the worshippers being ‘caught up’ in the flow of the service, and opened up to communication with God at a deeper level of consciousness. This is the second perspective that will be used to examine the use of liturgical texts within the Church of England.

## 1.2 Methods available for this study

There are a variety of methods appropriate for engaging with the complexity of human beings as displayed in their ritual activity. It would be possible to undertake a textual analysis of the main liturgical rites. Another method would be to engage in historical analysis to see how liturgy has developed. A third way would be to engage in an empirical study. I will examine each of these in turn with reference to some who have used these methods. I will assess the usefulness of these methods for this thesis, and then show how the methodology I have selected will assist in a greater understanding of the subject.

### 1.2.1 Literary criticism

The first method to examine is that of engaging in literary criticism of the text. This in essence is what Bridget Nichols accomplished in her doctoral thesis, at the University of Durham in 1994. She recognised at the start that she was assuming an ‘ideal performance’ (Nichols, 1996, p.46), and that her aim was to ‘interpret’ what is going on liturgically in each of the three rites she examines (op.cit., p.41).

Nichols incorporates the interplay of people and liturgy by viewing the people as 'participators' (op.cit., p.42) who are invited to make a 'personal appropriation of the promises of the kingdom' as they are confronted with it in the rite (op.cit., p.87). Her argument is based on rites being 'simultaneously text and action' (op.cit., p.88). The performance of the Eucharist puts the worshipper in a 'threshold position' (op.cit., p.91), the position that demands that 'the worshipper examine his or her particular relationship to the Kingdom' (op.cit., p.50). Here the emphasis is on what the words are doing to the worshipper; the action of the text upon the gathered people is what gives meaning to the rite. This is a liturgy-centred understanding of worship. In this model the people still have no direct say in what form of words is to be used. The text is a given, which then operates upon the people to produce an outcome. This model does not allow us to question what form of words is used, and for this reason it cannot easily be used to answer the question of what makes 'good' worship. However, it does have the benefit of taking the various Church of England liturgies as they are and seeing what performative function they have.

The analysis of the Eucharist that Nichols offers is based on hermeneutical and theological concerns, particularly the use of performative signs (op.cit., p.80). She works through from structure to performance (op.cit., p.83) and tries to establish that the relationship between these is to do with 'appropriation' (op.cit., p.84), that is, 'a process in which the performers recognise the world proposed by the rite, and make claims upon it within and beyond the terms of the performance' (op.cit., p.49).

Nichols approach is to look at what the words are saying. I want to look behind the words at what kind of relationships they presuppose, and what effect they might be designed to have, and what effect they might have which was not intended. Nichols writes of a rite happening to people 'only because they choose to participate in it', yet the question remains unasked as to whether they would choose to participate in *this* rite were others available. The whole of her argument is that the Eucharistic liturgy acts to place people in a threshold position and that they can from there 'glimpse the proposed world of the Kingdom' (op.cit., p.116).

Nichols follows this discourse with a look at how the Bible is used in liturgy, through reading of the lectionary to allusions in the liturgy and interpretations in the sermon

(Nichols, 1996, p.121). Her comments on the lectionary are unfortunately now dated as the move to the Revised Common Lectionary has meant a move away from the themed Sunday readings of the Alternative Service Book. Even so, the way the 'original power of the biblical words gains new focus' by their use in the liturgy is a useful concept.

Nichols chapters on baptism and funeral rites attend to the 'liturgical relationship between the individual and the community' (op.cit., p.43). The Book of Common Prayer and the Alternative Service Book rites are compared and contrasted with emphasis upon the interpretation of the words. Her analysis is helpful, but again the new liturgies are already produced and what she says there is no longer true for the new rites. Nichols recognised that this would be the case (op.cit., p.186, fn.22). Baptism is interpreted as initiating 'the process of reconfiguring the individual's identity towards the appropriation of the Kingdom' (op.cit., p.187). Merging text and performance are again the main emphasis here.

As she turns to the funeral rites Nichols sees a shortfall in the older rites which should, according to liturgical hermeneutics, have proposed a 'world which can be appropriated by the worshippers' (op.cit., p.188). Her understanding is that, for The Book of Common Prayer, recuperation of the rite 'remains a matter of unfulfilled guesses at the way the liturgical process might have succeeded in answering the grief of its users' (op.cit., p.188). I see a slight problem here in that this assumes the nature of grief to be the same now as it was then. I am not convinced that it can be universalised in this way. My own experiences of death and grief in Tanzania would suggest that approaches to grief are cultural, and we cannot necessarily assume that there has been no cultural shift since 1662. There is a huge difference between views of death in a culture where death is commonplace and happens within the community, to a culture where death is sanitised and removed to hospitals, and largely seen as a failure of medical care when it occurs. This suggests that there are other factors than text and performance to take into account in an analysis of liturgy. There are also the thoughts and feelings of people in society to be reckoned with, and these may change with the years. I am not saying here that there were not problems with the way the earlier liturgies addressed death, but I do want to highlight that liturgy relies upon cultural setting for its effectiveness. Nichols' conclusion to chapter six that finds The Book of Common Prayer order to 'indicate a barren situation, where the congregation can never participate' (Nichols, 1996,

p.218-219) reflects a rather false understanding of liturgy as the only important part of the 'rite of passage'. I think it should rather be seen as a *part* of the process. There were many other parts to it, including the laying out of the body in the home, which were far healthier for the grieving process than the modern attitude of dealing with it all at the funeral, and try to be over with it by the next day. The examination of death from a peculiarly narrow angle of performative liturgy fails to take into account the societal influences and practices which preceded and followed on from the funeral, including the wearing of mourning clothes for a time afterwards. The study of death rites should never be divorced from the whole sociological setting in which they exist.

Nichols' analysis of the Alternative Service Book rite appears to take this move into account by recognising that the 'proposed word of assurance cannot be completed within the space of the burial service' (op.cit., p.224). She speaks of the gap between experience and belief (op.cit., pp.225-227), yet there is still the underlying note of assumption about what is needed at the time of death. I think there is a challenge as to whether we have understood the community, or whether we are applying our *theology* of death to the liturgy and meeting our perceived theological needs without ever really addressing the sociological and emotional needs of those who come. This is particularly true for those to whom the church is a strange place. Offering a tailor-made funeral which presumes Christian belief may be more than some people can cope with, even if they *are* Christians. That is why I think that there is another dimension to be tackled in the examination of liturgical texts, not just text and performance, but *flow*. This relates to how people participate in and get *caught up* in the liturgy used as a channel of God-directed worship.

The final conclusion of Nichols is that appropriation is never fully realised as the Kingdom has not yet come, there is an 'eschatological prospect' (op.cit., p.251). She expects there to be a move on behalf of the congregation to 'demand better liturgy' (op.cit., p.279), but the task still lies before her. In the end liturgical hermeneutics makes us aware of this need, but does not directly allow us to address it, since it is by definition a hermeneutic of what has already been written. I want to move us on one stage beyond this and address the principles by which liturgy is written.

### 1.2.2 Historical Analysis

The second method I want to examine is that of an engagement with historical analysis that looks at the shift which has taken place in liturgy. This was the approach of John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks in their book Worship in Transition. They start with an overview of the main features of the liturgical movement. They see these as firstly *participation*: 'Worship is no longer a spectacle, but a community action - a shift that leads to a discovery of the potentially cohesive power of ritual and ceremony' (Fenwick and Spinks, 1995, p.6). Secondly, *rediscovery* of the early church, the Bible, the Eucharist, the vernacular and other Christian traditions. Then thirdly, an emphasis on *proclamation* and *social involvement*. The overall emphasis is on renewal and 'creating worship that is "authentic"' (op.cit., p.10).

They then establish that twentieth century liturgical renewal is itself the product of earlier work by others. They examine various movements from different denominations. The Roman Catholics pre-Vatican II had already started looking at the way of allowing the laity to have some function in the liturgy (op.cit., p.28). Marks of this movement were the use of the vernacular, Gregorian chant with lay participation, and 'dialogue' Mass, with responses said by the people. The latter is similar to the style of the proposed new liturgies for Church of England worship (Buchanan and Lloyd, 1996, Six Eucharistic Prayers as Proposed in 1996, Cambridge, Grove, Worship series 136).

There was also an emphasis on Scripture, sermons and receiving Communion.

The Anglican Church too saw 'a period of rediscovery, research and renewal, and then, particularly in the 1960s, a deluge of new liturgical rites' (Fenwick and Spinks, 1995, p.37). The different historical movements within Anglicanism seem to have pulled in different ways. Wesley towards preaching and attendance at Communion (op.cit., p.35); the Oxford Movement towards 'Catholic forms of worship' (op.cit., p.39); and a variant of this, too, in Christian Socialism with its emphasis on the Parish Communion (op.cit., p.40). The abortive attempt at a revised Prayer Book in 1928 led to a more concerted and sustained effort to develop new liturgical forms. There was an emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist (op.cit., p.44) as a 'community' event (op.cit., p.45).

The work of Dom Gregory Dix on The Shape of the Liturgy has shaped thought on the Eucharist ever since, even though 'Dix's arguments and evidence are flawed' according to Fenwick and Spinks (Fenwick and Spinks, 1995, p.50).

The Church in South India is the subject of the next chapter, showing how the principles of liturgical reform were put into practice. 'Full congregational participation' was one of the major emphases, and this is seen as the origin of the responsive Eucharistic prayers proposed for use in the Church of England (op.cit., p.56). They are also attributed with starting the widespread modern use of the sharing of the peace (op.cit., p.56).

The summary of more recent Roman Catholic reforms does not really concern this present study, except to show that other churches are committed to liturgical reform. The main way in which liturgical reform in Rome impinges upon the Church of England is in the ecumenical attempts to find broad areas of agreement as the liturgies are revised so that the various churches work on convergent liturgy. The way the Revised Common Lectionary has been introduced to the Church of England in the last couple of years is a case in point, even though the lectionary has been altered from the Roman in some details. The more recent developments in Anglican liturgy seem to reflect upon the works of one man, Dr. Leslie Brown, who 'prepared the first draft' of the Church of South India liturgy (op.cit., p.55), and helped draft A Liturgy for Africa (op.cit., p.71) before working on the formation of the 'Pan-Anglican documents' (op.cit., p.72). It is this idea of family conformity that worries me the most. The sense of it seems to be that if we have a good thing let us use it as widely as possible, while also possibly trying to retain Anglican identity through recognisably similar liturgical documents. This seems to be based on the idea that liturgy is based on some world-wide convention on what language and form will best help us to worship God. This is an area that I want to engage with in the present study.

Fenwick and Spinks also mention the Vestments of Ministers Measure which got rid of the 'doctrinal significance of vesture' (op.cit., p.73). While this is true as far as the official teaching of the church goes, there may well be quite significant personal doctrinal statements being made by individuals through what they wear. I see this as another indication of the double-meaning which has gone on in the Church of England,

where even liturgical words have to be formed so that everyone can agree on them, while in reality being able to adjust their meaning in their own minds to 'fit' with their own particular theology. This is another area I hope to address.

The overview of recent liturgical revision in Fenwick and Spinks is extensive, but again does not really answer the question of what makes 'good' liturgy, or even whether this is possible, especially given that General Synod can amend and adapt rites presented by the Liturgical Commission.

The outline of the Reformed Tradition shows the big difference from the Church of England as being that liturgy 'was regarded as a guide for the minister rather than an invariable text' (Fenwick and Spinks, 1995, p.81) and that 'no URC minister is obliged to use any of the officially published rites, and many do not' (op.cit., p.86). The authors catalogue the changes in Methodism, and in the Eastern Churches, but no attempt is made to evaluate these, and so they have little value for this study.

The value of the Charismatic movement is seen by the authors as emphasising that worship and liturgy is of no use unless it brings 'people into touch with God' (op.cit., p.110) and its emphasis upon lay involvement and every member ministry. The Charismatic movement's relationship to the liturgical movement is seen as the latter providing 'an incubator' for the former (op.cit., p.112). While it may be true that those in Charismatic renewal are seeking new forms of liturgical reform, there is also the fact, unmentioned here, that many are also seeking to move away from set liturgies. This too calls for further examination and gives another reason why I think that historical analysis can only provide us with information rather than help us to answer the question of what makes good worship.

Fenwick and Spinks then turn their attention to other matters of concern, the Eucharist, Baptism and Confirmation. The movement to bring Eucharistic practice into some sort of consensus between the denominations majors on similarity of text, particularly in the lectionary (op.cit., p.121), but also the structure of the Eucharistic prayer (op.cit., p.129ff.). On baptism and confirmation they again review the situation and outline what responses have been made, but do not really evaluate them.

The use of language is dealt with, again from a historical point of view, not least to do with inclusive language and the use of common texts. In examining other means of inculturation they distinguish between primary Christian symbolism, such as the use of bread and wine, and secondary symbolism, such as dress and gestures. Similarly they examine architecture, music, traditional rites and language in fairly cursory fashion, ending with the acknowledgement that there has been a 'failure of the Western Churches to win large masses of what used to be called "working class people"' and that this 'may indicate a cultural gap in modern liturgies' (Fenwick and Spinks, 1995, p.165). The book ends with the question 'where next?' There seems to be, they say, an 'expectation of continuous change' based on the idea of 'the Church as a *pilgrim* people' (op.cit., p.195, authors' italics). However, neither this idea, nor its presupposition are challenged. Two models are foreseen: one where a 'kaleidoscope of patterns and forms' results (op.cit., p.196), and one where 'there is a real desire for the Church and its worship to exhibit stability in a highly unstable world' (op.cit., p.197). They foresee 'a desire to recreate the past in certain ways'. This could account for the recent rise in popularity of Celtic liturgies and songs in Britain.

The historical analysis therefore stops short of evaluation in any form, seeking rather to show what has taken place. Another way might be to evaluate the changes, but this raises the problem of what to base the comparison on. I do not want to ditch historical analysis, but it does need to be used as part of a greater whole, looking at what worked and what did not, and why. Questions also need to be asked about what cultural or socio-economic adjustments were going on at the time, and what people actually *thought* about the changes. Particularly it would be useful to know whether people thought worship was better than before or not. These questions will undergird my own study of the subject.

### 1.2.3 Empirical Study

The third method is to engage in an empirical study. This has been done by asking people questions in a social survey about their thoughts on and experiences of worship. This is the approach used by Andrew Bryant in a paper titled 'Lay communicants' attitudes to the Eucharist in relation to liturgical change in the Church of England', in Liturgy and Change (Newton, 1983), and by part of the research done by Gavin Wakefield in his doctoral thesis (Wakefield, 1998).

Andrew Bryant's survey of the congregation at St James, Birmingham, was prompted by his feeling that 'many have had to accept the new services' as part of their basic spiritual diet' whether they wanted to, or not (Newton, 1983, p.75). Also he was concerned that 'lay views have largely gone unheard' (loc. cit.). While the author recognises that the survey cannot represent the entire Church of England it is, at least, an illustration of how one congregation felt. He gives a pointer back to the 1960s showing that at that time people felt 'that the Church had gone too far' especially in revising the Lord's Prayer (op.cit., p.77). There is an interesting comment that many of the people assumed the changes 'were related to the decline in Church membership' rather than a 'change in the understanding of the Eucharist' (op.cit., p.78).

Along with liturgical change went actual cultural changes. For example, the change to attending Church only once every Sunday. This meant that one service had to cope with all the different expectations laid on it (op.cit., p.79). The change of language to 'we believe', while theologically and historically correct, brought with it a lot of dispute and intruded 'communal tendencies into privatised religion (op.cit., p.79), as does the passing of the peace (op.cit., p.80).

Bryant also mentions a conflict of views in what was going on in the Eucharist between those who see God as Immanent and those who see him as Transcendent (op.cit., p.81). Even more telling is when he says 'a single ritual, the Eucharist, is being used in separate ways with separate interpretations' (op.cit., p.82). It is possible to legislate for all you like, but in the end people will think what they want to think.

Looking next at the statistics, the high point of the Eucharist was seen as the communal reception of bread and wine by 71.4% of those at St James' family communion (op.cit., p.83). However, the perception of this moment was varied. Mainly it was seen as making my *own* communion with God, while only 12.5% saw it as a 'sharing with those around them (op.cit., p.84).

The lack of silence, or opportunity for private meditation is noted as another complaint (op.cit., p.86). Also, the increasing place given to laity in the services was commented

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<sup>1</sup> The Alternative Service Book 1980.

upon, although the key part of the celebration is the priest's alone. But this 'can appear as no more than a monotonous listing of God's mighty acts; it is all just so many words' (Newton, 1983, p.88). This is of course a response to the Eucharistic prayer which a theologian would be horrified with. The words are needed to describe what is going on theologically, even though sociologically they may not be regarded in this way.

Of the congregation at St James, 75% 'felt that they had little or no influence in decisions related to the worship' (op.cit., p.89), while many still 'expect clerical dominance' (op.cit., p.89). Interestingly the clergy felt it was their place to be dominant (op.cit., p.91).

Bryant seeks to show that there is a gap between clergy and people's understanding of the Eucharist (op.cit., p.91). He reckons that 'the stress on orthodoxy and truth has often been at the cost of coherence and significance in relation to the larger problems in meaning of the individual's life and social experience' (op.cit., p.92). He sees the realisation that 'liturgies are man made, not God-given as a direct result of the proliferation of liturgies in recent years (op.cit., p.92).

Bryant also questions Turner's notion of 'communitas' on the grounds that people are concerned more about a oneness with God than a oneness with each other (op.cit., p.93), and thinks there is a real danger 'that the Church's symbols have meaning only for the initiated few' (op.cit., p.93). Finally, Bryant highlights the incongruity between society's understanding of the church and its own self-understanding, particularly with regard to world-views.

This approach then will enable us to find out the problems both within the Church and in its relation to the society around it, of which Church-attending Christians are in a small minority.

The unpublished results of Gavin Wakefield's survey, the questions for which are given in Appendix C to his doctoral thesis (Wakefield, 1998), give some data relating to another parish, Christ Church, Billericay, from 1993. These results<sup>2</sup> show that the style of worship and timing of services were the biggest reasons for people *not* attending

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix p.112 for the relevant results.

particular services (Que. 6). Questioned about whether they worshipped God best in a service with a set order of liturgy, those who disagreed outnumbered those who agreed, with about a quarter having no preference (Que. 9). Most found the service of Holy Communion helpful (Que. 11) and thought it should be received weekly (Que. 12). Many people wanted more modern songs in worship (Que. 16b), and wanted 'less traditional' services (Que. 18).

The problem with any survey like this is taking a big enough sample to claim it as representative of the Church as a whole. There is a need for more information, but regrettably, information is difficult to assess when there are so many variables. This is why there is such a difficulty in approaching a study of liturgy from an empirical point of view. The question, what makes good liturgy, is going to have to be amended, for there will be almost as many answers as there are individuals. There is, however, still the fact that liturgy is basically part of a *corporate* activity.

It is for this reason that I will explore neither individual spirituality, nor the text of the liturgical documents but certain social groups as a whole. My concern will be with congregations as corporate entities, engaged in acts of worship. It is this precise corporateness that is my main concern in the analysis of flow.

#### 1.2.4 Assessing the usefulness of these methods

I have shown the limited usefulness of textual analysis, based on the liturgical texts alone. Nichols, for example, is limited by her necessary assumption that she is examining a 'best-case' scenario and as she rightly points out, that is not always people's experience of worship (Nichols, p.46).

I have also shown the limited usefulness of liturgical analysis based on the development of doctrine within the service revisions. In this regard Fenwick and Spinks are of limited use in asking what makes 'good' worship by the fact that they are largely dealing with what the *liturgists* think. That is, their viewpoint is that of the ones who are writing the liturgy, and not those who are using it. They are dealing with givens, the fact that liturgy has changed. They have analysed how it has changed, and to a certain extent why it has changed, but there is little on whether people *feel* that they are engaging in better worship.

The usefulness of empirical study for this current work is also limited. The empirical study comes closer to offering a useful answer as to what makes good worship in that it asks questions of those involved. The problem is of course that many people will not have experienced many different forms of worship and will only be able to comment on and assess what worked best for them in the traditions to which they belong.

### 1.3 An interdisciplinary method

These various approaches all have their value, but there are limitations to what they can say about what makes 'good' worship. However, perspectives gained from the human sciences, sociology and anthropology, are of some real benefit in gaining insight into how groups operate. For this reason I have chosen not to attempt a statistical analysis of people's views, but rather to opt for a method which applies sociological and theological insights to the use of texts and to see what results. In subsequent sections I have drawn upon one limited dimension of these human sciences to interpret liturgical behaviour. The dimension I am concentrating on is that of ritual studies. While recognising that the sociologist looks primarily at observed phenomena there is real value in drawing on these insights and using them in an interdisciplinary way to engage with liturgical studies.

I therefore propose to treat the underlying question 'what makes good worship?' by dealing with a sociological analysis conducted through a theological understanding of liturgical texts. That is I will ask whether worship is only achieved, or is at its best, when the participants experience together a sense of flow in the worship.

In order to do this I want to do three things. First, to look at the nature of ritual performance to see what models sociologists have come up with that may help us to understand what is going on in people's minds when they come to worship. This should answer the questions, 'What do they think they are doing?', and 'How do they measure success?'

Secondly, I want to look at the theology of ritual performance, in particular to see what theology has to say that is not simply sociological. Here I will look at the principles undergirding the use of liturgy.

Thirdly, I want to see what evidence there may be of explicit concern with sociological factors within some of the actual texts either in use, or proposed for use, in the Church of England.

From this I want to draw conclusions about the current trends in liturgical development in the Church of England and to make suggestions for where it should be going so that it fulfils this proposition that worship should enable people to meet with God.

That this is the basis for worship is acknowledged by Donald Gray when he says that worship 'must be as accessible as it is humanly possible to devise, while still retaining echoes and nuances which evoke the infinite and eternal' (Perham, 1989, p.102).

Worship at its best should be directed to God. In this sense liturgy is a tool which can be used to enable people to meet with God. How effective that is will depend upon the shape of the tool and what people are trying to do with it. Gray admits that 'any Prayer Book which is designed for the Year of Our Lord 2000 must of necessity be two-eyed', one eye on the traditions of the past, and the other on 'our God-given task of making the gospel both alive and available in his world of the present moment' (loc.cit). Using liturgy to teach people, to categorise people, or to present as many theological symbols in as short a time as possible are not primary, or even secondary, concerns of the liturgy.

The lessons that can be learned for liturgy from the perspective of the social sciences are only just beginning to be recognised<sup>3</sup>. It is essential that liturgists grapple with other disciplines that can throw new light on the task of producing worship that engages with people. This thesis aims to explore some of these areas by seeking to assess a variety of sociological perspectives and apply their insights to the interpretation of liturgical behaviour.

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3 For example: Nathan Mitchell, 1999, Liturgy and the Social Sciences, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota

## CHAPTER TWO: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE STUDY OF RITUAL

### 2.1 Introduction

The social sciences give useful insights into understanding the nature of ritual performance. These insights can help us to 'reshape our understanding of the rituals of Christian liturgy' (Mitchell, 1999, p.64). The concepts that are of particular importance for this current study are those of ritual, flow, performance and symbol. I want to examine each in turn before drawing conclusions about the impact these have on the Church of England's use of its liturgical text.

### 2.2 Ritual

It is difficult to pin down an exact definition for the meaning of 'ritual' within the writings of social science as each author works with their own definition. It is not therefore easy to compare their different approaches, and there seems to be misunderstanding between authors due to their different usage. Roy Rappaport, in his posthumously published Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity, defines ritual as 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (Rappaport, 1999, p.24). This is a sufficiently loose definition to encompass all sorts of rituals, from human society and within the animal kingdom. It is a functional definition which is aimed at encompassing all the various attempts at defining ritual. However, Rappaport admits that this is not universally accepted, and points to the various misunderstandings between different authors (op.cit., p.28). Another problem is that for most, if not all, of these authors their understanding continues to develop and what they wrote yesterday may not be what they believe today.

In looking at ritual we are limited to observable elements. The underlying beliefs that give rise to rituals can be studied, but the underlying truth is not possible to ascertain by observation. Rappaport's conclusions are tainted by his view that 'divinities are reflexive creations of their worshippers' (Rappaport, 1999, p.398). This imposing of his own beliefs on his observations is inevitable, but does not make his view correct. The opposite also remains a possibility, that is that a divine being *does* exist, and is active in the created world. That is not to say that the Christian church must necessarily have a monopoly on the understanding of this divine being, but that observation of this world cannot give us the whole picture.

### 2.3 Rites of Passage

One of the key insights for a study of liturgy is given by the anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner writes about 'rites' rather than rituals. In examining rites we are looking at particular rituals associated with change in society. Turner, following van Gennep, sees all types of rites as having the processual form of 'passage' (V Turner 1979, p.16). Within these he identifies three phases of separation, transition, and incorporation or re-aggregation. The transitional phase is the one on which he concentrates his attention, as it is here that people are brought to the 'threshold' and enter what he calls a 'liminal' phase. As all types of rite are seen as having this transitional phase we need to examine how this relates to the rites of the Christian church. Turner identifies a further division of rites into those of initiatory passage and those for seasonal rites. The difference between the liminal phases in these he identifies as initiation 'putting people down' in order to then elevate them, and the seasonal rites 'setting people up' in order to return them to humbleness. Within the church we might easily see the initiation in terms of the ordination rites, and the seasonal passage in such festivals as harvest and Christmas nativity plays.

Furthermore Turner notes that each of the three phases of passage may be of varying length, depending on the particular rite. Thus separation is prominent in funerals, incorporation at marriages, and transition for pregnancy, betrothal and initiation. Turner's definition of rite is thus self-limiting. It is easy to see how this relates to what are traditionally known in the church as the rites of passage, but it is not so easy to see how this relates to the daily or even weekly worship of the church. Is there a sense in which the Sunday service can be called a 'rite' with Turner's meaning? Perhaps a way to approach this would be to ask if anything changes during the service - is there indeed a 'passage' from one state to another? Is there a liminal phase through which people pass? In one sense there is. Most Christians attending a service would say that they had been changed as a result. People go to church because of what they get out of it. This may be more in the area of a change of mind, than a physical change, but it is important nonetheless.

The problem here is that a change of mind cannot easily be measured by sociological means. An independent observer would not be able to discern any change as having

taken place. Kieran Flanagan writing about the Roman Catholic rites, which are arguably much closer to the highly ordered rituals of sociological studies, still says that 'rites do not produce tangible effects' (Flanagan, 1991, p.7). I will return later to an examination of what Flanagan has to say and its relevance to this current study.

The concept of 'rites' as it is used in sociology is therefore of more interest to the occasional rites of the church, those that we commonly call 'rites of passage'. The problem comes if we try to generalise this and say that all church services are 'rites' in this sense. The weekly Communion service and the order of Daily Prayer are not strictly about process, nor are they necessarily about seasonal passage. They have some of the qualities of ritual in that they have certain elements that habitually take place, but they lack this fundamental of involving people in a process of change.

### 2.3.1 Rites as liminoid phenomena

Turner brings another element into the equation. He points out that all of these 'liminoid phenomena' in modern technological societies are competing for recognition in what is essentially a 'free' market (V Turner 1979, p.54). This brings in the idea of choice. Turner distinguishes between 'liminal' and 'liminoid' phenomena. The liminal are the activities that are actually performative; they make a change from one status to another. The liminoid are those individualised activities of industrial societies that are needed to provide the flow experiences no longer available in ritual. The liminal is distinguished by status, by socially integrated and collective representations and the liminoid by contractual relations, idiosyncratic groups that are fragmentary and may be revolutionary. In modern complex societies both these types may 'co-exist in a sort of cultural pluralism', although he reckons that neither type is society wide in influence, but rather that each type belongs more or less to specific groups. Thus churches, clubs and fraternals would be liminal, sports activities, literature, drama and the like, liminoid. The distinction that he makes is that the liminoid is more like a commodity that one pays for, while the liminal elicits loyalty towards the particular group and may involve some kind of obligation (V Turner 1979, pp. 50-55). Liminality elicits loyalty, and is bound up with membership. 'One *works at* the liminal, one *plays with* the liminoid' (op. cit. p.54). There is a moral pressure to go to church, he says, while people will queue up to go to a football match. One involves obligation, the other choice.

The problem appears to be that people need to have some kind of liminoid activity, especially if they do not belong to a group offering liminal activity. But there is not necessarily a straight choice between one activity and another. However, with the rise of Sunday as a leisure day, church going is increasingly being seen as a leisure time activity. That is to say that people may not be attending church just because of the liminal experiences associated with it. Similarly there may not necessarily be such a sense of obligation that people feel they *have* to go to church because they are Christians. The sense of obligation may be quite strong within the United States, but in Britain the fact of having a State Church, and the corresponding history associated with baptising anyone in the parish who requests it, has led to a diminished sense of obligation towards church attendance. It is only in the more sectarian churches that one is likely to find people being encouraged, or even expected, to take part in everything, and where the church authorities expect to control *everything* that those people do, including their social activities.

### 2.3.2 Churchgoing as a 'leisure activity'

This distinction of liminal as involving loyalty, and liminoid as paying entertainment, comes close to the question of whether church going is seen as a work or a leisure activity. Michael Argyle defines leisure as 'those activities which people do simply because they want to' regardless of whether there are goals involved (Argyle, 1989, p.315). The important difference between work and leisure for Argyle is whether or not an activity is undertaken for material gain. He points out that both work and leisure may involve the same activities, that is that one person's work may be another person's leisure activity, and vice versa. It is also possible for some leisure and work activities to have no clear distinctions, particularly where 'work' is carried out in the home. The amount of leisure time available to people also changes. Young couples with small children will probably have extremely limited leisure time, but once those children have left home they will have far more opportunity to become active in church, politics or social clubs.

In his understanding the key to these activities is the social life and contacts that come as part of the package, what he calls the 'complete "leisure world"' (Argyle, 1989, p.321). This world becomes complete in itself. He cites the case of Scottish Dancing which has 'special costumes and rituals', and 'a great deal of joy, partly generated by the music'

(op. cit. p.322). This sounds to me quite like a church service. If this comparison is valid and 'going to church' is simply one choice of leisure activity over against others then it changes the perception of what is going on. If people are regarding church in this way then we should expect the tail off in church membership once teenagers become socially active elsewhere.

The problem with this view is that it is only consistent if going to church *is* a leisure activity, and many people in the church do not see it this way, even though others do. The worship services of the church should be trying to achieve something of intrinsic value for and in themselves, that is, they should approach the nature of what Argyle calls 'work'.

Argyle says that 'the distinction between work and leisure is quite subtle, since they may involve exactly the same activities' (op.cit. p.315). This is clear on the part of stipendiary ministers of the church, that is those who are paid a 'living allowance' in remuneration for the job they do. Thus, the priest, or presbyter, is 'paid' to lead worship, while the congregation is there voluntarily to be 'participants'. The distinction should be clear, and it is furthered by the concepts of clergy and laity as two distinct groups, but on another level, while material gain may not be part of the equation, spiritual gain is. This becomes a major issue once someone has had a conversion experience, which for present purposes may be described as a shift of emphasis, where the spiritual gain is perceived as of more value than material gain. In this circumstance 'going to church' or, better, belonging to the community of the 'church', is seen as bringing greater spiritual gain, and of far more worth. In a sense it actually involves exertion for 'material' gain, and is done with the compulsion that it is part of what being a Christian involves. This is where the similarities with a dancing club break down. It is not a matter of life and death if you attend dancing every week, nor is it of significance once you are too old to be actually involved. However, for many Christians it is life itself to be part of that world-wide group of Christians regardless of age or level of participation.

Where this has bearing on the current study is at the level of what expectations the worshippers hold. A view of the church at worship as a 'social club' may be consonant with a particular Sunday 'ritual' where clothes, colour, smell and ritual action become

important and part of the proceedings. From the priests point of view, regarding Sunday worship as a leisure activity may lead to the view that the service is 'entertainment' and does not therefore need a fixed text, but gains greater value the more it diverges from the expected norm. The priest who views the liturgy as 'work' will want it all to be performed properly in order for it to be effective. People seeing the worship as part of the 'work' they do may be more inclined towards an 'every member ministry' style of worship where everyone has something to offer to the group as a whole. This is the view that has led to widespread liturgical revision with 'liturgy as the work of the whole body of Christ' (Meyers, 1993, p.155). These differing views in turn affect the way the use of text is perceived, and indeed what words they will want to see used. Bruce Reed, in his assessment of the dynamics of religion (Reed, 1978), has pointed to a variety of ways in which members of society regard the church and their part in it. He touches on the use of text in only a few places. One of these is in describing dysfunctional religion in what he calls the mode of extra-dependence. According to Reed dysfunction happens in this mode when the capacity to distinguish between the symbol and the thing symbolised is lost, and people start to look for 'immediate and magical' answers to prayer. The person may then 'fear that small changes in the liturgy or in ritual acts will break the spell' (Reed, 1979, p.76). A rigid use of text may therefore indicate a 'magical' approach to religion, while the 'promotion of "instant worship" to make services attractive' he sees as 'denying the struggle to come face to face with God' (Reed, 1979, p.150). Reed sees the need for set words to use in worship, and hopes that congregations can be led to appreciate the liturgy in the same way that they might need time to learn to appreciate a 'great symphony' (loc.cit.).

#### 2.4 Emerging Ritual

Nathan Mitchell, in Liturgy and the Social Sciences (The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1999), outlines an understanding of what he calls 'emerging ritual' which offers more scope for the study of liturgy within the Church. This view 'challenges many of the cherished conclusions that were formulated by liturgists searching for the roots of ritual in the research of anthropologists' (Mitchell, 1999, p.39). It holds that ritual and society are in a constant state of flux, so far from ritual becoming more and more formalised as time goes on, it is rather to be seen as developing in its interaction with society. What emerges is ritual that connects with society as it is. So, the meaning of rituals is to be found 'in their performance' (Mitchell, 1999, p.49). They are

‘meaningful not by reason of what they refer to, but in virtue of what they actually do, individually and socially’ (loc.cit.).

This being the case, there is a need to establish what draws Christians to worship in church services. Victor Turner quotes Moore and Myerhoff as saying that ‘collective ritual can be seen as an especially dramatic attempt to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitely into orderly control’. Within this ritual they observe that there is a certain stylisation: ‘actions or symbols used are extra-ordinary themselves, or ordinary ones are used in an unusual way that calls attention to them and sets them apart from other mundane uses’ (V Turner 1979, p.87). While this may be true of certain rituals, it is not necessarily the case that all church services would come under this category of ritual. Nor is it clear quite what is being controlled in a church service.

#### 2.4.1 Church attendance linked to worship styles

It may be that there is a certain category of person that is drawn to go to church, whereas another may be put off by the whole idea. It is certainly the case that numbers attending church have been dropping, as Flanagan notes (Flanagan, 1991, p.23). However, his analysis that this is because of the ‘mishandling of the modernisation of rites’ (loc.cit.) is debatable. Flanagan is writing from a traditional Roman Catholic perspective, one for whom the performance of the liturgy was fulfilling in and of itself. He seems to be implying that people are no longer going to church because they liked the old rites, but not the new. There may be some truth in this for certain people, but he ignores the fact that people were leaving the churches before the changes in liturgy occurred. There is a need for a study on why people go to church at all, and, when they do, why they choose a particular church to worship in.

#### 2.4.2 Enjoyment of worship

There is a question of whether people go to church quite simply because they enjoy it. The answer to the first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism ‘What is the chief end of man?’ is ‘Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.’ There may well be a certain element of church worship that attracts those who still go. There is often little need for engagement with others, one can attend and sit in the same pew each week, be known by a few people, and enjoy a certain level of community feeling, while having the moral gratification of having ‘done your duty’ for that week. Others

may find that there is a certain amount of power involved in their attendance, those who organise the various activities that make up church life find fulfilment in what they do and gain satisfaction from it. Others may simply enjoy the participation in a weekly activity that does not tax their skills too far. It may be then that some people stay away because they don't enjoy going to church services, or possibly don't think that they will enjoy it. This concept of enjoyment by participation is addressed partly in what sociologists call 'flow'. I will turn next to an examination of that concept.

## 2.5 Flow

Turner's understanding of the concept of 'flow' is exemplified by the following definition:

'Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement' . . . it is 'a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part . . . we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future.' (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi & John McAloon, quoted in V Turner 1979, p.55)

Using this definition of flow, Turner attempts to show how this may link with the feeling of *communitas*.

"Flow" may induce *communitas*, and *communitas* "flow", but some "flows" are solitary and some modes of *communitas* separate awareness from action - especially in religious *communitas*. Here it is not team work in flow that is quintessential, but "being" together, with "being" the operative word, not "doing." (V Turner 1979, p.46)

This variety of 'flows' is an important concept. In a church service it is possible that some people will experience flow as an individual, that is, solitary flow. The possibility is there that individuals each experiencing solitary flow may thus experience *communitas*. Not everyone's experience need be the same. It may be that each person will experience it in a different way. Some people seem to be natural participators. They may be drawn to worship in the church quite simply because they like being with

other people and get a sense of 'flow' from that participation. Others may consider themselves as individuals even when worshipping together with others. I think here particularly of those small congregations where everyone is several pews distant from the next person. There is a sense in which they are together and yet each person wants to be alone with their own thoughts without having too much engagement with the others present. This provides an instance of solitary flow that may not necessarily lead to *communitas*. However, *communitas* as defined here, could also be a natural outcome of experiencing flow while together. It could even be that in this instance the 'being together' is not of paramount importance, except perhaps for their being in the presence of the person leading worship.

#### 2.5.1 Flow and Communitas

*Communitas*, according to Turner is that experience of togetherness felt by those undergoing change together. It is therefore similar to 'community' but distinct from it. It is like the feeling of those involved in an initiation ritual - possibly even in such things as baptism preparation groups or marriage preparation classes. While together those involved feel a sense of community that arises out of the common liminal phase of 'betweenness'. Thus it can only be expected to last for as long as the group is together, although residual feelings may linger which recall that this group spent time together at such and such a time for such and such a purpose.

If we link this in with Turner's idea of 'normative *communitas*', that is, the maintaining of *communitas* on a permanent basis, such as is experienced by, say, Christian groups in a period of religious revival (V Turner 1979, p.47), then we come close to what the church calls 'living as the people of God'.

This idea of being together is important for what goes on in worship. Obviously this feeling of togetherness can only be experienced when together, but it also gives the group identity for what it does during the week, that is the worshippers are aware of their group identity because of what takes place on the Sunday meeting. It is important to maintain the feeling of unity in any particular congregation. The moment unity is broken, then there is a danger that the group will no longer experience '*communitas*'. Some worshippers may find their experience of worship heightened by their being among people with whom they feel 'at one'. This is catered for in a variety of ways

within the church. The renewed emphasis upon 'The Peace' as a special time for making peace, or reconfirming peace, between various members of the community before sharing in Communion together is a powerful expression of that unity that is meant to be felt. I will examine this further in Chapter Four.

Within this concept of the 'people of God' is included the notion that we will live as a community. This may involve some ethical considerations. The groups norms and expectations will need to be met in order for any individual to feel themselves part of the group. Conversely the further someone is from the norms exhibited and expressed by the group the less they will feel themselves to be part of the community. This has repercussions on the mission of the Church. If the Church is to reach out to those outside its boundaries then it will find that newcomers are likely to be at the periphery of the group's self-identity. It is only as they conform more and more to the expectations and standards of the group that they will become more centralised and be considered by themselves and others to 'belong'. This raises the question of how far people who do not identify themselves as being part of the group will experience 'flow' within the meetings. It would appear that we should not expect people who are on the periphery to have the same quality of experiences as people who are more involved in the group.

It is also obvious to any casual observer that many of the people in church on a Sunday are only 'together' in the sense of sharing the same space. There are those who come in to church and participate in the service with very little interaction with others in the building, and yet their sense of community is built up by the very act of being together and sharing in the same 'liminoid' activity. What is open to investigation is how far that is reliant upon the experience of 'flow' as outlined here. Turner says that 'communitas has something of a flow quality but doesn't need rules to trigger it off. Flow is experienced in an individual, communitas among individuals' (V Turner 1979, p.58). So the 'flow' experienced by the individuals should lead to the feeling of communitas in the group.

Another way of looking at this would be to ask what behavioural traits were common to the group. Does this sense of communitas give rise to a common ethical code, a common way of looking at the world, or even a common theology? There is certainly something about churches that tends to draw those of a certain disposition together in

one group, which then becomes the norm to which others joining the group are meant to adhere. The style of worship used naturally follows on from the defining core group. While changes may be possible over time, as the members grow and develop, it is also true that such groups become highly conservative and resistant to change. This further heightens the sense of *communitas*, as those who worship together are *others like us*. However, it still remains for us to ask how far these individuals experience 'flow' in worship.

#### 2.5.2 Flow by common consent

There is a sense in which it is the commitment to one another that is important, much as it is in marriage. The satisfaction that is gained by a group of people having common goals and a will to flourish makes all the difference. When people come together because they have *decided* to do so, then they become more focused and the better they are likely to work together. A part of this common consensus may be which *text* they will use in their meetings. In one sense it may not matter at all which text is used so long as there is consensus. It is only once people start to disagree about such matters that it becomes a problem. There are other matters to consider, such as *how* the text is presented or used, and again there needs to be consensus here, although there is likely to be a much wider variety of opinion simply because so many more possibilities emerge. Some of these considerations are cultural, and flow may in this sense be related to the cultural in so far as they are in a shared emotional experience with a common focus. There has to be a desire to do things in *this way* and not any other. In this sense any act of worship is an exercise in compromise, not necessarily finding the lowest common denominator of worship styles, but simply reaching agreement over what everyone can use in common.

#### 2.5.3 The sensation of flow

'Flow' is seen as a 'merging of action and awareness' (V Turner 1979, p.154), 'the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement'

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p.36). While 'play is the flow experience *par excellence*'

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p.37) other activities may produce sensations of 'flow'.

Csikszentmihalyi does not call the experience of worshippers 'flow' in this strictest sense, but does allow that religious experiences may be 'analogous to flow'

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p.37). Csikszentmihalyi's work emphasises that the experience

of flow is 'so enjoyable that people are sometimes willing to forsake a comfortable life for its sake' (loc.cit.). Yet it is not clear that enjoyment of worship is one of the chief reasons why people come to church. Even so it needs to be taken seriously. There is a question as to whether worshippers should enjoy what they experience. There must be some attraction which makes people want to come back week after week. It is possible that on a simple level it is down to enjoyment. Even so each individual's perception of what exactly is enjoyable may be different. For some it may be the fact of being together with people that one recognises and finding comfort in the human contact that occurs. This may be especially true for older people. For others it may be the liveliness of the singing, or the quiet moments away from the busy-ness of life. Once people come on a regular basis it may simply be habit that keeps them coming. It is questionable whether all services would necessarily allow people to reach this state of 'flow' where they can experience enjoyment. It might even be questionable whether they *should* be enjoyed. Further questions need to be asked about what exactly it is that helps people to reach this state of flow. It may be familiarity with the words used, or the style of worship, or the charisma of the particular leader. All of these questions need to be addressed within this concept of flow.

One element of people's enjoyment may have little to do with flow. Reed points out that people follow a religious behaviour pattern, that is when they meet regularly for corporate activity, they 'become attached . . . to one another' (Reed, 1978, p.51). Effectively people return because it is a part of their rhythm of life, they want to be with the group and may even get a boost from being there. This identity with the group may help to overcome some of the dissatisfaction felt in any particular act of worship. Comments like 'That wasn't so good today', or, 'I feel a bit out of sorts, I didn't get much out of it' do not indicate that the person will not return. Rather it shows that they are committed to being there regardless of whether each individual act of worship lifts them to a state of flow. It may take a long time before an individual feels such a sense of dissatisfaction with *the group* as a whole that they no longer want to come and worship.

#### 2.5.4 Church culture and the cultural shift in society

It is clear from the decline in numbers attending church that people are not coming back week after week. There is a need to determine what it is that keeps those who are there

in, and what it is that makes other people stay away. Part of the answer has already been seen in the examination of leisure time above<sup>4</sup>. Even so there is a question to be asked about whether people are simply ignoring Christ, or whether there is something about the church and its worship that puts them off. There is a sense in which society has moved on where the liturgy has lagged behind. Ruth Meyers in her article on 'Liturgy and Society' (Meyers, 1993) identifies the supposed 'cultural shift' of the late twentieth century as one of the main reasons to propose liturgical reform. This shift she sees in McLuhan's terms of a shift from the 'hot culture' of written and spoken word, which required little participation by the audience, to the 'cool culture' of electronic media which provides a low level of input and requires greater audience participation (op.cit., p.164). Thus she reckons that the new liturgies should rely more on spontaneity and a variety of media. There is still a problem in that while this shift may be taking place the older members of congregations, who largely have control of what occurs, are still effectively members of the old culture. They are 'the core of people who were attached to more traditional worship and symbols' (op.cit., p.169).

While it is difficult to speculate, it would also appear that the current rate of change in society means that even what is current now may not be around long enough for revised liturgies to make contact with the whole culture again. We live in a time of such change that trying to meet everybody's expectations and needs in worship may prove impossible. Having said this it also needs to be noted that modern liturgies are designed to be flexible, allowing the new forms to be 'adapted to the circumstances of the worshipping community' (op.cit., p.173). Even so we need to address the challenge of trying to exist as a 'worshipping community' where everyone can come together to worship. One of the problems associated with the revisions of the 1960s is that those liturgies were written for a particular point in time and for particular congregations. They were not easily usable by others and now look distinctly passé. The new liturgies are meant to be 'adapted to the circumstances of the worshipping community in a given time and place' (Meyers, 1993, p.173). However, it is still the case that the adaptations have to be within the proscribed limits, and it is the definition of the limits that will decide how widely the new liturgies gain acceptance.

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4 see above p.21

### 2.5.5 Flow and liturgical text

The difficulty in the case of this present study is in deciding how much the experience of flow is dependent upon the liturgical text. As flow relates primarily to the individual we would need to know how each individual felt in a worship service. Csikszentmihalyi says that 'to provide intrinsic rewards, an activity must be finely calibrated to a person's skills - including his physical, intellectual, emotional and social abilities' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p.100). Clearly to fine-tune a service of worship to the individual needs of 50 people would prove impossible. However it is partly the sense of structure that helps to induce a sense of flow. 'Enjoyment of activity seems to depend on whether its structure allows a person to match his skills with demands in the environment, to center his attention, to receive clear feedback, to be in control of his activities, and to lose self-consciousness. These structural characteristics produce a sense of elation, a feeling of creative achievement which, although typical of games, can be provided in any structured activity, including work' (op.cit., p.140).

This gives us a framework by which we can measure the success or otherwise of a worship service in providing flow experiences. The question of skills and demands is the first point made. Within a service of worship the average participant is expected to stand and sit at the appropriate points, find their way through a book or books of instructions and participatory sentences, sing in tune with others and listen carefully to what is being said from the front. There may be said responses to memorise for a short period of time, and there may be appropriate bodily responses to be made at certain points. The fact that this takes place in a large building with others all doing the same thing makes it slightly easier, but there is a certain barrier to be overcome before a new person can become sufficiently familiar with the ritual to participate fully. There is therefore a big question over whether someone who does not possess the appropriate skills could ever experience flow in a church service. A high degree of literacy is assumed, and a certain musical expertise. If these are lacking it is doubtful whether the person concerned could ever experience the degree of 'flow' that another might have. The second point is on centring the attention. The church service provides a ready focus for what is going on. Whether the attention is centred on the person leading, or the books being used, or even on God, there are certain factors involved which make it easier to achieve. Worship that takes place without a liturgical format tends to be focused more naturally on the Service Leader. There is thus a clear focal point, and

someone to relate to. The use of a book gives a clear focus in the book itself, one can concentrate on the words being said, they become familiar by repeated use, and thus help the worshipper to focus on the content. It is possible to say the words without consciously reading them. This may not be quite so bad as it sounds as far as flow is concerned. The fact that someone can participate in an activity while their mind is engaged at a deeper level is one of the prerequisites of flow. It is this aspect of losing self-consciousness that also characterises the Flow State. The matter of receiving clear feedback is provided for by the fact that everyone is doing the same thing. Hence, if you're doing the same as everyone else then you must be right. Similarly, in the case of books there is clear feedback by whether the words on the page match what everyone else is saying. There is also the fact that each person is in control of his or her own actions. There is no compulsion to do as everyone else does, and there is always the possibility of opting out, although in this case it is usually your own enjoyment rather than everyone else's which is impaired.

There is thus an obvious correlation with the concept of flow and what takes place in a worship service. But in just the same way that playing a game does not guarantee that one will experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p.37), so attending a worship service does not guarantee that one will experience flow, however the greatest enjoyment of worship is experienced when one reaches a state of flow. That being the case it is important for worship leaders to understand what will aid the people to experience flow, and to gain greater enjoyment from it. This begs the question whether we are meant to enjoy worship, but I take it for a given just now, and will examine the theological implications later.

## 2.6 Embodiment

Another aspect of flow that needs to be considered is that of embodiment. In his book, Studies in Pastoral Theology and Social Anthropology, (Davies, 1990) Douglas Davies highlights the importance of the human body in our self-understanding. 'People conceive of themselves as embodied individuals' (Davies, 1990, p.19) and we need to look at the entire notion of reality in which one embodied person encounters other similar persons. An individual has 'awareness of himself as a complex creature possessed of a mystery within himself just as he is set as a creature within a mystery in his own relation to God' (op.cit., p.21). For Davies then the 'pastoral task' is to 'allow the individual to know

this context of mystery in which he is truly set' (loc.cit.). The very fact of our having a body, and worshipping one who is without a body is part of the mystery of worship. But it also means that we can expect to use our bodies in our worship of God. We will want to engage not just our minds, but our emotions, and our physical selves in approaching the Creator. This aspect of being as created before our creator naturally puts everyone onto the same footing. Davies points out that this is the way many clergy view their relationships with other people, rather than as professional to clients. While this may be true for the clergy's self-perception, I wonder if it necessarily holds true for the people's perception of the clergy. There is still a tendency to see the minister as 'in charge' during worship, although this may be quite simply a practical view, recognising the pastor as being a 'central figure in the more public symbolic and ritual life of people' (op.cit., p.22).

Western Protestant Christianity has largely ignored the 'whole body' approach to worship. This tends more towards the use of language alone for expressing its worship, as Davies points out (loc.cit.). The word based approach that gives us the sermon, Bible Study and didactic instruction as the most essential elements of Christian life also denigrates the aspect of 'ritual' in worship, and discourages a spirituality which feeds on 'symbolic expressions of faith' (loc.cit.). I will turn shortly to an examination of the role of symbol, but for now it is sufficient to see that the symbolic relies more on the use of our senses and emotions, and so is concerned with embodiment. One reason that they may have been ignored is that while they engage directly they do not always lead anywhere, as Davies says, 'aspects of embodiment are ends in and of themselves and this is especially true in worship' (op.cit., p.24).

#### 2.6.1 Music and embodiment

Music may also be an element of embodiment. Anthony Storr, in his work Music and the Mind (Storr, 1992), reckons that 'music brings about similar physical responses in different people at the same time' which is why 'it is able to draw groups together and create a sense of unity' (Storr, 1992, p.24). Both the act of making music and the act of listening to music involve physical response. There may be 'emotional arousal' (op.cit., p.26), although an individual's emotional responses may vary with their mood (op.cit., p.27). There is also a physical arousal indicated by movement of the body: the head nodding, feet tapping, body swaying, or joining in vocalising. 'Motion and emotion are

inseparably linked' (op.cit., p.184). The movement of the body coincides with the rhythm of the music. It effectively links with repetitive physical actions that are predominantly rhythmic, such as breathing, walking, the heartbeat and sexual intercourse (op.cit., p.33).

Music may draw people together, but it does not necessarily therefore have the same effect on everyone. 'To some extent a listener's response to a particular piece of music is governed by his subjective state of mind at the time; and some part of his experience is likely to be derived from the projection of his own emotions rather than being solely a direct consequence of the music' (op.cit., p.70). Storr takes issue with Cooke over the idea that music may communicate emotions: 'the emotional effects of music are more dependent upon context, less upon purely musical devices' (op.cit., p.73). This has bearing on our understanding of the place of music in church. The emotional responses to music seem to vary, not only according to the individual's mood, but also according to context. It would not therefore be too far wrong to say that playing a piece of music in church may change its reception *because of the context it is placed in*. The use of 'secular' tunes for many traditional hymns shows how the use of a good piece of music was utilised for church worship. Much of the music used in church is used to accompany text, and to that end most of the text it accompanies is also rhythmic poetry. This acts both as an aid to memory, and as a way of giving the words deeper meaning by their association with a piece of music.

The association of words and music has the potential to be both emotionally enriching and to be damaging to the mood in an act of worship. Particular groups may attach certain tunes to certain texts in such a way that singing a hymn to the 'wrong' tune can seriously affect the emotional response. It may not even be anything to do with the key the tune is set in, only that it is not the 'right' tune. This becomes a particular problem when different denominations, or even groups from different countries, meet together and discover that they do not have a tune in common for the hymn they want to sing.

Within the last forty years or so many 'new' songs have emerged in the church, using different forms to the hymn form. This raises a question over why there is such a love of the hymn as a musical/poetical form. It may be that the rhythmic style lends itself particularly well to singing texts, but the newer 'choruses' are often very singable too.

The difference is that the words and tune are often inextricably linked as they are written for the particular words, and do not necessarily follow a commonly recognised meter. Another complaint would be that many of the choruses do not have the same depth of theology as the older hymns. To be fair it is not all the old hymns that have good theology, nor do all the new ones necessarily contain poor theology. Most hymns and songs are subjected to the 'trial by singing' which eventually roots out the poorer examples by lack of popular use. Of course it is not that popularity proves the theology, but rather that time will tell on all sorts of counts. Storr concludes one chapter of his book with the words 'great music . . . is both personal and beyond the personal' (Storr, 1992, p.188), the same could be said of great hymns and songs. When the music and the text come together with the emotions and moods of the people then we will experience 'flow' in worship, for nothing unites in quite the same way, as singing together is able to do.

When people come together for the Eucharist 'somatically there is the knowledge that the power of emotion and the significance of awareness is rooted in shared *behaviour*, not least in the acts of *speaking and singing together*' (op.cit., p.25 my emphasis). The very act of meeting together to say the same words and sing the same songs together is an expression of community. The Eucharist also contains one of the most powerful symbols of embodiment in that the participants ingest 'the sacramental body' (loc.cit.). It is here that 'the human embodiment of the believer meets the symbolic embodiment of God' (loc.cit.).

An important element in embodiment is that of symbol. I will investigate this more fully in the following chapter, here I want to look at symbol from a sociological perspective.

## 2.7 Symbol

Davies notes that Sperber argues that 'symbols are not learned in the way in which propositionally based knowledge is learned', rather 'it is perpetually integrated into one single system within an individual'. So, Davies concludes, 'the religious symbolism of people consists in a cumulative set of mood-memories which lie at the heart of that persons religious identity' (Davies, 1990, p.23). People thus come with all the symbol associations they bring with them. This means that 'symbols cannot simply be matched with a meaning. Symbols are not signs and cannot be paired with interpretations'

(loc.cit.). There is, therefore, no underlying 'universal language' in symbols. Symbolic meaning is separate from intellectual assent to doctrines, so eating and drinking at Eucharist ought to be allowed from an earlier age. If, argues Davies, a 'message of God's love and acceptance' is meant to be the goal, then the medium should convey that message of welcome and not exclude many of those present. This is an area where it could be said that theology dominates over sociology in the Church of England tradition.

According to Davies, contemporary Christians pay little attention to phases of growth. 'As far as the pastor is concerned each individual needs to be encouraged to move from era to era with an accompanying maturing of symbolic structures' (op.cit., p.24). The current position of only admitting teenagers to Holy Communion suggests that 'real religion' begins here, but children are developing symbolic knowledge far earlier than they acquire intellectual knowledge. 'It is important that the child should be free to grow its own symbolic meaning in and through eating and drinking sacred things' (loc.cit.). My experience with my own children would indicate that they do attain this symbolic perspective much earlier than they are given credit for. When participating in a Christian version of a Passover Seder meal in the home they are aware that the eating of matzo and drinking of wine are symbols of Jesus body and blood. Even before they can articulate it there is the very fact of belonging and doing what everyone else is doing. If we are prepared to baptise children then the implication is that we also ought to include them in the symbolic 'meal' that we share in the Eucharist.

Davies also notes that the symbolic may have more meaning for some than an exegetical sermon. The sermon requires head-knowledge and the engagement of rational thought processes, while the symbols require physical engagement. These people may well 'find eucharistic liturgy to be a period in which their own mood-memory is open to reflect upon current life events within the context of that background fixity of liturgy' (Davies, 1990, p.24). The reason for this is that symbols connect with people at a deeper level. If we compare signs and symbols, the usual distinction is that signs are arbitrary in their nature, and could be replaced by other signs. One easily recognised example of this is the different words used in various languages for the same object. The word chosen to indicate that object is fairly arbitrary, and could be replaced by another word without too much difficulty. With a symbol, however, there often 'seems to be some link between

what is symbolized and the object acting as the symbol' (op.cit., p.26). Within this context he mentions the use of water to represent cleansing, 'the symbol', he says, 'is often said to participate in that which it represents' (loc.cit.). So, 'symbols are powerful because they elicit human imagination having first attracted human attention' (loc.cit.).

This link of symbol with the imagination indicates that people are going to see things differently from one another. The importance of symbol for Davies, following Sperber, is that it connects at the level of the imagination, and that each person is thus bringing all their prior associations to the particular occasion. In church services, then, each individual, although saying the same words and singing the same hymns will have 'some shade of varied opinion, some difference in mood' (op.cit., p.27). The use of symbols thus holds together people with widely divergent ranges of feelings and moods. There is a wide range of possibilities here and it may be that we need to help unlock those possibilities through our worship. That is why forming liturgy should never just be in the hands of one person. It is too easy for them to leave something out simply because it doesn't mean anything to them. There is also the danger of performing liturgy that has little meaning for the performer, but sensitivity to the needs of all those present should help to alleviate this. The leader *is* taking on a symbolic role for and on behalf of the people and will need to be alert to their needs and feelings. I shall return to this in the next section.

## 2.8 Performance

I now want to examine the concept of performance in greater detail. It can be said that the nature of liturgy is close to a performance. For instance, Flanagan, writes about 'the actor' and 'his audience' (Flanagan, 1991, p.32), and the 'liturgical performance' (Flanagan, 1991, p.33). This comes close to what Schechner is talking about in his book Performance Theory (London, 1988). There he uses Turner's concept of liminality to describe what goes on in a theatre performance. Some people might not be too happy with the idea of church as 'theatre', but it is another way of approaching the question of what sociologically is going on when people come to worship in church. Schechner sees several areas of public performance for human activities, particularly the realms of play, games, sports, theatre and ritual (Schechner 1988, p.6). So, even here, we find ritual linked in with the concept of theatre.

### 2.8.1 Schechner and Performance Theory

Among the qualities Schechner lists as belonging to these activities, is the concept of a special ordering of time (loc.cit.). Within the event there may be a certain number of steps to be taken which have to be completed in order for the performance to come to an end *however long it actually takes*. Thus the concept of time is suspended until everything is over. This he likens to what happens in revival meetings, but we might equally well apply it to any church service. The service is not over until all the procedures are over. No one would feel comfortable walking out before the minister had pronounced the blessing even if the service had taken far longer than usual. Some sections of the liturgy might have to be shortened here and there in order for the service to finish within the time normally allowed. However, there is still a certain structure which has to be followed, and the final hymn and blessing are almost a given in any church situation.

### 2.8.1 Limitations in Schechner's approach

There is a limit to Schechner's usefulness when considering the church, as he seems to have little understanding of Christianity, or of its role in society. His approach is that of one looking in from outside and finding it all rather strange. This brings us into the realm of belief versus verifiable fact. It is difficult to make claims that a sociologist would be prepared to agree to in this respect, but the spiritual dimension of life is essential to an understanding of Christianity as it is practised by its adherents.

Schechner's assessment of trance dancing is crucial in this respect. He likens trance dancing to the unscripted performances in 'black and pentacostal (sic.) churches' which have 'revivals, healings, chants and responses, talking in tongues, snake-handling, and the like' (Schechner, 1988, p.90). However his understanding of trance dancing demonstrates a lack of belief in the supernatural. He appears to be seeing all these activities as merely aspects of cultural identity, rather than aspects of an underlying spiritual reality. Thus, for Schechner, demon dances are just performances, as are phenomena associated with the Holy Spirit.

### 2.8.2 Contrasts to Schechner

Christian writers do not see this in the same way. David Burnett writes about primal and folk religion in his book Unearthly Powers (Eastbourne, Monarch, 1988). In it he points out the dangers inherent in spirit possession: 'these rituals cannot just be regarded as

interesting cultural ceremonies. Possession contradicts the very dignity of humankind as created by God' (Burnett, 1988, p.173). The intention of the performers is crucial to our understanding of what is going on. Demon possession usually involves an individual allowing or seeking to be possessed for a short duration of time during a trance or some rhythmic action. Christians expect the Holy Spirit to be in the Christian community as a whole, and for that presence to be experienced continually, even though at certain times there may be a heightened awareness of God's power at work in the gatherings of the Church.

Similarly, when dealing with the theatre, Schechner sees the rise of theatre in the late medieval period as coinciding with the decline of church services (Schechner, 1988, p.123). This, however, is in the very period when Cranmer was writing the liturgies that would come to form the backbone of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. He also ignores the fact that theatre has been around from very early on, and that the church and theatre coexisted within the Roman Empire.

### 2.8.3 Drama producing change

Schechner's assessment of what goes on in aesthetic drama is more useful. Here he notes that it is the audience that is moved to change as a result of the performance, while the actors are required to begin at the same point each night and to produce the same results each time. This is not the only category of performance that he sees though. Schechner mentions two others and supposes there may be more. In ritual, he says, it is the subject of the ceremony who is transformed, while in social drama all those involved undergo change.

This is where the regular weekly church service fits in. There is a sense in which all those who participate are meant to change. The weekly 'performance' largely consists of the same 'performer' and the same 'audience' doing much the same thing every time. The change, if any, is internalised. Yet the average church congregation in the Church of England are not there to see a performance. This may be the case in Cathedrals where there is less participatory liturgy, but even there, there is a sense in which every worshipper is 'involved' in what goes on. It is involvement that is the key. Schechner writes of his own experiments with participatory audiences who aren't allowed to interrupt the 'flow' of the play, but who can move around and watch or join in. In many

ways this is similar to what goes on in church, it is a participatory performance, and while the script must be worked through from beginning to end there is movement and involvement. However the difference is that the 'audience participation' is itself scripted. The 'audience' are themselves an integral part of the 'performance'. Indeed, without the congregation no performance can take place since there is a minimum number required for any service of Holy Communion to occur. The rubrics at the end of the Communion in the Book of Common Prayer specifies a minimum of three persons besides the priest.

#### 2.8.4 Priest as facilitator or performer

This analysis contrasts with the current model of worship as being that of priest and people together participating in a common act of worship. Many people today would see the priest as a facilitator rather than a performer and it is here that the model begins to break down, particularly where the Church of England is concerned. Since the Reformation there has been a concern that the priest is not just there to 'offer the mass' on behalf of the people who sit meekly watching what goes on without even understanding the language used. Rather the priest is the 'President' who presides at the table, and who enables the people to meet with God.

Throughout the Anglican Church today there is a renewed emphasis on the ministry of all God's people. The current trend is to see the clergy as 'enablers and trainers of the ministry of others, rather than as the people who do all the ministry themselves' (David Sceats, 'Orders and Officers of the Church', in Celebrating the Anglican Way, Ian Bunting (ed.), London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996, p.197). This coincides with an emphasis on the importance of what goes on *outside* of the worship service. The Sunday service might best be described in this sense as a pick-me-up, giving strength and renewed commitment for the coming week. There are so many different elements at work here that it is hard to categorise at all.

#### 2.8.5 Performance and worship

It is at this point that Schechner's model of concentric circles, representing the various elements of a performance, may help us to understand what is going on in worship (Schechner, 1988, p.72). The centre circle is the drama itself - the act taking place. For the purpose of the church let us call this the Eucharist. The next circle is the script, that

which is translated and taught to others - in our case the liturgy. The third circle is the theatre, the specific performers, or in our case the particular church and Sunday. The outer circle is the performance, the events that happen on any given occasion.

Seen in this way the liturgy is only a small part of what makes up the whole performance. In looking at the use of text in worship we are concentrating on only one area amongst several. However, if we also take it that the central circle, the drama of what is taking place, is a given, then the other circles aim at making that take place to the best of our ability. If people are to meet with God In the Eucharist, if it is to become truly worship, then the other elements will need to be centred on that event in order to enable it to take place. The script itself, the liturgy in use, will need to have the end in view of people meeting with God at his table. It will need to facilitate this, whoever is reading, and in whatever manner the ceremony is performed, the words themselves will need to have value and to be able to draw worshippers into God's presence. Added to this is the place of the church setting, both the building and the particular worshippers. They will also need to be centred on the task at hand, namely the worship of God. They will need to appreciate and use the liturgy in such a way that it does justice to the purpose of the service. The building will need to be ordered in such a way as to facilitate the minister and the worshippers to accomplish this. Lastly the particular event will also need to be centred on the primary task of meeting with God. This may well mean that the leader has to be open to restructure and adapt the service in order to allow it to flow. This openness to change is essential if the particular needs and feelings of people are to be met. A wooden reading of the words or repetition of the text may fulfil the purpose of filling the time, but it will not allow people to truly meet with God.

#### 2.8.5.1 Liturgy and performance

How this is to be accomplished is not clear. Flanagan seeks to show that sociologically the liturgical act is ambiguous (Flanagan, 1991, p.36). It is difficult to find out exactly what 'works' for any given person. He seeks to show that liturgy is all to do with the performance, and as such it is involved in the area of 'doing', not of 'knowing' (op.cit., p.34). This contrasts sharply with Schechner. He sees a certain amount of complicity between the 'performer' and those involved as being essential to the act of worship. Flanagan however is preoccupied with *rite*. Thus he criticises recent liturgical revision for making certain 'social assumptions' and for seeking to make worship culturally

relevant (op.cit., p.34). Flanagan asks some searching questions about what was going on in the liturgical renewal of the Roman Catholic Church: 'What were the cultural assumptions used by liturgists?' 'How sociologically adequate were these?' (op.cit., p.42). These questions seem to apply not just to the renewal of the Roman liturgies but to all recent liturgical revision in the major denominations, most of which has been working along very similar lines.

Flanagan's position seems to me to be overly pessimistic. While he argues that liturgists have not understood sociology, I think it would be fair to say that he has not fully understood what is going on in liturgy. He seems to see liturgy as a performance where the principal actor is to lift the audience up to an encounter with the holy and unknowable. I would question whether the only way of viewing liturgy is as an *actor* performing for his audience. Other possibilities immediately spring to mind. There is the model of the priest as a *focus* for what is essentially a group action of worship. The priest is only saying what the whole community would say. The priest is then a symbol for the community of their relationship with God. There is the model of priest as *mediator*. In this model the priest acts as a go-between, mediating between the people and God. It is the kind of model that we see in the Bible with Moses and the people of Israel in the wilderness. A better model might be to see the priest as the *facilitator* of the people's worship. This model relies heavily upon the notion of a 'ministerial' priesthood, that is the priest as a servant, which has engaged much modern thinking on the nature and role of the prime functionary in the local church. These different models bring with them different expectations of what will happen in a service of worship. If priests see themselves primarily as facilitators of the people's worship then their expectations will clash with the worshippers who are going to view a performance but who do not want real engagement.

It appears that part of the problem with Flanagan's analysis is that he does not go far enough back into history. He starts with what he sees as the status quo being upset by modern renewal, and fails to look back far enough to see that rather than innovation much modern liturgical practice is seeking to recover what was lost from the early liturgies of the Christian church. The 'need to incorporate the laity' (Flanagan, 1991, p.46) is not just a 'Modernist' or 'Reformation' approach but was there in the text of

Acts 2:46 and 4:31<sup>5</sup>. It would also seem that Flanagan behaves in much the same way as many others who simply do not like the new services, by denigrating any changes as due to 'imperfect sociological understanding' (op.cit., p.52). His whole attitude smacks of the feeling that 'it's not the Church I grew up in'. While this may need to be taken into account by those planning worship, it is also a fundamental error to assume that one person's love of spectacle and show, which produces a nice feeling that they are witnessing something special, takes precedent over others, who may gain from a more participatory service. Flanagan's analysis depends upon what *he* thinks is aesthetic and emotional. A sociologist should be taking into account the different feelings of *all* those present, and while Flanagan may represent a certain group of people within the church, I doubt that it is the majority view. In choosing to depict liturgy in this particular way he has failed to appreciate the endeavours of others with different experiences. There is a cautionary lesson to be learned from this, I suspect that many priests also need to find out what experiences people have of worship within their churches. It is not necessary to always go with the majority view, but it certainly helps to deepen our own worship by listening to and engaging with others who may have a different perspective.

#### 2.8.5.2 The importance of a script in liturgy

The degree of participation that is expected in a service also needs addressing. For Flanagan the words would not even need to be audible or in a language understood by the people (op.cit., p.53 - quotation from Casel). This is the situation that Cranmer sought to combat by the use of the vernacular as he felt that the words *were* important. The Book of Common Prayer was to be the norm for three centuries of English worship. The script was provided with varying degrees of participation. There are words which can be spoken only by the priest such as the Absolution and the Words of Consecration; there are words which are spoken by the priest on behalf of all those present, such as the Prayers for the Church Militant, and there are words which are said by all the people together, such as the Lord's Prayer. The fact that these words were all written down allows one to check that the correct words are being used, although it is harder to regulate the *way* in which they are said. The use of a single Prayer Book also brought uniformity to the worship of the Church of England. It was now possible to enter any

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<sup>5</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (Acts 2:46 NIV). After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:31 NIV).

Anglican church in the land and find the same words being said in the same order as in any other church. Until the use of hymnody became widespread there was very little variation available in the services.

The use of a script also makes it much easier to see what is going on in the services. Even though the new liturgies allow for much more variation, it is usually variation within prescribed boundaries. There are few places where the priest can extemporise, the main variation that is allowed is the choice of text from the available alternatives. Thus the shape of the service is ensured and it is quite possible to analyse what is going on sociologically and theologically. I will attempt an analysis of some recent texts in chapter four.

The texts are not the only thing to affect performance, however, there is still the layout of the worship space and the dress and actions of the 'players'. These could both be considered under the term of 'symbol'.

## 2.9 Worship space

One of the continuing problems facing many churches today is that while the *words* of the liturgy have changed the *setting* of the liturgy has not. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer made some regulations about where the table was to be placed, and the position of the priest. The new liturgies do not specify nearly so much. This is probably because there is an implicit understanding that the liturgies have to be used in a variety of places. This is rather defeating the purpose though, since liturgy *is* tied to place, as I will seek to show now. When a text does not take into account *where* it will be used, then there is a corresponding failure to engage fully with the purpose for which the text is offered. All texts are changed when they are used in different settings. The Church of England has been trying to find common texts to unite people while ignoring the fact that the text itself is affected dramatically by the location in which it is used. One problem with the new liturgies is that they can not always be used in the kind of setting which would allow them their full effect. We are saddled with old buildings that were designed for worship as it was practised in the past. Most of those buildings have also been drastically altered since they were built. The addition of pews is one of the major factors affecting worship, and yet everyone now sees them as part of the tradition. Among other 'recent' innovations are the pipe organ, rood screens, and, if we look at what was envisaged in

the Prayer Book, the 'east-end altar'. This is what Harold Turner has called the 'dead hand of the past' crippling and distorting current efforts towards a more truly Christian liturgy and life (Harold Turner 1979, p.326). According to Turner the architecture and layout of the building confuse people if old buildings are used for modern worship. John Bell of the Iona community concurs with this. In a talk at Cranmer Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1999 he judged that forty percent of the liturgical problems of the church are due to architecture.

There are three issues which need addressing, whether a building is needed or not, what layout is required, and the relationship of place and community.

### 2.9.1 Is a building required?

Harold Turner states that 'churches are not really essential to Christianity' (H Turner, 1979, p.323). That is, the building is not a requirement for Christian fellowship. The 'church' in 'The Acts of the Apostles' met in the temple courts, and in private homes (Acts 2:46). A further instance is given of the church meeting by a river (Acts 16:13f). There is an ideal held by some parts of the church that says that the worship itself is the cathedral (H Turner, 1979, p.324). This is shown in such choruses as 'Jesus we enthrone you' (No. 131, Mission Praise, 1983, Basingstoke, Marshall Morgan & Scott) with the line 'and as we worship build a throne'. In this line of thinking it is essentially the *community* of Christians that is more important. Most people would agree that it is the body of Christians meeting together that is called the 'church'. The name only came to be applied to the building they meet in at a later date. The idea that the building then became a 'special place' naturally followed. In Britain and other parts of Europe this may have had as much to do with the type of place chosen to build a church. Many of the original buildings were built on the sites of pagan shrines or temples and so the association would be naturally in the minds of the people that the church building was similarly such a special place. The tradition of the church consecrating ground for building strikes a similar note, although Wesley and others condemned this practice as 'flatly superstitious' (H Turner, 1979, p.321).

There may be a sense in which a building can be considered 'holy'. The very fact of its use for one particular purpose, or even being built with the purpose of worship in mind, does set it apart *in people's minds* as being special. It becomes 'more-than-ordinary'

(op.cit., p.327). In this sense it does not matter whether it is 'consecrated' or not, as its use sets it apart as something holy. The difference between these two positions is enormous. On the one hand we have the 'divine presence residing in places...upon which people are dependent'. On the other, the divine presence is 'located in the community itself with the place of worship dependent for its measure of holiness on the life of this community' (H Turner, op.cit., p.328). I think that it is without doubt that these two positions are both held by members of the Church of England today. For some the building is an essential part of their worship, for others it is the community. It is often felt that the only 'proper' worship takes place in church, with 'house groups' a poor relation. It is possible to see a correlation between these two opinions and the view of liturgy that is held. Those who see the divine presence as resting in a special building will also look for the liturgy to be performed correctly. On the other hand, those who see holiness located in the community are more willing to explore new forms of liturgy especially those that emphasise the nature of the church as community.

Ultimately the use of a building is for 'practical necessity' (H Turner, op.cit. p.325). This follows the realisation that the church must meet *somewhere*. It is all very well to have high ideals about community as church, but the reality is that if you want to meet together in a large group then you need a space big enough to do so.

### 2.9.2 The style of building

It is too easy for sociologists to stop at the notion of a 'sacred place' and to go no further in their investigation of its *effect* upon the worship carried out there. Rappaport, for example, mentions the 'continued existence of the 1,000-year-old cathedral' as demonstrating 'the endurance of a liturgical order' (Rappaport, 1999, p.144), and notes that 'the characteristics of many (ritual places) would deeply affect the consciousness of those inside them' (op.cit., p.257). But this is almost the limit of the discussion concerning place. While the building may be ancient, in the case of Christian cathedrals, what is inside them has changed considerably over the years. The bare stone walls that we see now would have at one time been painted in bright colours. The interior decoration has changed over time with the addition of pews, and maybe their removal again in favour of more contemporary seating. Chapels may have been added, the arrangement of furnishings changed and organs built. In short, the building may look and feel very different to how it was in the past.

There have been a variety of standard patterns in church building. Rappaport mentions the cruciform design (op.cit., p.258), and the older basilica style is well known. Harold Turner questions whether the development of having a central table on a platform with a cross either on the table or on the wall behind together with a pulpit to one side is really expressing the essence of what the church is about (H Turner 1979, pp.316-317). This arrangement stresses the Communion as central and marginalises the reading of the Word. He thinks it would be better to have a central aisle with seats facing into the aisle and a table in the centre, with a pulpit at one end and a font at the other. This would keep baptism central to the congregation (op.cit., p.320). This essentially highlights the problems of using old buildings for modern worship. The building may not be conducive to the kind of worship that people want to experience. The development of new texts for worship has not helped this problem. Little attention has been paid to *where* the texts will be used, yet the building profoundly affects what goes on in it.

### 2.9.3 Place and Community

'The *domus ecclesiae* always has to struggle against the tendency found throughout the liturgical life of the church whereby the building, the rites, the music, the art all claim an autonomous existence as cultural products in their own right, to be appreciated primarily by aesthetic or other canons rather than by their service of the worshipping and witnessing community' (op.cit., p.332). Turner shows that this problem may be compounded by the way the building is regarded by the community in which it is set. There will still be people who regard the *domus ecclesiae* as the *domus dei*, the house of the church community as the house of God. This creates a tension between the view that the divine presence rests in a particular place, and that of the divine presence located in the community itself, with the place of worship dependent for its measure of holiness, upon the life of the community (H Turner 1979, p.328). The latter may be how the congregation understand the role of the building, but in the popular mind the former is more prevalent. The building ideally will 'encourage the sense of community by bringing people into visual and auditory relationship with one another and with the minister, and assisting their participation in all the action of the liturgy' (op.cit., p.344).

The style of building may assist or hinder this building of community. While there may be a reluctance to promote changes in the layout of a familiar building the question still

needs to be addressed as to whether the style of building is the one best suited to the needs of the worshippers.

## 2.10 The role of the leader

One other area needs to be addressed from the perspective of sociology, and that is the position of ordained leadership within the church. If the building in which liturgical worship takes place can affect the sense of worship for each individual, then the leader can affect it even more profoundly. Bruce Reed in his book The Dynamics of Religion (1978, London, Darton Longman Todd) sees a maintaining of the distinctions of various roles as essential to the proper running of the local church. Because churches are basically voluntary societies the role of leader is of vital importance (Reed, 1978, pp.165-166). He advises against understanding the role of a church leader in the same way as a manager (op.cit., p.165). There is a particular dynamic involved between priest and people which will affect the efficacy of the worship being offered. Reed sees the paramount skill of the priest as being 'aware of and sensitive to process whether consciously or unconsciously' and the need 'to be able to work with people in the dependent condition' (op.cit., p.170). For Reed this dependence is of immense importance. The priest, or presbyter, needs to know how to manage the sense of dependence that people project onto him or her.

This role for the priest is being consistently undermined in British and United States' culture. It is now seen as undesirable to be dependent. Sin and guilt are dealt with by therapists rather than by 'christian forgiveness and regeneration' (op.cit., p.174). Reed sees this as leading to an undermining of the role of priest and consequent confusion over what that role is. Further confusion is created, in Reed's view, by 'Lay participation in the liturgy' (op. it. p.175). This undermines the leadership role which is needed to help people 'deal with their dependent condition in a functional way' (op.cit., p.177). The priest's own understanding of his or her role will deeply affect the way worship is perceived and participated in by the worshippers. Reed's proposals lead to the conclusion that worship will be at its best when the priest has a clear role. There must be a high degree of self-understanding, and an ability to assist people to manage their anxieties concerning the world. The priest uses 'symbolic activity' to 'evoke fantasies which bring the congregation into a sense of wholeness', and enables church members 'to feel integrated with the surrounding locality' and to feel 'responsible for it' (op.cit., p.179).

The symbolic activity in which the priest engages is itself governed by the official texts which are to be used. The understanding of those texts and of what goes on in worship is of great importance. I turn next to an examination of the theological understanding of ritual performance.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

### 3.1 Symbol in Theology

I have examined how sociologists view the worship event in relation to church communities, now it is time to turn our attention to what, if anything, the theologians have to add to this understanding that is not itself simply sociology masked as theology. One of the key areas for this understanding is the theology of symbol and it is here that theology touches sociological understandings and develops them further into an aspect of faith.

#### 3.1.1 The use of symbol in the church

I want first to examine how the use of symbol emerged from within the church community. Roman Catholic writers have understood the church itself as a symbol of the Body of Christ. Werner Stark has made a comprehensive study of the Sociology of Religion, in which he investigates the meaning of symbol (The Sociology of Religion, Vol. V: Types of Religious Culture). The principles of the church community are made known through their dogma and ritual (Stark, 1972, p.76). The central ritual of the Mass is seen as 'a sacred drama' (op.cit. p.95). However, Stark sees a contrast between the original meal, and the rite practised today. There is a distance between them due to 'the contrast between an event symbolised, and a symbolic re-enacting of it' (op.cit., p.96). For Stark, then, the original, highly symbolic event, gives way to the ritual of today. The origin of this rite he sees not so much as a Passover, but a typical Jewish table blessing. In other words, Jesus in telling them to perpetuate this in breaking bread and sharing a cup of blessing, was telling them to do the one thing that they would carry on doing anyway! (op.cit. pp.102-111)

For Stark, the sacraments are essentially a symbolic link of a material object with a spiritual reality (op.cit. p.120). However, he sees some symbolic actions as being very similar to the sacraments without having the same effect. For example, he compares the use of water on the forehead from the stoup as one enters a Roman church with the use of water on the forehead by the priest in baptism. The two actions are similar, but the effects very different. Stark relates all this to a symbolic world view in which even the words of the Old Testament are taken rather more figuratively and symbolically. This kind of symbolism extends into such matters as the church building, which is seen as

symbolic of the Body of Christ. This is clear even from the fact that the same word 'church' is used both for the building and the gathered people of God. Stark shows some of the symbolism which has been attached to the style of the church building in the form of a cross, to the relevance of the door as symbolic of entering the Kingdom of God through Christ, through to the symbolism of building with bricks and mortar, as the living stones are built together with love (Stark, 1972, p.130).

Many of these symbols are, or were, useful means of teaching a fairly illiterate population the truths of the Bible, but it is not very convincing as a reason for continuing to use them today. Every building has to have a door to get in, most buildings are built with four walls, so these facts of buildings are less symbols of Christ so much as useful teaching aids.

### 3.1.2 Symbol and art

Stark's uncritical approach continues in his examination of the use of art in Roman churches. 'Art', he says, quoting Redlich, 'is capable of expressing those experiences from which knowledge remains excluded' (op.cit., p.135). He denigrates the Calvinist churches for keeping art out of their buildings, but nowhere does he critique the use of art in Roman churches. For him it is enough that it is there, this shows that the Roman church is the last repository of culture and no more needs to be said. However, it would have been more useful had he attempted to look at *why* the reformed churches were so wary of art. In one sense, it was a reaction, albeit an overreaction, to the excesses of Roman art. The gaudy and abundant artwork was felt to be almost idolatrous, and while much of it may be beautiful, not all of it can be said to be biblically correct. Often it is fanciful, and misleading, such as Stark's cited example (op.cit., p.139) of one of Michelangelo's paintings showing a still young-looking and chaste virgin with her 30 year old crucified son. Here, I think, art is overstepping the mark and is being used to reinforce teaching that is not to be found openly in the Bible.

### 3.1.3 Symbol in Roman Catholicism

Karl Rahner sets out the basis for the traditional Roman Catholic position on symbol in his analysis of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Volume 4 of Theological Investigations (Karl Rahner, 1996, Ch. 9). Here he shows how in Catholic thinking the symbol brings the present reality of the thing being symbolised. He bases this on his

understanding of the nature of God and the Trinity, which is seen in relationship. Thus the symbol 'renders present what is revealed' (Rahner, 1996, p.239), it is 'the reality in which *another* attains knowledge of a being' (op.cit., p.230, author's italics). Basing his argument firmly on Thomist thought, Rahner sees the symbol as taking on something of the nature of the thing symbolised, it is essentially a two-way process that is involved. In this way the Logos is the image, representation and presence of the Godhead (op.cit., p.237), and the Church is the 'symbolic function' of the Logos in the world (op.cit., p.240). The symbol and the thing symbolised 'have an intrinsic connexion by virtue of the nature of things' (op.cit., p.42). So the symbol does not merely point the way to the reality, but has in itself something of the reality of the thing symbolised.

This highlights one of the problems involved in the use of the word *symbol*. It is tempting to think that there is a distinct contrast between Protestant and Roman Catholic thought on this issue, with the Anglicans characteristically holding the middle ground. Unfortunately, the issues are not nearly so clear cut. The difference rather seems to come from a philosophical perspective, independent of the church tradition to which people belong.

#### 3.1.4 The link between the symbol and the thing symbolised

Tillich points out that 'every writer who uses the term "symbol" must explain his understanding of it' (Tillich, 1957, p.41). Tillich's own definition includes the notion that whereas a sign does *not* participate in the reality to which it points, a symbol, on the other hand, 'participates in that to which it points' (op.cit., p.42). But, he says, symbols cannot be produced intentionally, nor invented, although they can 'die because they can no longer produce response in the group where they originally found expression' (op.cit., p.43). Tillich thus places symbols within a close relationship with the thing being symbolised, but nevertheless it is not an incontrovertible one, and is dependent upon the association made by the people for whom it is a symbol.

Macquarrie picks up on this idea of participation, pointing out that it is different from saying that the symbol is a 'likeness' (Macquarrie, 1967, p.198). Macquarrie expands the notion of symbol, saying that the word is actually used 'to cover a whole range of possible relations between the symbol and the symbolizandum' (op.cit., p.200). Another problem that Macquarrie highlights is that the grammar of discourse is different.

He sees Roman Catholics as 'suspicious of symbolism' while holding strongly 'to a doctrine of analogy' (Macquarrie, 1967, p.215), while some 'Protestant theologians and philosophers of religion' had their 'conception of symbols...so far removed from what Catholic writers have meant by analogy that a conflict between the two points of view was inevitable (op.cit. ,p.216). Macquarrie's solution is to try and answer the underlying question 'What is the relation between the symbol...and that to which it is supposed to refer? (op.cit., p.216). There seems to be, he says, 'a whole range of symbols extending from those that have only a minimal relation to what they symbolize to those for which it is possible to claim an intrinsic relationship and affinity' (op.cit., p.217). In fact he prefers this word 'affinity' to describe the relationship of symbol and symbolised, since it 'has some advantages over both "likeness" and "participation"' (op.cit., p.220). The understanding of a symbol 'depends on the habits of mind of a given group of people' (op.cit., p.217).

This is very similar to the thinking of Isambert, who reckoned that a symbol has three aspects: 'as signifier it has a meaning and can be grasped by the mind, as a perceptible object it is part of the material universe; and to the extent that the connection between these two aspects is the result of a consensus, the symbol is a social fact' (quoted in A G Martimort, 1987, p.176). A symbol then has a meaning according to the agreement of the people using it as a symbol. It may have a natural link with the thing being symbolised, but even if not it has some degree of affinity, though this may be greater or lesser depending on individual circumstances. The symbols in use in the Church may have a close affinity with the symbolizand, or a lesser affinity, but what that is can only be defined by the way each symbol is perceived within the community using it. This concept may give us a way forward for the different understandings of the elements in the Communion Service if it could be agreed that there is affinity between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Jesus, but what that affinity is depends to a great extent upon the particular community using the symbols, and not to any inherent quality of the symbols themselves.

Rahner's use of relationship within the Godhead to justify his theology of symbol does not, to my mind, do justice to the relationship with other inanimate objects. To say that the Son is symbolising the Father is on a completely different level to the bread symbolising the body of Christ. On the one hand we have a relationship which is already

defined as we talk about God in Trinity, on the other we have the use of a relationship which has been given meaning by its use, but we cannot say that *all* bread symbolises the body of Christ. It is given this specific symbol within the context of the Eucharist, but even here it is arguable whether it takes on the nature of the thing symbolised simply by being designated as such. The problem is exactly that outlined above. Possibly the best answer comes from Richard Hooker 'whether with change or without alteration of the element such as they imagine we need not greatly to care nor inquire' (Hooker, Ecc. Pol. Book V, lxvii(6)). The important thing to establish is that a link exists between the symbol and what is symbolised, even if it cannot be fully explained.

JD Crichton picks this theme up in his paper for the Society for Liturgical Study in April 1980. He quotes Marsili as saying 'A symbol is a twofold reality of something that really exists on two levels' both are real, but 'the symbol never exhausts the meaning of what it symbolises' (Stevenson (ed.), 1980, p.28). So the symbol while still 'real' is both revealing and hiding the meaning of what it symbolises. This seems to be on a different level to what Rahner was talking about in his use of the word 'symbol'. Rahner wanted to recover the old way of doing things while Crichton sees the need to move on. For him, the Roman rite suffered badly from being 'over-symbolized' (op.cit., p.29). He goes on, 'Its shape and meaning was often obscured by a multitude of signs, gestures and secondary symbols of very varying value, and if they give the rite an air of mysticity (the passing of which some bitterly regret), they did nothing to point up the central mystery, the mystery of Christ, which the rite exists to celebrate' (loc.cit.).

Crichton goes on to show how far from the symbols being inherent from the start, many of those now seen as 'traditional' were picked up from pagan or pre-Christian culture (op.cit., pp.30-31). While noting this he also bewails the fact that in our industrialised society there are few symbols which we can borrow for use within liturgy (op.cit., p.33). However, he also challenges liturgists to 'look at the means that are now available to us, sound, light, colour, visual aids and movement, several of which can now be used precisely because modern technology has made them possible' (loc.cit.). His conclusions thus lead him to say that what we need is a recovery of the full value of the biblical symbols, for example using sweet smelling chrism so that its fragrance can be smelt by the people. In the area of gestures he reckons that we should discover what are the appropriate gestures and movements for people in this culture to express worshipful

sentiments, and for language he sees the biggest problem as being that 'we have forgotten, or never learnt, how to talk to God in language that is credible and acceptable to people of today' (Stevenson (ed.), 1980, p.35).

### 3.1.5 Liturgy and symbol

What he is talking about is nothing less than the reform of liturgy to incorporate many of these symbols into the new rites, rather than to concentrate just on words: 'It is ironical that in an age that is showing a need for symbols certain styles of celebration of the liturgy have turned it into a stream of verbiage' (op.cit., p.29). While recognising that he was not referring to the Alternative Service Book, it is possible he would have levelled this criticism at it. It is an area that is being addressed in the new Church of England liturgies, but I will leave a full analysis until the next chapter.

Anthony Boylan, in his paper 'Symbolism and Liturgical Formation', also shows that 'these traditional actions have been surrounded at different times and in different places with different prayers and ceremonies, which have expressed in different ways for peoples of different eras and different cultures the significance of these central and unalterable acts' (op.cit. p.7). His answer though is not to adapt the symbols for the modern culture, but to educate both celebrant and worshippers in the real meanings of the symbols used. 'If (*the leader of public worship*) has that familiarity with the medium of communication in which he is working and can use each element in such a way that it does contribute, he will be a far more confident celebrant and the celebration itself will be far more effective' (loc.cit.). He sees the idea of good liturgical celebration to be a constant cycle of better worship producing a deeper sense of community, which in turn produces better worship, and so on (op.cit., p.10).

### 3.1.6 Symbol in theology and sociology

Other Catholic writers have critiqued material from the social sciences and have applied this understanding to their discussion of the nature of 'symbol'. For example, Christopher Walsh, in another paper at this meeting, reviewed the approaches of Mary Douglas and Victor Turner. Looking at Mary Douglas' writing in Natural Symbols he faults her for her 'univocal, unhistorical and uncritical' view of the Church and its liturgy (Stevenson (ed.), 1980, p.20) and yet uses part of her analysis to say that recent

liturgical revision in the Roman Church has 'embraced and accelerated' the trend towards internalised religion and a rejection of 'magic' (op.cit., p.19).

Walsh finds similar problems with Turner, who he feels also lacks historical perspective (op.cit., p.24), yet he still finds some of his conclusions of use for liturgical revision. The concept of liminality coinciding with actual experiences of *communitas* he thinks particularly useful to think about. Walsh thinks that many of the current liturgies are 'rites with no passage' and that other instances of passage have no rites attached to them (op.cit., p.25). That this is true should lead us to ask whether all of the sociological findings on ritual are applicable to the Church. It would seem from this that there are limitations to the usefulness of a ritual approach to all worship. We need to be careful to avoid thinking that all services in the church should conform to the model. It is after all only a model constructed from observation of societies, and it might be better to construct new models when we look at what actually takes place in church worship rather than to adopt the ones derived from tribal societies.

Walsh in a sense agrees with this when he says that while liminality puts us in touch with the archaic realities of man, 'a language does not have to be dead, nor even Tudor, to be liminal and archaic in the true, radical sense' (op.cit., p.24). Alongside this he calls for a radical revision of the use of symbol in Roman worship, particularly the introduction of symbols of service, while recognising that 'genuine symbols, of course, cannot be invented, only discovered. But where they already exist, they can be built on' (op.cit., p.26).

Care is needed with Walsh's analysis of Turner, since he fails to take into account the difference that Turner saw between the *liminal* and *liminoid*<sup>6</sup>. The *liminal* has to do with the rites of passage in the primitive world, rites which were industrious and moved people from one status to another, while the *liminoid* has to do with the non-productive leisure world of today's industrialised nations. There is a change, and to say that today there are 'rites with no passage' is true, but it may reflect upon this distinction of what is *liminoid*. The culture has moved from a general recognition of Christian festivals to almost no recognition. It is difficult to build meaningful symbols for a people who have lost all sense of connection with the past.

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<sup>6</sup>see above p.20

Walsh's conclusions about the words we use are also useful:

'It is perfectly obvious that we have not yet found the right language for worship, symbolic language in the strong sense, language which is not just one-dimensional and representational, illustrating what we think we already know, but imaginative and creative, challenging decision, creating vision, giving a pattern for action, and affecting reality. . . Poetic language, symbolic language, whether English, Urdu, Geordie, or Scouse, does not need to be explained and exegeted, but must be allowed to communicate its own form of feeling and thirst for knowing; to mediate an experience for those present, not just to tell them about somebody else's' (Stevenson (ed.), 1980, p.26).

I will take up this matter of symbolic language shortly.<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.1.7 Reappraising the use of symbol in the church

Anthony Boylan presenting a paper at the same meeting said 'Words, in one sense, are symbols, but actions, gestures, objects, often speak louder than words. They are not as precise, nor as closely defined, but they can communicate much more powerfully, if they are only allowed to do so' (op.cit., p.14). He then goes on to call for a reappraisal of the use of symbol in the Church: 'The churches of the Reformed tradition abandoned many of these already diminished symbols and took refuge almost entirely in the printed word. After several centuries there is a recognition that this approach has its limitations and that non-verbal symbolism does have an important place' (op.cit., p.15). Therefore, 'we ought to concentrate now upon ensuring that the symbols used are truly effective, in that they move us to respond to the grace offered in the sacrament. . . we need to be ever more conscious of the importance of good visual symbolism and of its power to communicate ideas and feelings which often lie beyond the net of language and logic' (op.cit., p.16).

Walsh's conclusions on 'flow' are similar. Turner's view that the revised liturgies simply reflect cultural values and therefore have no 'root -metaphor' he sees as inadequate (Stevenson (ed.), 1980, p.24) because the reality is that there is simply a different 'root-metaphor' (and one which Turner along with Flanagan just doesn't like). Walsh

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<sup>7</sup> see page 60

sees room for improvement. He writes of only experiencing a few times himself something he would term 'flow' (op.cit., p.24), but thinks that there are exciting possibilities for the future of liturgy if the questions of 'balance between structure and anti-structure, form and freedom, rubric and spontaneity, ministry and participation' are addressed (op.cit., p.26).

Boylan, however, sees 'the test of a "successful" liturgy' not in 'the feeling of euphoria and well-being that comes from a happy balance of readings well read, songs well sung, prayers well said, etc., but the pastoral and missionary activity of the community which follows from its worship' (op.cit., p.10). So 'flow' for Boylan is less important than the resulting 'communitas', and what the community then does as a result. The end product of the liturgy is then not to be measured by a feeling of having experienced 'good' worship, but by whether people have met with the living God, and are living changed lives as a result. This leads him to say: '...we ought to concentrate now upon ensuring that the symbols used are truly effective, in that they move us to respond to the grace offered in the sacrament . . . we need to be ever more conscious of the importance of good visual symbolism and of its power to communicate ideas and feelings which often lie beyond the net of language and logic' (op.cit., p.16).

For the Roman Catholic Church then, the symbol is vested with the power of the thing symbolised and the correct use of symbol is to be recovered in the liturgy. This may involve education, but it will also involve creative approaches to finding modern symbols that can be used to convey adequately the meanings required. This seems to recognise already that symbols may have a natural life span and that modern symbols should be sought to convey the truths contained in the old symbols.

### 3.1.8 Symbol and text

All of the symbols that are used in liturgy have their meaning grounded by the accompanying use of text. Kevin Irwin addresses this in his chapter on Symbol (Irwin, 1994, p.128 ff.). A symbol can have many levels of meaning, such as water being used for washing; cleaning, or drowning in. You can't legislate what images will be in people's minds with the use of any given symbol, but you can, by the accompanying words, tether the symbol to one particular range of meanings (after Irwin, 1994, p.128).

The symbol will still need to be appropriate for the intended use, or there will be a discrepancy between the two that will say one thing but show another. For example, in baptism, dunking a person under the water would not 'fit' a washing motif as much as it would a dying and rising picture. So the texts can only be understood properly when appreciated within the light of their liturgical settings: 'the emphasis placed on liturgical *texts* as the chief meaning of the *lex orandi* in much liturgical writing in general . . . is appropriately contextualized and, in our opinion, only correctly understood when texts are appreciated in light of the way they are used in liturgical settings especially when they accompany the use of symbols' (op.cit., p.129). The symbol thus gains power by text joining with the context to an appropriate 'fit'.

### 3.1.9 Symbolic language

This seems to provide a parallel for the sociological understanding of symbol. Thus, text joining with context to provide an appropriate 'fit' corresponds to the theological language of word joining with element to produce a sacrament. It is therefore important to choose the correct words to fit the context in order to maximise the symbolic use. It is this 'fit' of word and symbol which will aid the liturgical 'flow' and allow active participation so that God can 'do something' in us. As Martimort says, 'Liturgical signs form a language that prolongs the words of the liturgy or lends them a greater intensity: the evocative power of signs makes it easier to understand the message, and on the other hand it gives more powerful expression to interior feelings and attitudes' (Martimort, 1987, p.174).

This 'fit' needs to be thought out carefully when texts are considered. A mismatch can seriously hinder the flow of the service, whereas an appropriate match will heighten it. For Martimort 'word and action together form a single sign; they are . . . form and matter' (op.cit., p.174). He goes on to say that 'the entire liturgy is made up of signs' (loc.cit.). The assembly itself, the priest, the time, the sacraments, all are a sign in this sense. This makes transferring symbols from nature, particularly those that are attached to particular times of year, peculiarly difficult to transfer to other cultures, especially if this is across hemispheres. For example, the light/dark imagery appropriate at Christmas in the Northern Hemisphere does not fit easily into the Christmas season in Australia. Other such examples abound. It is therefore important to consider carefully what words are going to be used in any particular cultural setting if the 'fit' is to be maintained. This

would agree with Sperber's comment that reasoning to do with symbols does not cross cultures, since each is different (Sperber, 1975, p.27).

The associations made need to be natural ones so as not to hinder the worship by an inappropriate match. A problem occurs here where the 'natural' symbols do not have the same associations universally, for example bread and wine. A question arises as to whether it is permissible to use other 'elements' which convey the same symbolic meaning. It might be further asked whether it is possible to find a correlating symbol in other cultures. Martimort quotes Isambert again: 'all things are not able to symbolize anything and everything, and some representations have a privileged capacity for serving as symbols' (Martimort, 1987, p.177). In other words there are some things which lend themselves to becoming symbols, and it is in the nature of symbols to have a strong 'fit' with the thing being symbolised. If this 'fit' is absent then the symbol loses its strength.

As an example it is sometimes suggested that the Eucharist could be celebrated with local staple foods. On a surface level it might appear easy to associate the Eucharistic symbols with other elements of eating and drinking from a different culture, say, honey and water and maize, potato and banana-cakes as common staples in East Africa. Tovey sets out a good case for these different elements to be used, based on the idea of analogy. 'The logic rests on an allegorical interpretation of the matter used in making the cakes' (Tovey, 1988, p.28). However, he shows that there are deeper levels of symbolism inherent in the bread and wine. For example, the colouring is suggestive of both flesh and blood. Furthermore, the 'dying and rising' which occur in the planting of seeds in the ground, and again in the manufacture of the products maps symbolically with the dying and rising of Christ which is symbolised in the sacrament.. When these are taken into account it becomes harder to find appropriate symbols from other cultures which would do the job as well. Even so, it has to be said that the symbolism of bread and wine is sometimes not as deep in those cultures where bread and wine are not normally used in daily life as it is in cultures where those foods are already known and used. Perhaps the most potent reason is that these are the signs that Jesus himself used, and that the bread and wine should therefore remain 'normative' (Martimort, 1987, p.177). Spinks concurs with this when he writes 'these Primary Symbols should remain unchanged' (Stevenson (ed.), 1981, p.30).

Again the form of the bread affects the symbolism. There are various options available for the bread to be used in the Sacrament. Some might choose ordinary bread, others unleavened, some might prefer it to be made like a cracker, or the Jewish matzo. Again, it is possible to have one large piece of bread from which each portion is broken off, or alternatively to provide individual wafers. Each of these considerations affects the symbolism and will bring more or less identification with any given member of the congregation.

Care needs to be taken in all these things to use symbols that are culturally appropriate to what is being symbolised. However, care needs to be taken not to go to the other extreme and to go along with every passing fad in the cause of becoming appropriate to the culture. Christians must be culture forming, and culture changing as well as culturally adaptable. Symbols play an important role in our increasingly urbanised society as they are able to help people grasp concepts more easily. This is especially so when the signs are 'elementary, primitive and unadorned' (Martimort, 1978, p.177).

It is always possible to educate people in the use and meaning of a particular sign or symbol, and this is partly achieved through the text accompanying them in the liturgy. However, we also need to avoid the opposite extreme of using liturgy in order to educate, as Stevenson warns us: 'the catechists and educationalists must not be allowed to take over, otherwise we shall all be going out of church asking ourselves "how much have we learnt this morning"'

### 3.1.10 Dominant and secondary images

Stephen Platten (Stevenson (ed.), 1981, pp.5-6) observes Farrer's note that 'the principal images act as canons of control upon the lesser images'. This sounds like Turner's concept of Dominant Symbols. The concept of a Dominant Symbol is that it governs the interpretation of the lesser symbols for any particular ritual. Within the range of meanings of a Dominant Symbol particular meanings 'may become paramount at different times' (V Turner, 1979, p.146). Unlike a 'sign' a Dominant Symbol is not 'fixed' in meaning, but it does govern the interpretation of other symbols used within the 'total symbolic system' (op.cit., p.145). Macquarrie differentiated analogues from symbols in the same way, saying that while analogues are 'self-interpreting, symbols need 're-interpretation and refurbishing' (Macquarrie, 1967, p.201). For Turner the

Dominant Symbol could be 'said to represent a crystallization of the flow pattern of the rituals over which it presides (V Turner, 1979, pp.145-146).

This means that we have to find some way of identifying the principal images. Platten assumes that the dominant image is, for example, Passover, and the lesser images are the cluster of symbols associated with the Passover. All of these lesser images are then controlled by the motif of freedom from slavery by the death of the firstborn sons of Egypt. This does tell us something about the way that symbols in a cluster control one another, but a problem arises if a primary symbol is adopted into another cluster as a secondary symbol. The problem, quite simply, is to know which is the dominant image. For example, the sprinkling of water is a *primary* symbol in baptism (although many nowadays would see sprinkling as a rather sparse use of the symbol), and has a *secondary* use when it is used for sprinkling the coffin at a funeral. The dominant image might be suggested by the water of baptism, but it is also possible that the death of a person becomes the dominant controlling motif. In the latter case water might be understood to be preparing the body for burial. The accompanying text will tell us what the liturgists *think* is the dominant image, but that may not equate with people's thoughts as they see and use the symbol. It is difficult to dictate a meaning, or even a dominant image, as that will depend for a large part on the individual's own previous experiences of the use of any given symbol.

Platten seems to find many of the biblical symbols unhelpful. The symbolism of Passover and Exodus celebrating 'the innocent deaths of many thousands' (Stevenson (ed.), 1981, p.15) being a case in point. Because of this he sees the Bible as only 'one quarry for Christian images' (loc.cit.) on the basis that there are many other sources for rich symbolism which do not have these associations. But it is questionable whether it is right to drop symbols because of certain people's sensibilities. On this basis we would need to drop the whole of the symbolism of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of God, and probably even the symbolism of the Eucharist as eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ. Platten argues that no symbol has 'a divine right to immortality' (Stevenson (ed.), 1981, p.7). This may be true, but it does not necessarily convey the right to change the symbols given to the church by God. While it would seem legitimate to find new secondary symbolism that has meaning within a specific culture, the primary images are the ones with which he has most problem.

#### 3.1.10.1 Symbol as visible word

In the same series of talks Brian Spinks shows that symbols are essentially a 'visible word' (op.cit., p.25). The sacraments thus combine both word and deed, similar to the prophetic 'word' (dabar) of the Old Testament. In this way the symbols, for example of bread and wine, 'not only declare, but help bring about, that which God wills' (loc. cit.). Spinks then identifies secondary symbols which draw attention to and explain primary symbols, for example the use of oil, or laying on of hands during baptism (op.cit., p.27). He then argues that it is only these secondary symbols which should be culturally adapted as they are the ones which are in danger of becoming obsolete or obscure, particularly when used in different cultures from the originating one. Spinks sees no call for abandoning the primary symbols, or for adapting them to different cultures, so bread and wine must remain whatever culture we are in, presumably even if those substances are unknown before the arrival of the church. His call for the primary symbols to speak for themselves and to be used fully, without being diluted agrees with the Roman Catholic authors we looked at earlier. So, he allows no sprinkling nor dedication, no communion in one kind, nor individual cups, only the full symbolism will do. While this may be preferable there can also be occasions when the symbols are not used in this way. This may be for a one-off occasion, or even for regular use, for example the Methodist Church's use of individual cups for the wine at communion, although this is largely due to non-alcoholic wine being used.

The secondary symbols are, however, part of the 'interpretation' and 'explanation' of the primary symbols, and so are open to being changed (op.cit., p.30). It is worth quoting Spinks in full here:

'The Church's duty in this matter is to consider the origin of these signs and gestures, and evaluate their present meaning; it should include a readiness to discard those ceremonies which are traditional but devoid of obvious meaning, and which point only to a cul-de-sac. It means questioning whether elevations, bells and censings are really expressing something about the eucharistic action, or whether they are merely a denominational or party badge. Again, do celebrating at the North Side, or putting a chasuble on only at the offertory, or wearing the academic gown, really symbolize anything of importance for the Gospel, or are they remnants of a mistaken or invented theology, and human

pride? . . . The Church's duty is to be ready to adapt its Secondary Symbolism in different cultures and at different times'. (Stevenson (ed.), 1981, p.31)

#### 3.1.10.2 Problems with the dominant/secondary analysis

Part of the problem with this is the reasoning behind only changing the secondary symbols. If Turner's use of the term 'dominant symbol' corresponds with that for Primary Symbol, then even these primary symbols should be semantically 'open' (V Turner, 1979, p.145). The secondary symbols then gain significance from their relation with the Primary Symbol. We have already seen that symbols may be affected by the community within which they are used, so it is only helpful to ask the sort of questions Spinks is asking on an individual basis, not for the Church as a whole. The problem with eliminating everything that does not have a 'meaning' is that there may be things going on under the surface of which we are not yet aware. However, we have already seen that symbols may die, and it is no bad thing if these questions are asked regularly, but it is debatable how far people are prepared to take it. The Order of Confirmation has been challenged as having no meaning, yet in some churches it is considered a Primary Symbol, and in others it is hardly recognised. There is a danger here that we either go too far or not far enough. There might be reluctance to change Primary symbols, but the possibility ought to remain open to do even that should it become necessary in order to continue the *meaning* behind the symbols on in a different form. There is also the fact that not knowing the symbolic value does not necessarily mean that there isn't any. The Roman Catholic Church has a much richer pool of symbolism on which to draw and it may be that we could recover the meanings for some of the Secondary symbols before they are lost to us.

A further problem is that while it is possible to see the necessity for cultural relevance it is not always possible for the church authorities to decide what *is* culturally relevant. A case in point might be the way drums were banned in East Africa by the missionaries. They saw them as connected with spirit worship, but didn't really dig any deeper, if they had allowed the Gospel to penetrate within the culture and allowed those within it to decide what was allowable, they might well still be using drums today. On the other hand there have been moves made in the past that we might want to undo. Throughout East Africa eighteenth century hymns are being sung to old English and German tunes, and the priests wear black cassocks with surplices. If you ask why they do this, the

answer comes back, 'because it is traditional'. If questioned more deeply about cultural relevance, they answer, 'But this is our culture'. For better or worse, many of our traditions are now part of the culture, and while purists may want to be rid of some of them, they are very difficult to legislate against. Even Cranmer in abolishing certain ceremonies had a battle on his hands with those who wanted to retain them. It might be better to say that they should be abolished only if acting *contrary* to the Gospel, or the primary symbols.

### 3.1.11 Embodiment

Douglas Davies brings the theme of embodiment into the discussion about symbols. He sees the theme of embodiment as 'focused on the consumption of sacred food in relation to the consummation of religious ideas' (Davies, 1983, p.30). He points out that Cranmer used figurative language concerning 'the body' and linked it with spiritual concepts using the basic root metaphor of *digestion*. He was able to write this even though Christ's body is in heaven. So the theology concerning Christ's body has not affected the liturgical use of the symbol. Rather, 'to call the bread 'body' is a vital part of the means whereby the spiritual reception of that supernatural body is possible through the physical eating of what bears the name of body' (op.cit., pp.30-31). Even so, the act of eating was often peripheral, 'Cranmer . . . was attempting to say something about what was going on in the believer in relation to the presence of Christ' (op.cit., p.34). The elements of bread and wine can be seen as 'symbols operating within the arena of human embodiment' (loc.cit.). It is the *eating* of these elements that is important, not just for the action, but for the ideas that are conveyed along with it. 'Each individual comes together with others bearing his and her own autobiography and mood-memory of piety . . . the broad sweep of religious ideas presented in modern liturgies allows the individual to focus on whatever aspect may appeal at that time' (op.cit., p.35). When they come together to eat they are satisfied not because 'full' but because they are eating 'symbols of Christ, of the love and acceptance of God' (loc.cit.).

On this reading the multiplicity of images used in modern liturgies are a help rather than a hindrance. Even so, it seems to me that there are often far too many images presented, which give conflicting views, it would surely be better to concentrate on one or two complementary images, than to have too many various pictures given to the symbols at

any one time. The other alternative would be to allow different text to be used on different occasions so that the whole wealth of biblical imagery was covered, but not in one service.

The use of symbols does not require advanced understanding before it is effective, there is a sense of identity in eating together and a significance of bread and wine shared that goes beyond mere understanding. The sense of exclusion felt by youngsters, coupled with the realisation after confirmation that there's nothing special to it after all, may easily account for the loss of the youth from church. For the point is there is nothing special about the bread and wine in human terms, but only in the symbolic use. The elements do not suddenly taste different or even seem different unless 'received in faith', and it is that whole area of symbolic awareness that has been denied children for so long. People are far more complex than theology allows for, argues Davies, and 'it may be that human beings have been viewed too simplistically in workaday theology' (Davies, 1983, p.37). Added to this is the fact that the Communion service is far more common now that it is seen as the usual Sunday service, and is used with greater frequency at the occasional services, and especially for initiation services. While this may be for the better in terms of what we think we are doing, the corresponding fact of excluding many people, and possibly even making the visitors to those occasional services extremely uncomfortable has been largely ignored.

Within the Eucharist there is a possible correlation between 'performative utterances', words which have significance because of their 'force', and performative 'acts', that is acts which have significance because of their 'force'. If this does apply to the Eucharist then the eating and drinking is more important than the words attached to them. It is the eating which gives force even to the utterance 'this is my body'. So the words may need to 'retain the reference to *eating* and to the mutuality between bread, body and the heart of the believer' (op.cit., p.39). This ties in with the notion that symbols are given direction by the accompanying words. In this respect the relative paucity of the Alternative Service Book's 'The body of Christ' can be easily seen when compared to the richer text 'take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving' (1552).

The words help give focus to the context of the meal, as the story of Jesus' life is rehearsed, albeit briefly. As we come with our own stories, we are linked liturgically both with Jesus and the generations of Christians who came before us, and who will come after us, by this very act of eating and drinking. As Davies says, 'through the rite, as an expression of human embodiment, the totality of awareness embracing emotion and sensation is aroused in the final act of eating and drinking' (Davies, 1983, p.40).

### 3.2 Communitas and Koinonia

I have examined the understanding of *communitas* from a sociological perspective<sup>8</sup>, now I would like to explore the nature of *communitas* when applied to a Christian community. According to Davies, van Gennep's original study saw 'a shift from one social status to another' (op.cit., p.41) taking place in rites of passage. In the in-between stage the participants in the rite were in the liminal phase where *communitas* could be experienced. 'Turner's argument presupposes societies which in ordinary and everyday life are not egalitarian but are hierarchically divided into statuses of ordered rank' (op.cit., p.42). It is only in the liminal phases that this 'hierarchy is abandoned' (loc.cit.).

Davies outlines the three types of *communitas* identified by Victor Turner as 'spontaneous *communitas*', such as is seen in the sudden bonding of a group; 'normative *communitas*', when some degree of control is needed in the group or organisation; and 'ideological *communitas*' which is seen in 'utopian' groups wanting to be rid of social barriers. Davies sees the Eucharistic liturgy as expressing normative *communitas*, especially in the rather formal symbol of the exchange of the peace. He comments that some people see this as breaking with formal ritualism and allowing a real heart to heart exchange. He feels that we should see the liturgy as expressing normative rather than spontaneous *communitas* as it keeps things at a 'more realistic level' (op.cit., p.43). He also comments that ideological *communitas* is being exhibited in groups holding the New Testament model as the ideal.

I wonder whether the sharing of the peace is not sometimes an attempt to make the outward show of group bonding when in reality the truth is far different. The sharing of

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8 See above, pp. 26-28

a sign of peace is an option in the service, and turning to greet total strangers may not really indicate that any experience of *communitas* is there.

Davies' comments on periods of intense social activity amongst a congregation are also perceptive. Here he sees common activity such as a houseparty or parish mission as producing a sense of *communitas* amongst members. But here again he takes it as read that people should return to their hierarchical state afterwards. *Communitas* in Turner's view is only to be applied to the liminal stages, and is a negation or reversal of the everyday order. I am not sure that this can be totally identified with the Christian idea of *koinonia* as Davies implies. He sees the Sunday worship, as commonly perceived, as occurring in leisure time, and therefore as a 'liminoid' activity. So *communitas* is only to be experienced in the liminoid group while it is together in worship. For the Christian though, this sense of *koinonia* is an expression in worship of the normative state. It is wrong to view it as a purely liminoid phenomenon, for the emphasis on Christ's presence, and the mutuality of the worshippers, is supposed to be carried out into the everyday world. This is exhibited by the words at the end of the service, 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord', and 'Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory'.

In this sense the ritual is asserting the *ideal* which anthropologically may never be realised. Thus the ideals are stated in order to foster particular behaviour. It does not matter that people may not be able to live up to the ideal. There is almost an assumption that you *know* you are not going to be able to live up to the high standard expected, but that does not make it any less important. The ideal state does exist. Theologically this is expressed in the perfection of Jesus. However, it remains for individuals to put the ideal into practice. An individual needs to bring the ideal into reality by striving to reach the high standard expressed in the liturgy.

The breakdown of social hierarchies is supposed to carry over into the everyday world too. This may often be tinged with a sense of realism, Paul expected slaves to continue as slaves, but there was to be a permanent difference in the way slave and master treated each other as Christians. It was not the intention that the barriers were only broken down for Sunday. Even though this may have been the common experience of British Christians in the hierarchies of the Middle Ages it does not automatically follow that this

applies universally. *Communitas* is supposed to arise from the common bond that already exists in daily life, not just to be experienced in a gathering of Christians in 'liminoid' time.

### 3.3 Music and word

There is another factor that helps to create a bond within the community and that is one of singing together. According to Gelineau the purpose of singing is 'to awake meaning and induce an attitude' (Gelineau, 1992, p.494). Music, then, by this definition, is bridging the gap between sociology and theology. On the one hand we have the *meaning* of the text made plainer, yet on the other we are producing an *attitude* in the worshippers. I want to examine each of these concepts in turn.

#### 3.3.1 Music and meaning

The assertion that the meaning of the text is somehow 'awakened' is an interesting one. It is obvious that 'most church music is written to accompany some liturgical text' (Williams, 1982, p.49), but it does not necessarily follow that the meaning of the text is enhanced thereby. There have been attempts to show that music in and of itself is a language and capable of meaning. Alan Merriam was able to categorise five uses of music, all of which had an element of communication, and ten functions, the first of which was 'emotional expression' (quoted by Edward Foley, 1984, p.6). Foley goes on to add that in his experience 'the essence of music is self-expression, and that music is fundamentally a form of communication' (op.cit., p.8). However, he does not think that music can be called a 'language' as the same piece of music can produce different feelings in different people (op.cit., p.9). There are no universally accepted meanings that go along with certain sounds. At best the meanings that are there are learned meanings. That is, we come to associate certain moods or feelings with certain pieces of music, but that does not necessarily mean that others will have the same feelings. The use of background music in films is an interesting case in point. It is not certain that musical sequences can evoke specific feelings within a given cultural context, it may be that those feelings are part of the learned response to those sounds within the specific culture of films and television. The context within which the music is played may well have an effect upon people's perception of it. It is interesting to think that many people now associate Ravel's *Bolero* with a particular scene in the film '10' involving Dudley Moore and Bo Derek. Similarly many other pieces of classical music have found their

way into films and television and the associations they produce may be entirely different to the feelings evoked in people who heard them first in concerts. My point is that the *association* of the music plays a large part in its interpretation. It is the same dynamic as when some members of a congregation may baulk over the singing of a hymn to the tune Austria because of the associations it raises with Hitler's regime. The use of the 'Dam Busters' theme has a similar effect when used to accompany a modern hymn.

### 3.3.2 Music and attitude

It is the lack of ability to give *specific* communication that makes Foley hesitate to call music a 'language'. Similarly care needs to be taken in saying that music evokes an *attitude* since, as I have shown, the mood produced by music is most likely to be that which has been learned by association. If one only hears funeral marches at a funeral then that style of music comes to be associated with death, and the memory will evoke the mood the next time it is played. As another example, one may easily find happy memories occurring when listening to the piece of music played for the bridal march at a wedding. Association runs deep. So, even the attitude that is produced may have more to do with prior conditioning than by the music played. As Gelineau says, 'music appeals to the emotions rather than to reason' (Gelineau, 1992, p.497). This is correct up to a point. Music does appeal to the emotions, but the particular emotional responses in any individual may not be the ones intended by either the composer or the person who selected the music to be used at a given occasion. So we can say that music *does* communicate, but what it communicates may not be what was intended.

### 3.3.3 The power of music

But here we come to the very heart of the usefulness of music. It is powerful precisely because it 'does not allow the human mind to fix on a single meaning' (Foley, 1984, p.16). The power of music lies in its *symbolic* nature. Its symbolism is not of a directly representational type however, but presentational. That is, it has a meaning of its own which is *untranslatable* (op.cit., p.15). Music operates in the sphere of the present moment, it surrounds a group and unites all those that hear it, situating them in the centre of the world as it envelops them (Foley, 1984, p.17). Because it operates primarily at the present moment, it is also capable of developing new associations, and therefore new meanings: 'though for the most part music communicates whatever emotion and/or idea one is programmed to associate with it, music also has an innate

ability to communicate its own “message”, or to affect its own response aside from the programmed or learned . . . though how it accomplishes this has not yet been satisfactorily explained (op.cit., p.17).

The conclusion reached thus far is that music is not able to give meaning, nor to induce a particular attitude in worshippers, contrary to the assertions of those writing about liturgical music. Roman Catholic writers, on the whole, assume that certain types of music and singing are ‘christian’ in a way that other forms of music are not. Gelineau writes, ‘All music can indeed be religious or sacred, but only that music is specifically Christian which articulates the Christian faith’. It has already been shown that music in and of itself is not able to articulate anything clearly. The only way for music to communicate in this way is in its association with a *text*. This coincides with the view expressed above that symbols are able to become specific only when accompanied by a text, that the text itself is able to ground the meaning of any given symbol. Here, too, music as a symbol needs text in order to ground it in any one meaning. The fact that a familiar piece of music played later will evoke memory of the words does not mean that the music itself is communicating those words but rather that it has gained by its association with the words. The same piece of music heard by someone who had not previously heard the text would not be moved in the same way. It is entirely possible that two individuals, who both know the words associated with the music, could be affected in different ways.

#### 3.3.4 The benefits of music in Church

This may lead us to question the benefit of singing parts of the liturgy or including sung hymns in the worship. However, Stark asserts that ‘when our spirits rise, we shall spontaneously heighten our voices and ultimately break into song’ (Stark, 1972, p.145). This phenomenon is certainly familiar, the popularity of songs in any language testifies to that. Singing as a collective activity is often indicative of group unity. The chants and songs of football supporters show how a group can relate its identity and gain cohesion by singing together. The same is true of any group singing: ‘many individual voices . . . can actually be fixed together, so that, when they blend and follow the same rhythm, only one voice is heard - that of the group. This brings out a very strong feeling of unity and belonging’ (Gelineau, 1992, p.495). It is also a medium of expression which at its most basic does not require any tools other than the human voice (Foley, 1984, p.21).

We also need to examine whether there is any music which can particularly be called 'sacred'. Stark asserts that 'strongly collectivistic churches, like the Catholic, will . . . have a particularly strongly developed bent for the development of ecclesiastical music' (Stark, 1972, p.146). Stark seems to want to keep secular and sacred music in two different camps. The problem with this is that many hymn tunes have developed from 'secular' sources. The Wesleys, for example, would set new words to familiar drinking song tunes so that the people would be familiar with the music. In this sense I would disagree with Gelineau's comment above that the only 'Christian' music is that which articulates the Christian faith. The reality of it is that music is mainly only 'Christian' by its association with Christian words, and in this sense it is possible to 'christianise' almost any piece of music by associating it with Christian words or images.

The value of music lies in its ability to heighten the experience of using text. According to Foley, 'Primitives have known that beautiful sounds convey feelings and thoughts more powerfully, more completely and more exactly than does any word' (Foley, 1984, p.22). We may want to add the rider that it is not only 'beautiful' music that does this, nor that everyone has the same idea of what 'beauty' is. It might be further added from the argument above that music achieves this best when it accompanies text, not when used on its own.

The other problem with this notion of 'beauty' is that it may lead to the proposition that we must have a choir in church in order to produce 'beautiful' music. This attitude removes the production of music from the people and gives it to the specialist. There is also the big question of what constitutes beauty. While some people may like the liturgy sung to a setting of Merbecke, others will be turned off by it. There is the very delicate question too of the 'old' and the 'new' in church music. Not everyone appreciates the use of older church music, and many do not appreciate the new choruses which have proliferated. There is a need to find the way forward. Gelineau helps to point the way: 'If Christian worship really is a symbolic activity in which an assembly expresses its faith, then it follows that any singing or music *must belong to the believing people as a whole*, and not remain the special preserve of a chosen few, be they clerics or musicians' (Gelineau, 1992, p.502, emphasis added). So it is the community which is *using* the music that should choose what is meaningful for it. In Gelineau's words, 'the language

and the musical form used to clothe (the rites) must be both practicable and meaningful for each different culture and for each given assembly' (loc.cit.).

This puts the burden upon the worship leaders in each congregation to get in touch with what people want and find meaningful. It is a given that you cannot please all the people all the time, but it should be possible for a congregation to own their worship by deciding together what form the music and liturgy will take. The problem facing many congregations today is that they are comprised of individuals rather than a genuine community. People need to be communicating with each other before they can worship together. It should not be just the organist, choirmaster or clergy that make all the decisions, but the assembly as a whole that addresses the issues of what music to use, and where.

This assumes a high degree of participation and agreement. It may therefore remain an ideal rather than a reality, but that does not diminish its importance. If music is really going to join us together as one body it cannot do it on its own. The singing of songs together will only continue to divide us if the co-operation and unity are not there to begin with, we will need to seek agreement particularly on our underlying concerns. The important thing to recognise is the nature of music as a symbol. It can assist in producing a mood to associate with a given text, but its associations will be different for different people. A large part of the value of music is built upon its association with mood-memories. It is therefore imperative to build usable music into the common worship of a congregation. But the value of music lies also in the part it plays within the whole area of human embodiment. It is not an isolated phenomenon, but one which is a building block within the total experience of worship. We cannot stand still, or simply exist in the past. New forms do need to be taken on board if we are to engage with the society around us, the nature of the church as a missionary organisation means that we need to exist not just for our members, but those who are going to become members. This approach will make us receptive to new ideas that will allow us to grow and not remain static. We can agree with Gelineau that 'the liturgy can also be open to new sources of sound, like electronic music. There is a place in worship for the unexpected. It is the whole man who must worship, not only with his mind, but with his voice, and even with his body too, with the rhythm of dance and instrument which prolongs his bodily activity' (Gelineau, 1992, p.507).

### 3.4 Conclusion

The use of symbol in the worship of the church is seen to relate closely to the text accompanying it. It is the text that gives rise to the theological understanding within which the symbol is given meaning. The liturgical text also expresses the ideal for Christian community which may not always be fully realised by a congregation, yet is held out to them as the ideal through the use of words designed to engender and encourage this community feeling. Music may well accompany texts to assist in drawing out moods and attitudes which are being expressed through the words. In all of these areas the text is of paramount importance as it concretises the theological understanding of what is going on in worship. It is to the actual texts in use that I now turn.

## CHAPTER FOUR: LITURGICAL TEXTS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

We have seen that the sociological understanding of what is going on in worship has to do with the way symbols are perceived, and that the theologians' understanding has to do with the way text interprets symbols. It remains to see what evidence there may be of explicit concern with sociological factors within some of the actual texts either in use, or proposed for use, in the Church of England.

### 4.1 The Peace

Modern services have restored certain practices such as the sharing of the peace, and invented others, such as the words accompanying the breaking of the bread, although these are closely modelled on words from the Bible. But their addition seems to mark a change that has taken place culturally in Britain. It is now felt necessary to *say* that we are one body, and to *share* the peace, with the words:

"The peace of the Lord be always with you", and the response: "And also with you".

The accompanying rubric allows that "all may now share a sign of peace" (Alternative Service Book 1980, p.129).

If we ask why this has been added here it would appear that the most obvious answer is that there is no outward appearance of this oneness that the church expects to find and so it compensates for its lack by declaring that this unity *is* there. This would seem to be underlined by Colin Buchanan's comment that the 'doctrinal thrust' (of Series 3 Revised) 'is to emphasize the unity of the worshippers in Christ' (Buchanan, 1979 (b), p.22). However, his wish that people might use the peace in an unembarrassed way has clearly not been realised in many parishes. He highlights the problem by mentioning that we need to get rid of the 'traditional pew' if this is to be fully realised. Again, it is a wish that has not come to fruition in many places.

#### 4.1.1 Ancient practice

The text in the Alternative Service Book reads: 'The peace of the Lord be always with you', with the response: 'and also with you' (The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.129). The argument put forward is that the kiss of peace is the ancient practice of the 'Church's members recognising each other as in Christ before coming to the meal' (Buchanan et al (eds.), 1980, p.137). This is based on such biblical texts as 2

Corinthians 13:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:26, besides the appeal to the early church's practice of 'the giving of the liturgical kiss of peace among the faithful before the Eucharist' (Dix, 1945, p.106). I want to investigate how far this can be called a re-establishing of ancient custom, and how far it is a modern invention, and whether we can see here the influence of sociology or theology upon the liturgy.

Ancient practice was for a 'kiss of peace as a sign of respect or friendship' (op.cit., p.107). Its use was only permitted once a person had 'received the Spirit' by confirmation (loc.cit.). Within the liturgy its place was initially before the offertory but later practice put it before the communion (op.cit., p.108). It was intended not to be 'a formality' (op.cit., p.105), but to assist reconciliation of Christians 'at variance with each other' (loc.cit.). The intention is thus really to ensure that the community is at one with each other; with the kiss based on a culturally appropriate sign of respect.

#### 4.1.2 Modern practice

The modern version is said to be 'not just a merry back-slap, but ...the Church's members recognising each other as *in Christ* before coming to the meal' (Buchanan et al, 1980, p.137 my emphasis). The accompanying texts offered as options within the Alternative Service Book do emphasise these aspects; 'He (Christ) has *reconciled* us to God', 'let us then pursue all that makes for peace and *builds up our common life*' (The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.128, section 30), but this does not tell us whether these words connect with what people are actually feeling, or whether they are telling them what they *ought* to be feeling. There is the possibility of a sense in which the words and actions may be simply a symbol of what *ought* to be taking place, that here the words are accompanying the actions for the purpose of making a theological point.

Much of the emphasis at this point must come down to actual *use* rather than what is said in the text or hinted at in the rubrics: 'all may exchange a *sign* of peace' (The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.129, my emphasis). If the rubric is followed then there is movement and engagement, the audience suddenly become participators, but there is a serious question as to whether the desired effect has been achieved. 'Flow' can only occur at this point if all are *willing* participants; the motive is good, but the sociological analysis may need some working at. The instructions only indicate that 'a sign' of the peace may be shared. However, what this sign is on a given occasion is

usually dictated by the leader, or by what is perceived as *traditional* behaviour within that congregation. It may not necessarily equate with what any given individual *feels* to be appropriate.

#### 4.1.2.1 How the Peace may be used

This was recognised by the compilers of the Commentary in Patterns for Worship (Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, 1995, pp.219-221). They give four short vignettes of the way churches use the Peace and a box giving guidelines for how they think it should be used. This includes 'time to get straight with God' and 'with other people', 'time to share with others something for prayer', or 'for praise', and 'time to greet people you do not know' (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.220). All of these suggestions it will be noted involve the use of 'time', presumably a fairly extended period of time, which is not something specifically intended by the rubric. In one of the vignettes it is suggested that the Peace could be used as a kind of interlude, a twenty-minute coffee break, allowing non-communicants to leave before the Eucharistic Prayer (op.cit., p.219). This breaks up the unity of the service, something the theologians and liturgists are not necessarily willing to do. However, sociologically it does mean that people who are put off by the idea of coming to a full service of Holy Communion every week are still able to attend without the commitment implied by reception. None of this is even hinted at in the rubrics, yet it is one feasible outworking of the mechanics of what 'sharing the peace' means. This indicates that it is the way liturgy is *used* that is more important than the words printed in the book for an understanding of what is going on during worship.

#### 4.2 Common Worship?

Let us examine further the way liturgy is expected to be used by the average Church of England congregation today.

The four marks of the content of the new material produced in the Alternative Service Book 1980 is said to be: 1, slenderness of mandatory material, 2, Flexibility, 3, Corporateness, and 4, Joyfulness (see Buchanan, 1979 (b), p.22). An examination of the text should indicate how far that has been achieved within the text itself, and how much has been left for the actual performance of the liturgy.

#### 4.2.1 Rite A Communion in the Alternative Service Book

Much of the text of The Alternative Service Book 1980 is optional. Even the mandatory parts are often given alternative optional texts to use, or the option to use 'other suitable words'. A quick glance at the Rite A Communion Service shows that the structure of necessary material is:

Greeting

Act of Penitence and Absolution

Collect of the Day

1 or 2 readings followed by

The Gospel

Sermon (on Sundays and Holy Days)

Nicene Creed

Intercessions and Thanksgivings

The Peace (though sharing the peace with others is optional)

Bread and Wine brought to the table

The taking of the bread and wine into the hands of the celebrant

One of four Eucharistic prayers

The Lord's Prayer

The breaking of the Bread, with accompanying text

Invitation

Distribution

A Post Communion prayer

A Dismissal

This is obviously intended to make clear the four-fold action stressed by Dix of Taking, Giving Thanks, Breaking, and Sharing. Unfortunately, it is muddled somewhat by the actual practice as the rubrics give options for a wide range of variants - including 'praising God for his gifts (The Alternative Service Book 1980, section 33, p.129), and the use of 'traditional manual acts' within the Eucharistic prayer (op.cit., Note 16, p.117).

#### 4.2.2 The community life of the Church

The 1980 Alternative Service Book is written for a body of Christians who only come together on a Sunday and have little if anything to do with each other for the rest of the week. It would appear, however, that there has been an attempt to create an atmosphere of 'corporateness' by using certain texts which express it, or, more subtly, by greater use of the third person plural (Buchanan, 1979 (b), p.22, fn. 2).

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer however was written with a community in mind. The people who met on a Sunday were close neighbours and knew everyone else in their community nature was understood. Note for example the declaration, you that 'are in love and charity with your neighbours.' (The Book of Common Prayer, p.251). Similarly the warnings accompanying the Communion Service in the exhortations show that the priest was expected to know who was and who was not living peaceably in the community. The same can be said of the rubrics before the service. The Curate knows each of his parishioners and if there are any problems between them. Community nature was understood rather than declared.

Even so, Holy Communion was only necessary three or four times a year, one of those being at Easter. It is debatable whether this would necessarily give rise to *communitas* as Victor Turner defined it. The nature of community was more defined by the fact that people lived in close proximity and supported one another in daily life. This raises the question of whether '*communitas*' is produced in the same way today.

The Book of Common Prayer envisaged that the whole community would come together daily for Morning and Evening Prayer, although provision was also made for this at home in the King's Primer of 1545 (Diarmaid MacCulloch, 1996, Thomas Cranmer, London, Yale University Press, p.335). This daily gathering of the community was an ideal that was not fulfilled in practice. "As it turned out (Cranmer) was unable to persuade any but the clergy to worship daily and the people would only come to Morning and Evening Prayer on Sundays. They were unwilling to receive communion each week" (Ian Bunting, 'Morning and Evening Prayer', in Buchanan et. al., 1980, p.92).

#### 4.2.2.1 The Eucharist and the community

It is not really possible from the Book of Common Prayer to tell how often a service of Communion was meant to take place. The provision seems to indicate that there should be a Eucharist on all Sundays and Holy Days. Other indications show that Communion was provided for on Wednesday and Friday after the Litany, although the service could stop short of an actual celebration if there were not sufficient people present. This seems to indicate that the service must have been used far more frequently than just the occasions when sufficient people were present to share in the eating and drinking (see rubrics in The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI, 1968, pp. 229-230, 392-393).

Originally the Eucharist was allowed to be celebrated in Private Houses (1549), but this was later withdrawn (Canons of 1603). By the time of the Book of Common Prayer the understanding must have been that the Eucharist was to be celebrated by priest and people together in the Parish Church, or Chapel. The nature of Community meant that even three or four present were effectively representatives of the others. The rubrics also allow for one person to speak on behalf of all. This was a largely non-literate society. The priest would be one of the few educated people in the community. He was still expected to be a graduate of one of the universities and to be learned in the Latin tongue. He thus reads much of the service from the book provided in the Church for such use. Of course within time the words would become familiar to all those who attended. But still the people had very little to actually *say* within the context of the service. They were expected to listen and to participate. The use of the Common Book meant that everyone in the land was to use the same form of service, and the same words. The idea was that of uniformity rather than allowing people to participate when travelling as strangers were not to be admitted to the Communion. Even at the sermon the priest was not completely free. Only certain people were allowed to preach, and the others had to read a portion of one of the homilies provided for that purpose.

#### 4.2.2.2 Community in symbolism

The symbolism within the Communion was seen to emphasise the community nature. Cranmer saw the bread as being composed of many grains making one loaf, and the wine as being constituted from many grapes. The assimilation of this food and drink into our bodies through the stomach he saw as evidence of Christ becoming one with us

(Cranmer, On the Lord's Supper, Cambridge, Vol I, 1844, p.22). It was envisaged that not everyone would receive every week, only 'those that were mindful' and had told the Curate at least the day before. Quite what this does to the unity of the people is difficult to imagine, although it would appear that earlier liturgies (1549) specifically expected those who were not receiving to leave the church before the *sursum corda*.

#### 4.2.3 The structure of the service

The structure of the liturgy guaranteed its dramatic 'flow'. The 'high point' occurred at different places in the various liturgies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Colin Buchanan charts this development in his Grove Booklet What did Cranmer think he was doing? (Buchanan, 1982). He makes a good case for the difference in the rites for Holy Communion being to do with the consecration and reception of the elements. Beginning with the Sarum rite he sees the climax of the service as the moment of consecration. From 1548 the people were able to receive the elements, and this added a secondary climax to the service (Buchanan, 1982, p.12). The first English Book of Common Prayer in 1549 effectively made the high point of consecration lesser to the real climax of reception, the *act* that was at the heart of the Eucharist (op.cit., pp.16-17). Buchanan sees this as leading inevitably to the 1552 position that Cranmer wanted, which was to have 'no objective consecration' (op.cit., p.25), no use of the words 'consecrate' or 'bless and sanctify', op.cit., p.22), thus making reception of the elements the only climax of the service. The changes then made leading up to the publication of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 led to a revived Prayer of Consecration and a secondary high point of consecration leading up to the climax of the service in the reception (Buchanan, op.cit., p.31).

In all these changes legislation had to be made to ensure that the changes were adopted universally, and not just according to the whim of the people or the clergy of any one parish. The 1549 service was 'enforced by the first Edwardian Act of Uniformity' (Hylson-Smith, 1996, p.19). The Second Prayer Book of 1552 was reinforced by the second Act of Uniformity, with the Forty-Two Articles following in 1553 (op.cit., pp.20-21). Penalties for not using the correct forms of worship were stiff, with loss of benefice for the clergy and heavy fines for the laity (Hylson-Smith, op.cit., p.20). Mary's accession to the throne late in 1553 brought a short-lived return to the Latin Mass. Elizabeth re-established a revised 1552 service with the Act of Uniformity of

1559 and the new Book of Common Prayer of 1662 was duly enforced with its own Act of Uniformity. New laws were slowly introduced only in this century to allow greater powers to the National Assembly and then to General Synod with the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974 giving General Synod full power in relation to liturgy; this left only the authorisation of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer to parliament.

#### 4.2.4 The fixing of the text

Here we need to examine a point of use. The fact that Cranmer had to insist upon the correct use of the English Prayer Books indicates that not everyone was disposed to do so. Certainly by the time of liturgical revision in the twentieth century there were already many variations in actual use, many of them not covered by rubrics. The use of the exhortations had been so widely abandoned that the legal opinion is now that such omission can no longer be regarded as 'of substantial importance' (Legal Opinions Concerning the Church of England, 1994, London, Church House, p.235, reference is being made to Canon B5).

The rise of the use of hymnody has also affected the use of the Prayer Book text. Originally the only items to be used were those in the text, with Canticles sung at the appropriate points. But with hymns inserted the whole service is changed in its impact. Writing about the Revised Series 3 Service Colin Buchanan reckoned that only ten minutes of a one-hour service was made up of reading from the text on the page (Buchanan, 1979(b), p.22). He goes on to say 'These proportions emphasise how much the character of the service is determined by local considerations' (loc.cit.).

With the Alternative Service Book 1980 the Church of England was introduced to the real possibility of using various options and alternatives within the liturgy (though the word 'alternative' in the title is not intended to indicate this, but rather that it is 'alternative' to The Book of Common Prayer. The Alternative Service Book kept certain common responses within the Eucharistic Prayers so that the congregational parts remained the same whichever prayer was used. With the new draft liturgies, however, the move is towards having a variety of responses too.

All of the new services, beginning with those of the 1960s and 70s, have opted for a large number of words in this central part of the Communion. The Book of Common Prayer in comparison seems to have a relative paucity of words. It could be that this is seen as an essential part of teaching within the context of the Eucharist, but the question remains of what exactly we are trying to do. A longer prayer may mean that we get in all the definitions and correct theological points, but it seems to be at the expense of a coherent service. That is not to say that short is necessarily better, but the length of the prayers means that inevitably you cannot concentrate on all that is being said, and tend towards the position of listening out for key words that indicate that the next congregational response is due. Now that nearly everyone is literate, we have a greater number of printed options available to us. The service sheet can be printed up each week (with a corresponding misuse of resources), or a library of books can be available in the pew (or chair-back) for everyone to see. This means that the simplicity of the Prayer Book rites has gone. Now that everyone has the ability to read we assume that they will want to do so. Part of the earlier study showed that flow results when we are engaged in a learned series of actions which result in us being able to participate without conscious effort so that we can engage at a deeper level, described as the 'flow state'. When we produce large numbers of books or pamphlets to find our way through, or produce a different liturgy every week on paper, we are in danger of destroying that idea of performing habitual and familiar actions which allow flow to take place. This is not to say that we need to root the liturgy in the received forms, but that constant experimentation may be detrimental to the building up of a worshipping community. The new liturgies seem to be relying upon getting across correct theology rather than being what help people to worship.

#### 4.2.4.1 Examining the new texts

We can see this in the example of Eucharistic Prayer D, put forward to the General Synod by the Liturgical Commission. The prayer is meant to be suitable for use when children are present at the Communion. This in itself is presupposing a move towards the reception of children at the Communion before Confirmation, which is a current move within parts of the Church of England. The service seems to indicate that it is being written to satisfy the opposition that it is a valid Eucharist, rather than to provide a means of children sharing together with adults in a meaningful celebration.

The Preparation of the Table begins with words faintly reminiscent of the Roman use. 'Through your goodness we have this bread to offer', although the word here is 'bring' there is still the sneaking suspicion that it is basically a simpler way of saying the same thing. It is followed by what almost amounts to a preliminary epiclesis: 'Bread for his body, /wine for his blood, /gifts from God to his table we bring'. It almost seems to be a way of allaying suspicion about the service. The whole emphasis is thus balanced by the response which is 'we shall remember Jesus'. The act of bringing the bread and wine is thus firmly rooted in anamnesis. The imagery is potent here, and might well appeal to children, but then why the prolonged explanation that follows? Surely this is a sufficient rendering of the importance of the symbols before us? We saw earlier how the use of a simple symbolic explanation allowed room for the imagination to develop around that one image. The more explanation is gone into the more impoverished or the more diverse the symbol becomes.

The lengthy Eucharistic prayer is broken up by the repeated formula: 'This is his/our story. /**This is our song. Hosanna in the highest**'. The move from 'his story' (history?) to 'our story' comes after the institution narrative probably in order to emphasise the ongoing nature of this sacrament as part of our tradition. The text of the Eucharistic prayer suggests that theology is more in mind than what is going on in the minds of the hearers/participants. The president's words are declamatory and inclusive ('we'). Sometimes the words are simplified to enable younger people to understand them, for example the word 'friends' instead of 'disciples', but at other times the text presupposes a fair amount of knowledge of the relevant words. 'Your Christ' is left unexplained, as is 'covenant', 'the city where angels sing your praise', 'untouchables', 'perfect sacrifice of love', 'defying death' are all left for the uninitiated to work out what is going on. Of course that rather begs the question as to whether 'uninitiated' should be there at all, but the assumption of this service is that it should be relevant where children are present. I wouldn't want to argue that the whole of the service should therefore be intelligible to children, but a clear, single symbol linking the motifs would help.

It would help to identify the underlying sociological and theological assumptions of this text. It would seem that God is definitely seen in anthropomorphic terms. The terms used include: 'Good Father', 'hands', 'face', 'your love gave birth', 'your arms reach

out'. There is a homely feel to the Preface that puts us in the heavenly city with the angels, and a loving Father who calls us home.

There is an echo here of the closing prayer of the Rite A Holy Communion Service in the Alternative Service Book: 'Father of all ...when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home' (The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.144, section 52). In this case the imagery of sacrifice, 'dying and living', is inserted into the outline of the story of the prodigal son returning to his father (cf. Luke 15:11-32). Now Jesus is seen as the 'Father' in the parable. It is he who 'met us' through his death and suffering. The concept of sacrifice is thus brought in through a domestic scene, that of the children ('we were still far off'), returning to God the Father through the Son. The text would work well with stable middle-class homes where family life is valued and children are loved, but is this the sort of society which would be expected to use this text?

Unfortunately the answer is probably 'Yes'. It could not work nearly so well in any area where there are large numbers of single parent families, where 'home' conjures up images of domestic violence and insecurity, and where the 'love' that gives birth might well lead to an unwanted pregnancy. The text is presupposing a certain sociological background within which it can be used. It might be that this is the predominant membership of the Church of England today, but that is not necessarily where the church itself would like to be. It might be that the use of this kind of text is inevitably limited in scope. While we do need positive texts, and to establish the kind of society we want to see, it does not do to neglect the backgrounds of the people who might well be expected to use it, especially as the Church of England continues to only authorise certain texts for use. If there are only to be a set number of texts which are to be used throughout the country then those texts need to cover all the needs of those who will use them, and those who might reasonably be expected to use them.

This prayer also loosely follows the formula worked out for the Alternative Service Book. That is it moves through the Salutation and Sursum Corda into the Preface with the emphasis on creation and incarnation and future hope, then into the Sanctus, and Post-Sanctus thanksgiving, followed by a recalling of the benefits Jesus achieved for us. There is no epiclesis (this has been done in the Preparation of the Table), but instead an extended narrative of institution which sets the scene in the full Holy Week/Passover setting before continuing with the traditional narrative. Now come the death and

resurrection, set in the scene of the 'perfect sacrifice', here making the point that what we are sharing is not to be considered a 'sacrifice'. Finally there is a petition for fruitful reception, reminding us of the 'feast in heaven'. The notable omission at this point is the anamnesis. Again this is probably seen as occurring at the Preparation, and referred to, though without the 'remembering' words, in the section beginning 'Jesus died . . .'. However, the calling upon the Holy Spirit together with the request to feed on Christ amount to an epiclesis. The visual imagery is strong at this point and opens up the symbols of bread and wine, both as a feeding on Christ, but also as a taster for the heavenly feast. This may not be particularly helpful. It may mean that people will be left to pick up on whichever image suits them, but it might also introduce an element of confusion. There will be a question in people's minds as to whether they are feasting, or commemorating the sacrifice of Jesus. It may be that the theological message is more important for the compilers of this prayer. It is perhaps unfair to analyse a prayer that has effectively been rejected by Synod, but it serves to show the current trends in liturgical reform. The problem, as always in the Church of England today, is that the newly authorised prayers are effectively the work of a committee. All new prayers have to pass through several revision stages, be presented to Synod and subjected to amendments, and then returned to the liturgical commission for final revision. This is not all bad. It does mean that the liturgies get thorough ground testing before being put 'on general release', but it also means that the liturgies are subject to various levels of criticism, not all of them helpful. There are many instances on record in the proceedings of General Synod where objections are raised over the use of 'new language'. It is quite possible that had the Book of Common Prayer been required to be passed by a committee that it would have had an entirely different shape and feel to it. The earlier liturgies of the Church of England were subject to review, as can be seen by the process that gave us the Book of Common Prayer through the first semi-English form in 1548, through 1549 and 1552 and on to 1662.

#### 4.3 The use of Symbol

I have already examined what is happening in the Eucharist with the symbols of bread and wine. There is still hesitation about prescribing what sort of bread is to be used. Many now use ordinary bread, sometimes a loaf baked specially for the occasion, sometimes unleavened bread, particularly in the form of wafers. Due to the nature of the service there is little room for developing alternative symbolism, although some liturgies

are using the bread and wine as tokens of the 'heavenly banquet'. It is not the primary image that is in mind, although there are suggestions, certainly for the cup, when Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:25 NIV)

More interesting is the development of other symbols that have been absent from the liturgies for a while, or have been underdeveloped. One example comes from the Lent, Holy Week, Easter book where a service for Maundy Thursday includes foot washing. The procedure suggested (Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Note 2, p.180) has only one foot uncovered, and the president pouring a little water over it and then touching the foot with a towel. Here the symbol is present, but highly stylised. If we are to recover the use of symbol in liturgy then we will need to be bolder in what is done. I am not sure that this rubric would be followed rigorously, but if it is then the symbol is effectively being robbed of its full meaning. The fact that those involved have probably already made sure that their feet are quite clean beforehand is another indication that the symbol is not being fully utilised.

#### 4.4 Baptism

The baptismal services are another area where we can see the changes that have occurred in sociological background, and theological understanding.

In 1549 the baptism was preceded by an exorcism of the unclean spirit that was thought to be in the child. By 1552 this had disappeared, as had the note of judgement in the opening prayer, concentrating instead on God's mercy. The whole tenor of the service seems to be towards a profound change taking place in the baptised. Even so, it was recognised that some effort had to be made on the child's part to keep this promise made on their behalf ('*he* will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments, The Book of Common Prayer, p.267). This emphasis remained in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. It was expected that children would be brought for baptism soon after birth ('the first or second Sunday next after their birth' The Book of Common Prayer, p.272). All that was required was that they notify the Curate either the night before or in the morning before the service. It was expected that children would be brought into church on a Sunday or Holy Day, and baptism at home was only to be performed in an emergency. The

baptism was not strictly a naming ceremony, the name was pronounced so that everyone knew who it was, just as in Confirmation and marriage. The necessity of baptism was largely governed by the uncertainty of life. Those who died unbaptised were not allowed Christian burial, and so the baptism was performed as soon as reasonably possible. Infant mortality was high, but this cannot have been the only reason for baptism at such an early age. The suggestion is there in the text that baptism made a difference to the quality of life that could be expected. The church is spoken of as 'the ark' (The Book of Common Prayer, p.264), in which we may pass through 'the waves of this troublesome world'. By being baptised a child became a member of that church, and was spoken of as regenerate by the Holy Spirit. God is perceived as gracefully allowing 'this charitable work of ours in bringing *this Infant* to his holy baptism' (op.cit., p.266). The Godfathers and Godmothers, acting as sponsors are able to make promises in the name of, and on behalf of, the child. There is a close social bonding here that is seldom seen in Britain today. The sponsors can make these promises because they have close ties with the one being baptised. There was an expectation that they would continue in the role which they undertook at the child's baptism.

#### 4.4.1 Symbolism in baptism

When we look at the use of symbol in these early Anglican liturgies, we see that the water symbolised washing: 'the mystical washing away of sin' (op.cit., p.269). The child was dipped into the water, three times in 1549: once on each side, and then face down, the number of dippings was unspecified thereafter, but current practice would suggest that a threefold dipping was still in use. The option of pouring water was only to be used if the child was weak or sickly, or too big to go in the font! The earliest service (1549) also used the Crisome, a white garment worn by the child immediately after baptism, and in which it was probably buried were it to die in extreme infancy. The Crisome was returned to the church when the mother came for her purification, which was replaced in 1552 by a thanksgiving service, the 'churching' of women. The priest signed the new member with the sign of the cross, saying the words of reception on behalf of the congregation. In fact, very few words were said by anyone except the priest, the only responses being short affirmations on the part of the Godparents, and Amens by the whole congregation.

In the Prayer Book service the thought structure begins with the need for baptism in both water and the Holy Spirit. It continues with the rescuing of Noah from the flood and the reception of children by Jesus. Following this, there is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to effect his work in the child now being presented, and then the promises and statements of belief are made, on its behalf, by the Godparents. This leads in to the prayers that the baptism may be received fruitfully. Lastly, the priest says a prayer over the water to the end that it might be effectual in bringing about the change that has been promised. After baptising the child the priest signs them with the cross as a token of being Christ's faithful soldier and servant, and the congregation receive the child, who is now accepted as being regenerate. At this point the motif of dying to sin and being raised to new life is used, and the way is prepared for the reception of the child at confirmation when he should be able to answer for himself the promises just now made on his behalf.

When we come to the Alternative Service Book the Godparents are first asked if they will help to nurture the child, and then make the promises 'for *themselves* and for these children' (The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.245). Then comes the signing with the cross with the prayer of dedication to be a faithful soldier and servant. The prayer over the water recalls the river Jordan and the Red Sea (but not Noah), and makes mention of both being one with Christ in his 'death and resurrection' and being cleansed from sin. The parents and godparents make a statement of belief and then the child is baptised (still by dipping or pouring, though I've yet to see a child 'dipped!'). The signing of the cross may be made if it hasn't already been done, and a lighted candle may be given 'to show that you have passed from darkness to light' (op.cit., p.248). The congregation welcome the newly baptised and the priest prays for the child, and for the parents (but not godparents), but the parents and godparents are not specifically told to bring the child for congregation, they are just expected to overhear it in the prayer.

#### 4.4.2 Changes in understanding baptism

The differences are worth noting. Firstly, the social background has changed. Godparents are not so likely to have much influence over the upbringing of the child and parents are brought into the picture, even being allowed to stand as 'godparents', which means that you could have a service with two parents and one other person standing as the sponsors. They are expected to make the promises themselves, there is now no

understanding that those bringing children for baptism are automatically Christian, they need to be asked. The godparents' role is definitely seen as secondary to that of the parents, it is the parents who are prayed for as *they* bring up the child. It is quite noticeable that the parents are still thought of in the plural, the most recent liturgy, which I will examine in a moment, prays for those who will 'care for' the child without making any assumptions about who that might be.

The symbolism is also interesting. The prayer over the water brings in two contrasting symbols, leaving the hearers either confused, or free to follow whichever line of thinking they will. The idea of washing was present in the former services, but the link to dying and rising with Christ was not made until *after* the baptism. The symbol of light is brought in after the baptism, but again, this introduces a new element into the equation. It is a helpful image to have included, but this might not be the best point at which to bring it in. It is as if the symbolism of the water is not powerful enough on its own without introducing another element. It is here that liturgy has given way to theology. Certainly the image is a good one for the start of a new life in Christ, but not when it is combined with pouring water.

#### 4.4.3 Common Worship baptismal services

The new baptism liturgy produced for Common Worship (Common Worship: Initiation Services, 1998, London, Church House Publishing) is unique in that it includes its own rationale. The text is quite clearly stated to be a 'guide to performance' (Initiation Services, p.8), and thus it is clear from the start that the liturgy they have produced is meant to be 'performed' and not merely read. What is important, for the authors is 'what is done' (op.cit., p.9). This is understood to include a 'dramatic movement' 'from darkness to light, from death to life, from being self-centred to being God-centred'. Movement is an important part of the new liturgies as faith is increasingly being seen as a 'journey', and this is reflected in the texts that have been produced.

##### 4.4.3.1 The journey motif

The journey motif has been around for a long time, giving a picture of the *Christian* life as a journey or pilgrimage. John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress is one such work. Its application to the transformation or conversion process can be seen in the title of a once popular tract by Norman Warren, Journey Into Life (1966, Eastbourne, Falcon). This

recognition of coming to faith as a process rather than a decision is also behind the material in Good News Down The Street (Michael Wooderson, 1982, Nottingham, Grove) and the Emmaus course (Stephen Cottrell et al, 1996, London, National Society/ Church House Press). In the introductory booklet for Emmaus the authors write: 'For much of the recent history of the Church, entry into faith has been seen as a crisis moment in a person's life ...however, what the Church has been discovering in recent years is that decisions arise much more out of a *process*' (Stephen Cottrell et al, 1996, Emmaus: The Way of Faith, Book 1: Introduction, London, National Society/ Church House Publishing, emphasis mine). The image of a pilgrimage or journey is not particularly new, what is new is the direct application of a scriptural *story* on to the faith process. In making the Road to Emmaus story of Luke 24:13-35 'a model for evangelism and nurture' (op.cit., p.28), one biblical journey is now the model for everyone's journey of faith: 'The road to Emmaus is the road to faith' (op.cit., p.35). This suggests that the Emmaus model has arisen out of narrative theology, a central issue of which is that 'God became involved in our history. God's story intersects with our story. We can understand our story by relating it to the story of God, as we read it in Scripture' (Alister McGrath, 1994/1997, Christian Theology: An Introduction, 2nd edition, Oxford, Blackwell, p.203). Whether the application of the Emmaus story to the journey of faith is appropriate or not is not the point. I simply wish to point out that this is where the current trend for using the journey motif is coming from.

#### 4.4.4 Imagery in Common Worship

Baptism is 'the sign and seal' of new birth (as it was in The Alternative Service Book 1980, p.44), it is a 'washing', a 'clothing' and a 'dying and rising' according to the introduction (Initiation Services, p.19). This again brings in a variety of images right at the start, and while representing the breadth of biblical imagery it is not necessarily the best thing to bring them all in at once. The Seasonal introductions are more useful as they concentrate on specific images related to the season. So, during Epiphany, the Baptism of Christ and Trinity we have the Spirit descending, Jesus anointed with power, adoption as children, and a calling to proclaim the God 'who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light' (op.cit., p.73). Easter/Pentecost, reminds us of Jesus being raised from the dead, so we die and rise and find 'rebirth in the Spirit'. We are 'continually created anew, as we walk the path of faith, and feed on the forgiveness of his healing grace'. This brings the journey metaphor strongly to the fore, but it is

questionable whether that is really the emphasis of baptism. Dying and rising is an obvious motif, but it is unhelpful to continue this into the idea of a continuous recreation. There seems to be an underlying theology here which has become dominant. The mixing of different theological motifs does not read well. It is not obvious that one should be recreated as they walk, nor that one should feed on forgiveness. The forcing of forgiveness into the model of 'healing grace' is extremely limiting. The bewildering array of images is too much to take in, and does not get better with rehearing it.

The Introduction for All Saints also takes up the picture of a journey. In this preface we are 'called to be friends' and to be made holy, we are on 'a journey of faith' where we are on our way to the 'heavenly Jerusalem'. Various images are employed for the coming of the new age, but again the word pictures are overpowering. There is an enormous amount of picture language to take in, and it lacks a coherence that builds upon one image, or upon closely related images, instead there seems to be an attempt to put as much as possible into as few words as possible so as to get it all in.

#### 4.4.5 An overabundance of symbols

I find this a failing in much of the new resource material. There is simply too much to take in, and the mind untutored in biblical imagery is going to find it all too much to handle. It would appear that theology is driving liturgical revision to the extent that sociological considerations are being ignored. There is a need for rich imagery, but it is all being overdone in a very short span of words. There seems to be a desire to teach baptismal theology through the services being used. As I indicated earlier, this is not an ideal situation. Services should never be used with the aim of teaching theology, but rather they should aim to incorporate theological understandings of what is going on. The problem here is that theological teaching is becoming dominant and the different images are not being developed to the point where they become helpful to the congregation or those involved directly in the rite. The other problem will be how many of the elements are actually incorporated in the service. There could be a case made out for using all the words of the introduction where all the optional elements are included. So, for example, the image of being clothed may or may not be developed later by the giving of white baptismal garments. Even though this is an image used in the Bible, it does not, of necessity, require that as many images as possible should be used on each occasion.

#### 4.5 A Service of the Word

A Service of the Word (1994, Church House Publishing) was authorised for use in the Church of England from 10<sup>th</sup> November 1993. This is the most flexible of all the currently authorised services, and so it will repay amore careful study to see what sociological and theological influences were behind its formation.

Because of its flexibility it was printed together with an introduction and notes for its use, followed in 1995 by a much fuller volume, Patterns for Worship, including more resource material. This latter volume is aimed at providing 'some indication of different ways of doing liturgy, taking into account sociological, architectural and churchmanship differences' (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.vii). Its structure is set out with four sections: The Preparation, The Ministry of the Word, The Prayers, and The Conclusion. Within these sections are various possibilities, some compulsory, others optional, some allowing a multitude of texts, others requiring authorised texts only. Its use with a service of Holy Communion is more limited due to the greater number of requirements laid down in Canon law.

Due to the nature of this service it comes with a fairly full explanation for how to use it. The idea is that a certain competence in organising liturgical worship is called for. 'The primary object in the careful planning and leading of the service is the *spiritual direction* which enables the *whole congregation* to come into the presence of God to give him glory' (A Service of the Word, 1993, p.4 my emphasis). A *community* approach is thus envisaged, which recognises the people as being the ones out of whom worship arises. There is less of the dictatorial attitude, and more of an acceptance of responsibility for the act of worship. This seems to represent a turn around from the situation I explored above<sup>9</sup> where the community only found its identity in sharing the one loaf. Now there is a sense of community that precedes the act of worship, however eclectic that community may be.

##### 4.5.2 Performance in A Service of the Word

In the matter of *performance*, again things are left largely to the particular act of worship. Actions can be included, but these are suggested and not prescribed (Patterns

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9 see above, p.81

for Worship, 1995, p.22). The 'right balance' of material is called for (A Service of the Word, 1993, p.6), but how to ensure this is left to the judgement of the person responsible for planning the service. Similarly the right use of silence, singing of hymns and 'overall direction' of the service are the responsibility of the leaders in any given congregation (A Service of the Word, 1995, p.6).

At first sight it looks as if this service might answer for those who want to follow the precepts of our pick-n-mix society. It is moving away from a sense of the service as *ritual*, although it may still be seen in terms of a *performance*. The authors are keen that this should not be the case though. Patterns contains clear guidelines that there should not be 'just one entertainment item after another' (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.25). It looks as if there is a recognition here that *flow* can only be achieved by people working together at worship. 'A clear structure is essential. Its main components should stand out so that the worshippers can see the shape, development and climax of the service – so that they "know where they are going"' (op.cit., p.11).

This recognises that worship is essentially for the community. Other sociological implications are gathered from the statement on structure: 'We should no longer be organizing our church life and worship on the assumption that people grow from being less Christian to more Christian in parallel with their age'. This is a tacit admission that the social climate has changed considerably from the times of both the Book of Common Prayer and even from the Alternative Service Book.

The possibilities for this service are therefore endless, with different emphases being used at different times. 'It would be possible', says Trevor Lloyd, 'to see the climax of the service in the reading of the Gospel, the preaching of the sermon, or in the intercessions, as the response of faith' (Lloyd, 1999, p.13). But for all its flexibility this service is not intended to be the main diet of worship in the Church. Rather it is 'authorized as an alternative to Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. It is not intended for daily prayer, but to provide a structure for Sunday Services and weekday services of an occasional nature' (A Service of the Word, 1993, p.7).

The difficulty in being able to analyse this service lies in its endless possibilities. It is effectively passing responsibility for worship down to the congregation rather than

centralising it. I will therefore leave a fuller discussion of its possibilities for Chapter Five.

#### 4.6 Liturgical Prayer in the Church of England

It would help to know what exactly the nature of liturgical prayer is in the Church of England. It is easy to criticise the 'committee approach', but some of the alternatives are just as bad. It would be possible, for instance, to allow one person to draft the prayers that everyone will use, or to allow each individual parish to draw up its own sets of prayers without reference to the wider body of the Church. If Church of England worship is to retain its identity then it will surely need to be through authorised texts. This then prompts us to ask what texts are required. Durham Daily Prayer (1998, Diocese of Durham) uses a different form for each season, and this is the route that has been followed for Communion in the new The Methodist Worship Book. The Church of England has been reluctant to take this line. The services produced for Lent, Holy Week, Easter, for example, reproduce the four Eucharistic Prayers from The Alternative Service Book 1980 and only introduce new Prefaces. The idea seems to have been to produce texts for the Eucharistic Prayers that can be used for certain groups of people, whether that is to include children, a traditional congregation, or whatever. This is largely unspecified, and the lack of an accompanying commentary makes it harder to see what is intended. Eucharistic Prayer E (with minor revisions this is the same in both the 1997 and 2000 versions) allows for a much longer Preface to be inserted, taking up the whole text between the Opening Dialogue and the Sanctus, the Prefaces can then be used to pick up a certain theme before moving in to the institution narrative. If Church of England practice is followed here then only Prefaces which have been approved for use can be inserted, but it does rather beg the question of whether more prefaces might in time be authorised for use.

##### 4.6.1 Familiarity with the words used

It could be argued that having a familiar response to make is conducive to 'flow' within the liturgy. However, limiting the responses to a few familiar words, would necessarily impose narrow restrictions upon the number of options which could be made available. Less variety is possible if certain words have to remain unchanged. The draft text, published ahead of authorisation, of the new Common Worship liturgy for Holy Communion, illustrates this well (The Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion also called The Eucharist and The Lord's Supper, 2000, Church House Publishing). The

double page spread (pages 28 and 29) with the responses for the Eucharistic Prayers has the possibility of confusing the reader who is unfamiliar with the liturgy. The choice of one of four acclamations has to be picked up from a verbal clue, the introductory words being different in each case. Then, the correct set of responses has to be selected depending upon which Eucharistic Prayer is used. One way around this is to print copies of the liturgy as it is used in each congregation. This is suggested in the booklet available from Church House Publishing, Planning for Change: suggestions and ideas.

There is still a certain element of literacy required for some of the new liturgies. For example, Eucharistic Prayer F (again, this is the same in both 1997 and 2000 versions) has a variety of responses with no verbal 'clues'. People using this would have to either become familiar with it, or read it from the book each time it was used. We have as a culture become heavily dependent upon having the printed word in front of us when we worship, and I am not sure that this is helpful for the developing of a worshipful atmosphere, or for the production of 'flow'. This is possibly why worship 'choruses' have become so popular in recent years, they are short enough, in the main, for people to remember the words without constantly looking at the book.

Of course, this is what people used to do with the hymns. Most of the traditional hymns have a logical 'progression' which aids memory, and some even have verbal clues within them. The best known example of this to me is Charles Wesley's 'O for a thousand tongues to sing'. In the Methodist Hymn Book version the links between verses were as follows: 'the triumphs of his *grace*'/ 'my *gracious* master'; 'the honours of thy *name*'/ 'Jesus, the *name*'; 'tis life and health and *peace*'/ he *speaks* and listening'; 'the humble poor *believe*'/ 'he *breaks* the power' (tenuous connection, but I think it is there nonetheless). It would be possible for people to still do this, but I suspect laziness plays a part, and the general trends within the culture, which are towards written media rather than remembering things.

This approach to worship, though, militates against introducing anything new. I suspect that most congregations would be unhappy with this arrangement. Using the same service week after week may have been satisfactory at one time, although the relative importance given to the Word of God meant that the important parts of the service were different each week, but there is something to be said both for continuity and for innovation.

It may be that part of the answer lies in what we do with the text. Using the same words for the core part of the service week after week will enable familiarity so that worshippers can engage at a deeper level. However, the occasional use of different material will also enable people to engage more deeply with what is being said, rather than just letting the same old familiar words drift past them. This brings us back to performance, and it is here that the most work needs to be done.

#### 4.6.2 The importance of how the text is used

It is quite likely that the majority of churchgoers are going to attend the church that is nearest to their home and where there is a reasonable level of fellowship and engaging worship. It is not therefore necessarily going to drive people away if the worship is mediocre. Unless there is feedback from the congregation it is entirely possible to be unaware of what people are feeling in worship and to see what they find helpful and what leads to situations where 'flow' is experienced and where a deeper level of 'communitas' results from worship. It is therefore imperative that those leading worship make themselves aware of what is going on in the minds and hearts of people attending worship. It is the *use* of text that is important here: how it is being used and what is resulting from it. John Leach in an article for Worship Together wrote of the difference that *shouting* a psalm made to the way people perceived it. The words were familiar, but the delivery gave it a whole new level of meaning (Worship Together Issue 22, Jan/Feb 1998, p.38).

It would seem from this study that the major considerations of the liturgical committees have been the theology and shape of the services. Sociological trends may have influenced the revision of the services, but there has been little in the way of overt thinking about the worshippers themselves and how the liturgy will be appropriated by them.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE WAY FORWARD

### 5.1 New directions

There is always opposition to any new move, whether that be in liturgy or in any other field. The history of the Anglican liturgies certainly shows this to be true. The Book of Common Prayer was not received by everyone as a good thing. The opposition from the West Country in particular is well known (see Diarmaid MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, Yale, 1996, p.429). The Alternative Service Book 1980 was also greeted with a lack of enthusiasm from some parts of the Church of England. Many people felt that it did not meet up to the majesty of Cranmer's writing. Now, again we have people opposed to the new services with cries of "What's wrong with the ASB?" Douglas Davies in his chapter 'Opposition to Liturgical Change' (Newton, 1983, pp.4-8) relates other specific oppositions to certain texts, but concludes 'the nub of the matter is not how do you preserve the traditional forms, nor how do you modify them to relate more closely to the present century, rather it is, what are appropriate forms of worship for today' (op.cit. p.7). His solution for a way forward is that it must be 'through liturgical creativity'.

This present study has sought to interpret liturgical behaviour in the light of insights gained from sociology, and to assess whether the current liturgical practice in the Church of England is assisting people to achieve the basic function of liturgy, which is to enable them to meet with God. There are pitfalls for the unwary liturgist who puts theology ahead of a basic human understanding of the people involved in worship. Liturgy must be able to fulfil its primary function if it is to be of use to the church and people in general. I want to try and draw together some of these threads in order to point a way forward for the current round of liturgical revision.

#### 5.1.1 Insights from sociology

Firstly, sociology is speaking to us of the 'society building' functions of liturgy and ritual. However, it is also the case that a sociologist may regard God as a 'functional participant', rather than as 'reality joining the game' (Ross Thompson, in Newton, 1983, p.11). Theologically there is a need to use the insights from sociology without thereby abandoning God in the process. The reality of God's presence is a fundamental for Church worship. It is not just that people *think* God is real but that his presence is experienced and that he acts within creation.

### 5.1.2 Non-verbal messages in the liturgy

Thompson's argument is that the new liturgies string together propositional statements while trying to form a 'message' for the non-Christian masses. The emphasis on verbal messages means that non-verbal messages have been ignored. This leads to liturgists missing the point in their concentration on text, and that is that 'what matters is the ceremonial setting in which the meaning of the words is unfolded' (Newton, 1983, p.12). It makes a big difference if the presbyter is holding the bread and wine, or raising his hands over the elements, or simply standing by the table. 'A different message is in fact proclaimed by the same words' (loc.cit.).

Thompson seems to imply that he wants a more 'Roman' mass with a high degree of symbolism. His arguments may however lead one to a different conclusion, that of the need to match word and setting in a unified whole. In other words, worship should engage the whole of our beings. One criticism of the Roman mass is that it engages primarily with the priest's total being while the congregation are little more than a static audience 'watching' the priest do his business. So, while Thompson's proposals make sense, they are only one reading of the evidence and his conclusions do not of necessity follow on from his arguments. It is possible to use his arguments and yet to arrive at a different conclusion.

### 5.1.3 Changes in presentation

The changes in the liturgy from 1662 to 1980 are largely changes of presentation. In Thompson's understanding the liturgy contained in The Book of Common Prayer is seen as reaching out to a transcendent mystery, while that in the Alternative Service Book 1980 presents the incarnate God in the midst of us. It is in the latter that, according to Thompson, our 'rhythmic, major-key ditties suggest informal enjoyment of God in our fellowship with one another' (op.cit., p.13). This, says Thompson, leads to the (then) current practice of shifting the emphasis on to the gathered community which is really 'celebrating its own identity' (loc.cit.). There is a shift from 'folk religion' to that of 'gathered community', so the church is largely self-defining as a group of like-minded people of similar social background. For Thompson liturgy also shifts to a position where it associates symbols with theological rather than actual concepts, and thus

succeeds in making itself incomprehensible to those outside the church (Thompson, in Newton, 1983, p.14).

#### 5.1.4 Accessibility of the new services

This is an area that still needs to be addressed. It raises the question of whether worship really is totally accessible to those who are outside the church. People may often feel alienated from a new experience. For example, some people will not go into a library if they have not been in before, others are unwilling to try out a different pub or night-club. There are all sorts of areas where people need to overcome fears before they enter, and where they will encounter a different culture once they are inside. Ministers should not be afraid of the fact that people will need to adjust to being in church, nor should they adjust the worship just so that it suits total newcomers. The important thing is to have worship services that do connect with people at a deep level. This is where the argument for highly developed ritualism breaks down. While it might be meaningful to some people, it does not automatically connect with a wide majority of people.

A large part of the problem of worship not connecting with the people is that liturgy has often been treated as a set of translatable propositions (op.cit., p.16). This has led to an attempt to update the services of the Prayer Book without thinking about what is going on in worship. The Alternative Service Book 1980 was a good example of this, and although the Liturgical Commission are now trying to move liturgy into new areas there is still a deal of conservatism within General Synod that will not allow the radical changes proposed to take place.

#### 5.1.5 Social practice and theology

Thompson sees social practices and theological ideas as inextricably combined, the significance of liturgical phrases 'cannot be divorced from the social effect they have as symbols acted out in the liturgical game' (Newton, 1983, p.16). This leads to the problem that it is quite possible for liturgy to embody lies. That is, it can make statements at odds with prevailing attitudes in society, or even at odds with Christian doctrine. Even the setting of the liturgy may embody lies. The placing of the 'altar' at the east end of the church, far removed from the people indicates that God is remote from people, the placing of pews restricts social interaction and encourages people to be individualistic in their worship, rather than fostering communal worship. In the same



manner the wording of the Book of Common Prayer services upholds the hierarchical status quo and carries an 'obsequious tone toward God', with an emphasis on the unworthiness of humankind to approach God, and a constant note of shame and guilt (Thompson, in Newton, 1983, p.17).

The fact that many people may want God to be a mystery when they meet for worship does not mean that that is what liturgy is *for*. The fundamental flaw for Thompson was that the Alternative Service Book 1980 simply tried to update the Book of Common Prayer without challenging the social and theological assumptions underlying them. The new liturgies have tried to redress the balance here, but the formation of liturgy is still effectively in the control of people who want to keep the old forms as nearly as possible. The social effects of liturgy have not been properly looked into even within the latest round of liturgies. That it is a concern is evident from the introduction to Patterns for Worship (1995, Church House Publishing). Here the authors state: 'The needs of the Urban Priority Area parish for worship reflecting local culture, language and concrete expression are not best met by a group of experts at the centre laying down all the words of liturgy. They are better met by creating the framework and the environment which will enable a new generation of leaders of worship to create genuinely local liturgy which is still obviously part of the liturgy of the whole Church (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.2)

At present, the underlying trend is for the Eucharist to be the main Sunday service without any thought of what that does for a congregation that is seeking to be missionary in its outlook rather than just maintaining the existing members. There is a failure to engage fully with the fact that if newcomers are wanted in church, or that if the children of church members are to be present for the Eucharist itself, then changes will have to be made to the assumptions about what Sunday worship is for, and who it is to engage with. Part of the problem is also that many Christians these days are 'Sundays only' Christians and therefore the entire diet of Bible teaching, nurture, and social activity has to take place within little more than one hour of a Sunday morning. This presents the problem of how to make the services relevant to people, and still true to Christ.

Thompson has this to say: 'It is not the individual statements but the whole corporately enacted poem, the whole verbal and visual and auditory and tactile experience that liturgy is, that needs to be true to Christ, relevant, and significant in its resonance with our whole lives. It is not a question of making the words of the liturgy accessible, but rather of allowing God to make himself accessible to the people through the liturgy as a whole' (Newton, 1983, p.17).

#### 5.1.6 Making liturgy relevant

This poses the question of how to make the liturgy relevant. According to Thompson it cannot be done just by updating the words, but rather by taking notice of what is going on in society. This is a far cry from those calls for the liturgy to pay no attention to culture, but to be divorced from it. Rather, Thompson wants us to regard the earthly society as the 'raw material' of the heavenly. It is not, in his view, valid to make Jesus mere word, or mere verbal message. He identifies evangelicals as the prime movers for this perceived change which, he claims, pays inadequate attention to setting. However, his one failure here is to attempt to make the connection with beauty. 'A faithful liturgy', he says, 'needs to be rich, ordered and beautiful' (op.cit., p.18). Unfortunately there is no general consensus of what constitutes beauty. He may be clear in his own mind that richly ornamented robes, theatrical gestures and an abundance of 'symbols' is to be held as beautiful, but others might see more beauty in simplicity, even austerity. The problem is that beauty is a highly subjective concept and may not be the best criterion to use here. Thompson has already noted that popular demand does not make something right. It may be that we need to seek a way of producing liturgies that break away from the old mould, and yet still connect with beauty in the world of today.

Even so, words are only a *part* of the liturgy, and the multiple variations on what can be done while the same words are being said should make us wary of his statement.

Movement and symbol are legislated for in the liturgy, but that does not keep everyone happy. The rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer calling for a table with a white linen cloth in the body of the church, with the priest standing to the north side of it are not uniformly adhered to today. There are no altar-frontals here, no east-end 'altars', nor east-facing positions. The so-called 'evangelical' position is, however, to be found in the Prayer Book. The reason why many people call for a retention of 'tradition', by

which they mean a high altar, ornate robes, and a distant priest, is that the practice has changed from what the rubrics state.

It is worrying that this tendency towards ritualising should be seen as good. The Reformers were concerned to remove the excesses of the medieval church and may have been overzealous, but it is extremely unlikely that all the Church's problems would be solved by a return to full ceremonial. This may put off as many people as it attracts. What is needed is rather to seek a plurality of 'liturgies' that are compatible with Anglican theology, and connect with the society amongst whom they are practised. This could mean having some commonly agreed texts, but far more flexibility could be built in. It would be possible for the church to legislate for some commonly held texts, such as the creeds and the Lord's Prayer, and to authorise various structures which would be allowable within an 'Anglican' framework. 'A Service of the Word' which was prepared for the new Common Worship series is the service which comes closest to this set up.

#### 5.1.7 Common Prayer

The Liturgical Commission recognised the problem of defining 'Common Prayer' in the modern setting:

"“Common Prayer” does not in fact exist, in the sense of being able to walk into any church in the land and find exactly the same words to follow. Nor should we pretend that it would be either good or right to return to a position – well over a century ago – when that might have been the case. Rather, “common prayer” exists in the Church of England in the sense of recognizing, as one does when visiting other members of the same family, some common features, some shared experiences, language, patterns or traditions. To accept a variety of forms, dictated by local culture, is part of our Anglican heritage, spelt out by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in his 1549 *Preface*: “it often chanceth diversely in diverse countries”” (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.5).

The problem, then, is how to define what is essentially *Anglican*. On the one hand, if Anglicans are to be defined simply by the use of a common set of words then logically only one liturgy should be adhered to throughout the world, but the many different churches of the Anglican Communion already use a variety of liturgies. On the other

hand the Joint Liturgical Group are working towards having very similar liturgical forms in the Roman Catholic, Church of England and other denominations within the united Kingdom. There is a need to define what it is that is so distinctively Anglican that we need to retain it. This can be looked at on the levels of church structure, religious belief and practice. Within these areas it should be possible to identify the essential core without which the Church of England would cease to exist as a separate entity.

#### 5.1.8 The marks of Anglican Worship

The Liturgical Commission identified what they see as the marks of distinctively Anglican Worship (Patterns for Worship, 1995, p.5):

- 'A clear structure for worship.
- An emphasis on reading the word of God and on using psalms.
- Liturgical words repeated by the congregation, some of which, like the creed, would be known by heart.
- Using a collect, the Lord's Prayer, and some responsive forms in prayer.
- A recognition of the centrality of the Eucharist.
- A concern for form, dignity, and economy of words.'

They also identified 'a willingness to use forms and prayers which can be used across a broad spectrum of Christian belief' (op.cit., p.6). This does not leave a clear definition of what is Anglican. It identifies certain key elements, but is a definition that explains what Anglicans use for worship rather than giving a definition by which one would be able to differentiate between what is Anglican and what is not. This may not matter. It is possible that to be an Anglican will be to adhere to a certain structure of church government, something which is not mentioned here. Thus the organisation is more of a definition than the worship in which the Church engages. After all, if all Christian worship is meant to lead to an encounter with God one would hope to find similar strands emerging from the various denominations. There may well be a sort of family resemblance, but the variety coming out of this common 'gene pool' may give rise to quite different expressions of worship within the one Church.

#### 5.1.9 Flow in the new liturgies

From the perspective of flow, I have looked at how flow experiences emerge from within a community committed to one another and using a common text. What that text

is in and of itself is not important for flow, that can come from an understanding of worship patterns. Where text *is* important is in retaining cohesion with *other* groups of worshippers. Modern Church of England texts are trying to aim at being all things to all people, and are therefore missing the mark. What is needed now is a holistic view of liturgy. There is a need to recover the use of common *words* while allowing flexibility of practice. Liturgy gives 'shape' to the service. The use of remembered texts gives a sense of continuity with the past, although this is happening less now that there are so many variations to choose from. It takes time for the liturgy to sink into patterns and develop in community. This will not signify an end to change, for changes will inevitably continue, but it will provide a basis for common worship within a community.

#### 5.1.10 Performance and the new liturgies

This study has indicated that the issue of leading worship still needs to be addressed within the church from a sociological perspective, particularly with regards to performance and symbolism. There needs to be a concern for the worship to be the worship of the *people*. While much effort has gone into coming up with the correct set of words to use in worship, more time needs to be invested in the human sciences. People's feelings and emotions in worship need to be addressed as these are a 'God-given part of their nature' (Paul Burbridge, 'Why put on a poor show?', Church Times, 18 September 1998, p.11). The 'atmosphere' of worship and 'production standards' need 'to be taken far more seriously in the Church of today' (Burbridge, loc. cit.).

For this to happen each parish church or worshipping community would need to look at how they can best enable people to meet with God. There is a large amount of resource material already available, and training for how these new models of worship can develop is being offered in some places. An Anglican ethos can be retained by adherence to certain guidelines, such as those in Patterns for Worship (Patterns for Worship, 1995, 199pp. 238-242). The entire Commentary at the back of Patterns for Worship illustrates the kind of areas which need to be addressed when leading worship in the Church of England. This Commentary gives an insight into how the Liturgical Commission is thinking, although it would appear that not all of their ideas are being put into practice, or even to have reached the final forms of the words of the liturgies which are emerging from General Synod.

The authors of the Commentary envisage a much more flexible structure for the service. Their approach has been to tell the 'stories' of several different imaginary churches to see how the services might take shape in each of them (Patterns for Worship, p.192). This does not mean that each church should be developing independently from others, but that an atmosphere of being *on the way* rather than having already *arrived* should prevail. If these guidelines are followed, the Church of England would be far less text-based, and would become more flexible and holistic in its approach to liturgy. It will mean finding that state of 'balance' with congregations being prepared to look more closely at the use of symbol and movement and colour within the context of worship (op.cit., pp.197, 222-224). It will mean being more willing to experiment with different forms and to look at the underlying message that is being given to society. There are exciting possibilities here and it is to be hoped that the Church of England is able to face up to them and not to restrict liturgical experimentation, or the continuing development of liturgy. It is within the renewed emphasis upon us being a 'pilgrim people' to be constantly on the move, and fixing liturgy permanently now will only hinder the development and mission of the Church.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The Church of England's use of liturgical texts has, in the past, had the effect of limiting experimentation in worship. Taking the aim of Christian worship as an encounter with God, liturgy is the tool with which to achieve this. In terms of people's experience of worship, the more people are 'caught up' in worship to look beyond themselves and to encounter God, the more effective the worship may be deemed to have been. This is synonymous with the 'flow' state detailed by Csikszentmihalyi.

In examining the terms of ritual study it was noted that the term 'rites of passage' does not sit easily with the majority of Sunday worship services, but has more to do with the occasional services of the church. It was noted, however that church activities in the Western world are largely an occupation of 'leisure' time. This can give rise to contradictory expectations of worship as 'entertainment'. There is an element of performance that comes in to church services, but the big difference is that the belief of the participants in church worship is that their being there has eternal significance, it is not just a matter of filling in time for self gratification. The community atmosphere engendered by worshipping together is an important constituent part of worship, which aids the experience of 'flow' within the worship. The concept of the community of God's people worshipping together is an important one which should not be lightly dismissed. The state of 'flow' may be aided by the worshippers acting together in a common activity of worship rather than all just doing their own thing in a common space. Some element of enjoyment must also enter the equation, although it is not always easy to determine what will be enjoyable for all the different participants. There are many physical aspects of worship which may aid the feeling of flow. Worship is an experience involving all of the bodily senses, and it is the resulting emotional involvement that contributes greatly to an individual's enjoyment of worship.

The use of symbols also assists the whole-body experience of worship, since they engage with the imagination and can be used to draw people beyond themselves into the wealth of imagery associated with the various symbols used. In considering performance it was noted that the audience are an integral part of the 'performance' of a church service. The text in use during the service is only a small part of what makes up the service of worship. Relationships between people are important, particularly those between priest and people. The self-understanding of the role of the priest may also affect the way

people encounter God. Little has been done to assess how various participants experience worship, and this is an area that needs addressing. The style of the building also affects the style of worship that can comfortably take place within it, yet the reordering of buildings to accommodate the current practice of worship are often slow in coming. In some cases the changes required would be too radical for many churches to realistically consider. However, these all affect the way a given text can be used.

In Chapter Three I examined the theological understanding of symbol as pointing to something beyond itself, and representing the reality to the people using it. There are various lines of thought about how the symbol and the reality behind it are linked. These range from a symbol merely being representational to the symbol possessing some of the qualities of the thing signified. A symbol, however, is not able to be invented, only discovered. The strong association of symbol and the thing symbolised can be enhanced by using the right words. It is also the case that symbols may 'die' in the sense that they can no longer convey the same meaning they once did. Changes in technology and in society render certain symbols obsolete. Words and symbols need to be carefully matched to bring out the inherent properties of the symbol. It is possible to render a symbol ineffective by the use of inconsistent imagery in the accompanying text. Symbols may occur together in certain groupings which will affect the way they are understood. I examined this idea of dominant and secondary images, and how images could be adapted to provide a fit with the culture in which they are used. The church may find it difficult to alter the popular mindset concerning the use of traditional symbols, even if these do not conform to the current understanding of and teaching about the symbols. The physical relation to the symbols was also identified as of importance. Actions back up the words spoken and reinforce their meaning.

The notion of *koinonia*, or fellowship, was linked with Turner's conception of *communitas*. There is a Christian ideal stated within the words of the liturgy which is not always realised in practice. Words may also be linked with music to form a powerful combination. Music may actually heighten the experience of worship, and bring out new depths from the written text of the liturgy. Theologically there is an expectation that when people come to worship they do so with their whole selves, body, mind and spirit. It is not then just the words used that are important, but the whole experience of worship.

In Chapter four these insights were related to actual texts produced for worship in the Church of England. The sharing of the Peace illustrates how a new text was introduced to take account of both new theological understandings and changes in society, although the change was introduced under the guise of restoring ancient practices. The variety of practice evident at this point in the service, however, indicates that the printed text has limited importance when it comes to deciding what is actually to be done. Liturgy is practised and used, it is never just words on a page.

This fact affects how we read the historic liturgies too. Of necessity any study of the practice of former times has to rely on the text to a great extent, but the text tells us little about how the liturgy was actually used. Contemporary accounts for many liturgies remain scanty. Thus an examination of modern texts in the making was used to illustrate the variety of practice possible from a common text. In fact the printed text accounts for only a very short space of time in the actual service.

Some of the symbolism from the new services was evaluated, and it was noticed that there is a tendency towards confusing the symbols by using text which brought in almost every understanding of the symbol.

Returning to the understanding worked out earlier that worship is to engage the whole person, and that its purpose is to enable people to encounter God, it is interesting to note that the new texts say little about how they are to be used. Much more scope is given for both variety and experimentation within the broad guidelines given in *Patterns for Worship*. It is in the Commentary to that book that most of the thinking about practice of the liturgy is given. This does not however make up part of the texts that people will use, and it will remain up to the individual minister or worship leader to do the thinking that will result in the text taking on flesh and resulting in a service of worship that does enable people to encounter God.

There has been within the Church of England a tendency to put too much emphasis upon the text itself and not enough on how it is to be used. There is a need to address the subject of worship from the perspective of the social sciences and to investigate how worship is perceived by the worshipping community. In this enquiry the considerations

of context and flow should be to the fore. In order to achieve the aim of Christian worship, which is to encounter God, the worship of the Church of England will need to be less text-centred and instead concentrate on the shape and flow of the service to enable the vast array of individuals to come together into the presence of the living God.

## APPENDIX

Questions and Results from unpublished doctoral thesis of Gavin Tracy Wakefield, submitted March 1998 University of Kent at Canterbury, titled Finding a Church: reasons people give for joining and moving from Churches.

### Question 6

What reasons do you have for not attending particular services?

domestic situation ☐ age of children ☐ style of service ☐ timing ☐  
one service is enough ☐ other .....

Answers given from 189 responses:

Domestic 26, Children 22, Style of Service 52, Timing 33, One service enough 10, Other 29

### Question 9

I worship God best in a service which follows a set order (liturgy) with little or no deviation.

Agree strongly 13, Agree 46, No strong view 46, Disagree 42, Disagree strongly 34

### Question 11

Our HC service is very good in enabling me to worship God.

Agree strongly 18, Agree 86, No strong view 44, Disagree 24, Disagree strongly 8

### Question 12

It is important for me to receive Communion each week.

Agree strongly 33, Agree 57, No strong view 57, Disagree 32, Disagree strongly 5

### Question 16b

It would be better if we had . . .

...many more traditional songs and hymns ...a few more traditional songs and hymns

...a few more modern songs and hymns ...many more modern songs and hymns.

Many more traditional 9, more traditional 38, more modern 53, many more modern 42

### Question 18

If we develop 2 morning congregations with different emphases which would you be most likely to attend? More traditional ☐ less traditional ☐ don't know ☐

More traditional 45, less traditional 84, don't know 44

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