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### ABSTRACT

This thesis gathers a variety of perspectives on forgiveness. It steps outside the Christian tradition to seek the contribution of the social sciences as well as considering biblical data and theological debate. It suggests forgiveness has wide meanings, and may entail many things, though there are no set answers or sure methods of guaranteeing the 'success' of attempts to engage in forgiveness.

Its dual foci are approaches - past and present - to the 'sacrament' of penance and to pastoral care and counselling. Problems which attend to each are considered; two texts - Kierkegaard's Purity of Heart and Bonhoeffer's Spiritual Care - are given special attention; the psychoanalytical technique of transference is assessed. Horizons are progressively widened and connections made between approaches.

It argues that there are currents in contemporary culture and society which might desensitise persons to the potential relevance of forgiveness and that the task of those engaged in the caring traditions of the church ought to be to enable persons to respond with creativity and, where appropriate, resistance, in their attempts to give and receive forgiveness.

Because it is concerned to resist the over-systematisation of diverse approaches, it argues that rather than adherence to strict criteria, a capacity to renew relationships is shared by the perspectives it considers, which in turn confirms a need to be more generous about what we affirm as genuine forgiveness and less judgmental about what we chose to call its counterfeits.

Some Sacramental and Pastoral Approaches to Forgiveness

Stephen Burns

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## Contours of forgiveness

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Whatever Christians understand by their talk about justification or 'being put right with' God (as the Good News Bible renders dikaów), this is experienced as forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> If any kind of behaviour characterises or witnesses to Christian faith it might well be said to be forgiveness. The Creeds hold forgiveness among the central tenets of Christian belief. In the gospels forgiveness is taught as both a gift and a task for followers of Jesus - something to be both given and received.

However, when we ask what we mean by our talk of forgiveness, complications set in. I want to start this study of forgiveness by quoting two important authors who might help foster an appropriate tentativeness about what follows. The first is C. S. Lewis, who writes that 'everyone says that forgiveness is a lovely idea - until they have something to forgive'.<sup>2</sup> The second is H. R. Mackintosh, who suggests that:

Far from being easy to understand, as might be thought from the perfunctory treatment they occasionally receive, the problems of forgiveness gather up in themselves some of the gravest intellectual perplexities which Christian belief has to face.<sup>3</sup>

As they suggest (and as others agree),<sup>4</sup> forgiveness is difficult, in theory and practice. Ronald Preston, for example, offers an excellent doctrinal perspective on forgiveness in which he locates forgiveness at the heart of the gospel:

In essence its meaning is that God forgives and accepts the offender (sinner) unconditionally if he or she trusts (has faith) in him. Good conduct (works) follows from this and does not precede it. It does not have to be earned, indeed it cannot be. Forgiveness has to be received and responded to joyfully. The signal instance of this forgiveness of God is Christ's word from the Cross with respect to those involved in crucifying him...<sup>5</sup>

Preston makes use of the Lucan passion tradition. But my earlier point about the need to be tentative when talking about forgiveness recurs in one woman's reaction to its Johannine counterpart: 'during the Good Friday office I was just sitting there crying right the way through, thinking, 'Well, everyone is tripping these things off their tongues, but what do you do when it's you?'.<sup>6</sup> She had been suffering from mental disorder and offered some notes to John Foskett. I think it helps here to shift Frank Wright's argument about 'pastoral theology' into my own thought: forgiveness presents a real challenge to attempts to be systematic because its engagement with aspects of human experience resists certainty about neat formulations.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it must also be important to attempt to define forgiveness because relationships might be impoverished if the attempt is not made. We might miss the real power in forgiveness and its capacity to be 'a stimulus, an irritant, ... protest[ing] at impoverished versions of social and interpersonal relationships',<sup>8</sup> as Rowan Williams claims. For that reason I also want to support a 'neat formulation' on forgiveness, suggested by David Atkinson, towards which I shall work:

Forgiveness is a dynamic concept of change. It refuses to be trapped into a fatalistic determinism. It acknowledges the reality of evil, wrong and injustice, but it seeks to respond to wrong in a way that is creative of new possibilities. Forgiveness signals an approach to wrong in terms, not of peace at any price, nor of a destructive intention to destroy

the wrongdoer, but of a willingness to seek to re-shape the future in the light of the wrong in the most creative way possible.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout this chapter I want to gather resources to animate my understanding which will also be useful to my focus on sacramental and pastoral approaches to forgiveness in subsequent chapters. I propose to begin by examining some dictionary definitions of 'forgive' and 'forgiveness', both of which point to the 'inclusive' nature of language about forgiveness.

\* \* \* \*

'To forgive' is a verb which, according to the Collins English Dictionary, might 'stretch' around a number of activities:

forgive: vb. -gives, -giving, -gave, -given. 1. To cease to blame or hold resentment against (someone or something). 2. to grant pardon for (a mistake, wrongdoing, etc.). 3. (tr.) to free or pardon (someone) from penalty. 4. (tr.) to free from obligation of (a debt, payment, etc.). [Old English forgiefan; see FOR-, GIVE] - forgivable adj. forgivably adv. - forgiver n.

It is worth bearing with the somewhat tedious reference to dictionary definitions, at least for long enough to note that there is in the senses of the word something like degrees of intensity involved: for instance, to cease to blame or to cease holding resentment against a person suggests something rather different to granting their pardon. Perhaps the distinction is something like that between a pastel colour and its bold, primary counterpart. However, what is common to the four senses cited here is that they all concern the action of one person to another indebted to them.

While the verb concerns the actions of only one person, the noun 'forgiveness' is concerned with both the one who may forgive and



the one to whom that act is intended, as the first sense here indicates: 'forgiveness: n. 1. the act of forgiving or the state of being forgiven. 2. willingness to forgive'.

I hope to take account of the way forgiveness is given and received, offered and appropriated. While it is always the case that forgiveness is effected by one for the other, there are attitudes and actions appropriate to the other which relate to the act of forgiveness itself, so I am concerned with the interaction, the relationship between two parties rather than the actions or internal disposition of one party only. I wish therefore to underline that the noun 'forgiveness' involves both forgiver and forgiven.

The verb is what I am going to call 'monological' throughout this thesis. By that I mean that it concerns the act of forgiveness. The noun, which allows for a view of the process of forgiveness which involves both parties, I hold might in some cases be qualified by the label 'dialogical'.<sup>10</sup>

I think that both 'monological' and 'dialogical' usages of the one word forgiveness are appropriate. The first underscores the real necessity of one to accept the insufficiency of the other in a way which is gracious and creative. It recognises that one partner must attempt to break a circle of judgement, violence or degradation and initiate something new. The latter emphasises the effective (as well as affective) character of forgiveness. It also allows for a recognition of a need for justice if it is truly to make for mutuality and promote renewed self-esteem for

both rather than destruction for the self-sacrificing forgiver.

So long as these different usages of the one word can be identified and accepted, there is no need to choose between two of which only one is correct and true. The sections which follow are concerned to establish the contention that the dialogical, effective nature of forgiveness is one aspect of a specifically religious view of forgiveness. Psychological approaches remain silent in this regard, and sociological approaches might not be regarded by Christians as ascribing enough weight to the nature of the interchange between forgiver and forgiven. Hence, I turn now to consider biblical approaches to forgiveness, and approaches from psychology and sociology, before concluding this chapter with some theological reflection on these various fields of study.

## 1.2 A CASE OF 'INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE' - BIBLICAL APPROACHES TO FORGIVENESS

Aside from more obvious reasons for appealing to scripture, such as its foundational influence for Christian faith, and because Christians continue to affirm its value, I have other reasons for examining biblical traditions. For example, it seems important to allow scripture to challenge some philosophical assumptions we might hold if we were unaware of the diversity of biblical perspectives on forgiveness. For example, we might reasonably suggest that God always forgives. Margaret Paton warns against this kind of philosophical assumption: 'philosophers run the risk of talking about a conception of God that is theologically

perilously empty'.<sup>11</sup> Biblical insights will help correct this tendency as they introduce the perspectives of numerous authors and relate various experiences. Biblical perspectives make for a certain lack of consistency and resist 'neat formulations', which will not appeal to some of the philosophically-minded (see above, p.2), because it is not possible to turn to scripture and discover the biblical theology of forgiveness. Instead we find different traditions with differing emphases, as we shall soon see.

On the one hand, this factor might lead us to believe that we can justify any sort of thought or behaviour and legitimately attach biblical authority to it. However, I wish to resist this conclusion, because it seems that though the biblical tradition is diverse, it is not shapeless. More hopefully, on the other hand, diversity might encourage us to be more generous about what we are prepared to affirm as genuine forgiveness and less judgmental about what we choose to call its counterfeits.

To reiterate, I am not attempting to uncover or mould scripture into one voice on forgiveness. Rather I am hoping I might provide some idea of what part the Bible might play in a theology of forgiveness for which its readers take responsibility. It is worth noting also that it is to scripture that sacramental practices appeal, and it is with the biblical traditions pastors will have to deal in their conversation, guidance-giving, teaching and preaching. Also, and perhaps more to the point, the Bible is the resource of which Christians will be most aware if

they want to think about forgiveness. Most probably, if Christians want to learn about forgiveness, they will before long turn to scripture.

I shall take the Old and New Testaments in turn. According to one author, Thomas Raitt, 'the most important statement on forgiveness in the Old Testament'<sup>12</sup> is to be found in Exodus 34.

6-7:

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,  
The LORD, the LORD,  
A God merciful and gracious,  
Slow to anger,  
And abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,  
Keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,  
Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,  
Yet by no means clearing the guilty,  
But visiting the iniquity of the parents  
Upon the children  
And the children's children,  
To the third and fourth generation.

The twenty three times this passage is echoed in the Old Testament (e.g. Num. 14.17; Ps. 130.4; Mic. 7.18...) suggest that forgiveness is one aspect of God's character which ranked highly in Israel's interest in God. Numerous examples can also be found of the exercise of forgiveness between one human being and another (e.g. Gen. 50.17; Ex. 10.17; I Sam. 15.25...). I want to outline some Old Testament perspectives on three issues which are relevant to our theme.

The Old Testament includes over two hundred passages which refer to forgiveness, and within them, about twenty reasons are given as to why God forgives. Raitt locates the impetus for divine forgiveness sometimes with God and sometimes with human beings. Forgiveness might occur because God has steadfast love (Ex. 34.

6-7; Ps. 6.15), or because God has 'womb-pity'<sup>13</sup> (Ex. 34. 6-7; Deut. 13.17) or mercy (Ex. 34. 6-7; Ps. 41.4). God also forgives for God's name's sake (Ps. 25.11; 79. 8-9); because it is God's ongoing propensity to be forgiving (Deut. 32.43; Ps. 65.3); because God chooses to forgive for reasons which appear to have no motivation from a human perspective (Jer. 31.34); because forgiveness is rooted in the mystery and holiness of God (Ps. 130.4); because God pities humans for the affliction caused by their sin (Amos 7.2, 5-6); and because God is moved to save humans from death (Ezek. 18.31-32; Is. 28.18).

On other occasions, God's forgiveness is represented as a reaction to human actions; for example, when they repent (II Sam. 12.13; Is. 55. 6-7), intercede (Ex. 32.30; Num. 12.13) or sacrifice (Lev. 4.20; Num. 15.25). At other times, punishment for sin is said to be enough to evoke forgiveness (II Sam. 24.16); it is thought to produce human virtue (Ps. 51.14; Prov. 16.6); or is employed to motivate humans to repent (Is. 44.22). Also, punishment which all deserve may be satisfied in just one person, bringing atonement to a whole community (Ex. 32.32; Is. 53.4-6); and finally, God forgives humans as they call out to God for forgiveness in urgent need (Ps. 6.1-7; 25.7).

Citing these eighteen reasons, Raitt concludes from his study that there is no one normative understanding of forgiveness in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> Instead, each passage dealing with forgiveness identifies reasons and circumstances which lead to forgiveness, rather than the term itself importing specific meanings into particular passages.

Raitt understands the central Exodus passage as a response to Israel's realisation early in the covenant experience that the covenant would collapse unless God was prepared to forgive God's people. Consequently, Israel's understanding of God was enlarged to embrace God's forgiveness, and this understanding was integrated alongside the already recognised commitment of God to punish sin.<sup>15</sup> Divine commitments to both punish and forgive were then held in tension in the tradition, which meant that it was not possible to understand God's forgiveness to be automatic. God's forgiveness was rooted in God's freedom, and although in certain cases it could be expected, it could never be presumed. Indeed, on forty occasions in the Old Testament God is recorded as refusing to forgive (Ex. 23.21; Deut. 29.20; Josh. 24.19), and prophets too are remembered as praying that God would not forgive others (Is. 2.9; Jer. 18.23).

Raitt argues that people were expected to repent in order to receive divine forgiveness in the vast majority of relevant passages, though a cause and effect relationship between the two is resisted by the writers of the Old Testament. One tradition which can be seen as countering the familiar procedure of repentance followed by forgiveness has already been mentioned: that of Is. 44.22, where God forgives not in response to repentance, but in order to inspire it.

New Testament traditions are perhaps more complex and certainly more controversial than those of the Old Testament, at least at the present time when the findings of some New Testament studies

are challenging familiar understandings of the relationship between forgiveness and repentance in Jesus' message. Three Greek words relate New Testament teaching on forgiveness: apolou means 'to release', aphiēmi means 'to let go' and charizomai means 'to be gracious'.<sup>16</sup> I shall present some texts which are relevant, following a similar pattern to my Old Testament exposition.

Jesus of Nazareth is the focus of the New Testament traditions on our theme. Pronouncing sins forgiven was a central characteristic of his ministry (e.g. Mark 2. 1-12, par.; Luke 7. 36-50), and he is remembered as teaching his disciples to continue this ministry (John 20. 22-23). Jesus' forgiving sin was controversial because in announcing forgiveness of others he usurped the role not of God (cf. II Sam. 12.13, which records one human being forgiving another)<sup>17</sup> but because he took on the role which, it was understood, God had assigned to the priests and cult of Israel.

Aside from the association of baptismal and eucharistic imagery with language of forgiveness (e.g. Matt. 26.28; Acts 2.38) a startling feature of Jesus' teaching closely connects God's reasons for forgiving to the willingness of human beings to forgive their fellows. God will forgive, Jesus teaches, those who forgive others (Matt. 6.14; Luke 6.37). In contrast to those teachers who were his contemporaries (cf. Joma 5.13 'if a man sins one, two or three times, forgive him, but if he sins a fourth time, do not forgive him')<sup>18</sup> and his relatively generous disciple Peter (cf Matt. 18.21 'as many as seven times'), Jesus encourages inter-human forgiveness 'until seventy times seven'

times (Matt. 18.21-22). The dependence of divine forgiveness on inter-human forgiveness is remembered with varying intensity by the evangelists. Mark's connection is the strongest: 'whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; in order that (hina) your Father in heaven may also forgive you' (Mark 11.25). Luke's version of the Lord's prayer is weaker, 'forgive us our sins, for we also (kai gar autou) forgive everyone indebted to us' (Luke 11.4). Matthew makes the connection weaker again in his version of the Lord's prayer, as Matt. 6.12 illustrates: Forgive us our debts, as (hós) we also have forgiven our debtors. Graham Shaw contrasts this view of Jesus with the insistence in later tradition on factors (such as contrition, confession, faith in Christ's blood, etc.) which make forgiveness conditional.<sup>19</sup> One early difference between the teaching of Jesus as it was remembered and those who followed him can be seen in the Pauline traditions making inter-human forgiveness not a condition for divine forgiveness, but rather a consequence of experiencing the forgiveness of God (cf. Col. 3.13; Eph. 4.32).<sup>20</sup>

God's refusal to forgive is related to the refusal of humans to forgive at inter-human level. It is said that God will not forgive those who do not forgive others (Matt. 6.15; Mark 11.26). Jesus' parable of the un-forgiving servant warns of 'torture' in store for those who cannot muster up heart-felt forgiveness for their fellows (Matt. 18. 34b,35). The gospels also make him speak of a sin against the Holy Spirit for which there is no forgiveness (Mark 3.28-30, par.), by which it is probably meant



ascribing the work of Jesus to a diabolical rather than divine power.<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 6.4-6 is one example of another New Testament passage which would seem to exclude the possibility of forgiveness in particular circumstances. The traditions associated with the disciples' authority to forgive also clearly involve their capacity to withhold forgiveness from others (John 20.23; Matthew 16.19; 18.18).<sup>22</sup>

Jesus tackles the issue of the relationship between forgiveness to repentance in the teaching recorded in Luke 17.3-4. It could be said that this teaches that repentance is a sufficient but not necessary condition for forgiveness, following Robert Enright and others who have concentrated their attention on this text.<sup>23</sup> If this insight is correct it can be seen to be in line with Jesus' own practice as now understood in much contemporary New Testament scholarship. Ed Sanders argues that where repentance normally entailed restitution,<sup>24</sup> Jesus did not make this requirement on those whose company he kept. He included the wicked in the kingdom of God as he understood and taught it while they were still perceived as sinners by their contemporaries and religious leaders.<sup>25</sup> He required no repentance as repentance was usually understood. Unlike his forerunner John the baptiser, Jesus was the friend of those who remained sinners. In Sanders' view, the 'novelty and offence' of Jesus' message was that the wicked who heeded him would be included in the kingdom even though they did not repent by restitution, sacrifice and commitment to the law. In contrast to the Old Testament understanding, Jesus preached 'God forgives you, and now you should repent and mend your ways'

- the gift of forgiveness preceded the demand for repentance.<sup>26</sup> Although the story of the forgiving father / prodigal son does not employ any of the Greek words for forgiveness (see above, p. 10), the concepts they involve are clearly evident in the passage. The father and son's reconciliation is based on the father's forgiveness which seeks no prior repentance. Perhaps most shocking of all in the gospel tradition, at the point of Jesus' greatest suffering, he speaks of forgiveness with no mention of repentance: from the cross - at least in the Lucan passion narrative (23.34).

If Sanders is right, he might be seen as aiding those seeking to give meaning to the qualifying 'Christian' in speech about 'Christian forgiveness'. Christian forgiveness in that case would be characterised as that which is modelled by Jesus and is followed (perhaps) by repentance.

I conclude from this brief examination of biblical traditions that scripture will not speak with one voice on forgiveness. A study of biblical material is helpful however in so far as it helps make one aware of where one is affirming scriptural insights and where they are being denied. This points up a need to attend to particularity in both the texts themselves and the circumstances of those who are interested in forgiveness today. The latter face a particular problem with the figure of Jesus in relation to forgiveness. The claims made about his divinity can be seen as frustrating attempts to take him as a role model for human beings and the distance between his time and ours might be regarded as an additional problem. For although some basic human

needs and emotions might not have changed, the way they are popularly perceived and understood most certainly has (I am thinking especially of modern access to psychological and sociological perspectives on inter-human relationships). Aside from this, an awareness of the triumphs and follies of the so-called quests for the historical Jesus might militate against the view that we can know very much about Jesus of Nazareth, and will certainly warn us of the danger of creating a picture of him in our own image.<sup>27</sup>

One way ahead for dealing with the diversity of the biblical traditions is to allow them to contradict, complement and correct particular perceptions of Jesus<sup>28</sup> and of the genuine character of forgiveness. As Michael Taylor points out in his discussion about encountering the Jesus of the gospels, this way is likely to lead to a discipleship which is 'more off-beat and strenuous' than before the particular task was undertaken<sup>29</sup> and whilst assimilating a picture of Jesus and grasping his message might unnerve and disturb our present perspectives it will surely also be potentially creative. I think that there is much to learn from this kind of insight as we are enabled to see Jesus as a major key to the kind of creativity needed if Christians are to exercise forgiveness.

Having considered the wide 'inclusive' meaning of forgiveness, I want now to turn to two resources in the social sciences which will help us to understand forgiveness. The first is from the field of psychology, the second from the field of sociology.

### 1.3 AFFIRMING 'THERE IS NOTHING LESS OBVIOUS' -

#### A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FORGIVENESS

Whilst the centrality of forgiveness might be beyond question in the Christian tradition, the standing of forgiveness in modern accounts of human life is not always so prominent. Jan Peters suggests that the flourishing of the social sciences may be said to be discouraging people from feeling a need for forgiveness because feelings of guilt are disappearing.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the felt-need for forgiveness has been stigmatised as betraying mental disorientation - a position represented by the Freudian psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel, who by the word 'forgiveness' meant to denote a pathological defence against too painful feelings.<sup>31</sup> The emergence of psychology has undoubtedly had a great effect on how forgiveness is understood and evaluated, and may have both constructive and constraining functions in a theological exploration like this one. The constraining function of psychology might be to point out unhealthy forms of experience which distort the Christian vision and so limit and define what might properly be said to belong to discussion of forgiveness and what is more correctly described under other names.<sup>32</sup> Constructively, psychology provides evaluations of forgiveness much more positive than those provided by Fenichel. Melanie Klein is one case in point.

Klein was born in 1882 in Vienna, Austria. She became interested in psychoanalysis when she moved to Budapest in 1910. In 1912 she began training in psychoanalytical thought and became involved in

the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society. She continued her interests on her move to Berlin in 1921, and in 1925 lectured for the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London. She moved from Berlin to make her home in Britain in 1926.

Until the 1930's at least her professional work belonged in the Freudian tradition. Klein's own contribution to that tradition was the application of Freud's ideas to the the analysis of very young children. Her distinctive contribution to the wider discipline of psychoanalysis was due to the way she weaved together Freud's insights - most notably his work on what he called the death instinct (which was largely ignored by other psychoanalysts until Klein) - with those of her own analyst from some of her time in Berlin, Karl Abraham, whose research had concentrated on the significance of the young child's oral and anal experience. Abraham's findings found their place in her work in her theory of the child's paranoid-schizoid position. This is the first of two theories which are especially interesting in relation to our discussion of forgiveness.

Klein held, in contrast to Freud, that object relations exist for human beings from the beginning of life. The relation of mother and child is 'imbued with the fundamental elements of an object relation i.e. love, hatred, phantasies, anxieties and defences'.<sup>33</sup> The experience of these object relations in the first few months of a child's life has a particular form. The child experiences sadistic impulses directed towards the mother. These impulses occur as the child splits his or her first object

- the mother's breast - into a good, i.e. gratifying, and a bad, i.e. frustrating, object, depending on his or her being satisfied for food needs, attention from the mother and so on. These impulses grow in intensity in the child's early experience, and Klein, taking up Abraham's work, explains that although oral-sadistic impulses are present 'from the beginning', they increase in strength with the onset of teething.<sup>34</sup>

Summarising her work in this field she offers an interpretation which appeals in this instance more to Freud than Abraham:

From the beginning of post-natal life... destructive impulses against the object stir up fear of retaliation. These persecutory feelings from inner sources are intensified by painful external experiences, for, from the earliest days onwards, frustration and discomfort arouse in the infant the feeling that he is being attacked by hostile forces. Therefore the sensations experienced by the infant at birth and the difficulties of adapting himself to entirely new conditions give rise to persecutory anxiety. The comfort and care given after birth, particularly the first feeding experiences, are felt to come from good forces [i.e. objects]... The infant directs his feelings of gratification and love towards the 'good' breast, and his destructive impulses and feelings of persecution towards what he feels to be frustrating, i.e. the bad breast.<sup>35</sup>

This experience of splitting is at its most prevalent during the first three or four months of the child's life.<sup>36</sup> It leads to the child making distinctions between love and hate. His or her 'cannibalistic' impulses are directed at the breast which is felt to be frustrating and the cause of anxiety, whilst the other breast is experienced as gratifying and complete. The divorce of good and bad involves the child's engagement in two psychological mechanisms. First, projection, by which the ego fills the object with some of its own split feelings. Second, introjection, by which the ego takes into itself what it perceives or experiences

of the object. These two important features of the child's experience mean that he or she is moulded from the beginning of post-natal life by an interaction between projection and introjection, and between his or her internal and external objects and situations.

Destructive impulses which originate in the death instinct identified by Freud are turned against the object and expressed as sadistic tendencies which rob the mother of good associated with her. This is the central feature of the phase of development Klein identified first as the persecutory phase, later the paranoid position, and which she eventually titled the paranoid-schizoid position, the name on which she settled.

In terms of talk about forgiveness, it is the phase which follows this one which is most central. The phase Klein labelled the depressive position emerges in the development of children normally 'in the second quarter of the first year'.<sup>37</sup> It is characterised by the introjection of the mother not now in parts (as in the earlier phase) but as a whole. Categories of love and hate are not now so widely separated by the child and both loved and hated aspects of the mother are taken in.

This introjection gives rise to feelings of guilt and mourning in the child and the child experiences a desire to make reparation, 'to make good the injury psychologically done to the mother' in the paranoid-schizoid phase. This desire is seen to arise from a growing synthesis of the internal and external situations of the child.

The drive to make reparation, which comes to the fore at this stage, can be regarded as a consequence of greater insight into psychic reality for it shows a more realistic response to feelings of grief, guilt and fear of loss resulting from the aggression against the loved object. Since the drive to repair or protect the injured object paves the way for more satisfactory object relations and sublimations, it in turn increases synthesis and contributes to the integration of the ego.<sup>38</sup>

Klein expands this in her later essay on transference to say that the depressive position involves the experience of feeling that aggressive impulses towards the bad object are a danger also to the good object, because the child is coming to introject the mother as a loved person.<sup>39</sup>

Klein's fullest definition of what she means by reparation is offered in her early essay on her play technique:

Reparation... is a wider concept than Freud's concepts of 'undoing the obsessional neurosis' and of 'reaction-formation'. For it includes the variety of processes by which the ego feels it undoes harm done in phantasy, restores, preserves and revives objects.<sup>40</sup>

These comments remained foundational for her later studies. She notes also in this early essay that 'the importance of this tendency [to make reparation], bound up as it is with feelings of guilt, also lies in the major contribution it makes to all sublimations, and in this way to mental health'<sup>41</sup> - an observation which can barely be underestimated. The threat to mental health is clarified by Klein in her suggestions in later essays that in cases where the paranoid-schizoid position has not



proceeded normally problems occur as the child finds him or herself unable to cope with depressive anxieties. Her later work on envy and gratitude outline how envy in particular can hamper the normal progression of the depressive position because guilt feelings which lead to attempts at reparation are outweighed by envy which attacks and devalues the object.<sup>42</sup> Other comments on the tendency to repair in the depressive position suggest that it aids the unification of the ego, facilitates a growing perception of reality, and also helps the child adapt to reality.<sup>43</sup> In terms of the importance of this phase for later relationships, she writes that 'making reparation is, in my view, a fundamental element in all human relations'.<sup>44</sup> Further,

These tendencies to make reparation I have found to be the driving force in all constructive activities and for social development.<sup>45</sup>

Klein suggests that in most cases the depressive position takes the first few years of childhood to work through.

Two further comments on the characteristics of the depressive position are significant, both of which concern the way related problems may be identified and approached in analysis. First, Klein notes that the central feature of the depressive position - the desire to make reparation - is commonly identified in child analysis in paintings and pictures which the child produces. Klein talks of the 'compelling urge' many children experience to paint pictures of those to whom they are related and notes especially the case of one child who painted an old woman 'on the threshold of death' in painting in full possession of her strength and beauty. The child in this case 'allays her own

anxiety and can endeavour to restore her mother and make her new through the portrait'.<sup>46</sup> This example illustrates a common occurrence.

Second, Klein notes that problems related to a person's incapacity to make reparation are identified in analysis by their incapacity to co-operate with the analyst.<sup>47</sup> Picking up some themes of mental health already mentioned (see above, p. 20), the point of analysis is then seen in terms of

Patients [becoming] able to make decisions which they were previously unable to make, and in general to use their gifts more freely. This is linked with a lessening inhibition of their capacity to make reparation. Their powers of enjoyment may increase in many ways and hope comes up again and again.<sup>48</sup>

Transference is the key tool to enable this. Two points are salutary about the theological significance of Klein's work. First, attention to Klein might encourage us to agree to some degree with the conclusion of theologians that forgiveness is 'unnatural'.<sup>49</sup> Our most basic instinct, as seen from Klein, is not to repair but to retaliate and hate.

What is of significance here for the later practice of forgiveness is the recognition that on the most primitive level the human desire is not for forgiveness but for retaliation. To forgive is to move beyond the principle of retaliation.<sup>50</sup>

Forgiveness might then be seen as the introduction of a new and unfamiliar principle - one which, to pick up a biblical image, involves the strangeness and strain of going the extra mile (Matt. 5.41). Because forgiveness follows a more primitive desire for retaliation it demands a working through of basic internal forces at work in us, and may be seen to require more commitment and creative energy than a retaliatory response to another. In

the light of this basic axiom we can begin to make sense, for instance, of Emil Brunner's statement that 'forgiveness is the very opposite of anything that can be taken for granted. Nothing is less obvious than forgiveness'.<sup>51</sup> Cost, sacrifice and expenditure all become appropriately associated with the business of forgiving. Against this background we may also be able to find rich meanings in claims about the creative nature of forgiveness (see above, pp. 2-3).

Second, we also see that a capacity to make reparation depends upon the early success of attempts at ego integration. Although the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions occur in the first few months of life they lay foundations and create expectations for all future relationships. In these formative phases the child requires self-object resources necessary to develop an integrated self through engagement in introjection. As David Atkinson points out, this means at least that

Forgiveness has to be offered as a gift if reparation is to be meaningful. If the child's urge to make reparation (for his perceived wrong towards the loved person) is to become creative for him and for the relationship, it must be met by a responsive gift from the mother (the wronged), i.e., by forgiveness. Indeed, presumably before the child can come to understand this particular life-drive which we call reparation to be reparation and not another thing, forgiveness has to come from the mother as a gift towards the 'wrong', which helps to interpret the child's own drives to himself.<sup>52</sup>

These comments beg the disturbing question of what consequences follow when good objects are absent or scarce.

1.4 'GETTING TRAFFIC MOVING AGAIN' -  
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FORGIVENESS

In order to approach the sociological perspective I have selected, I shall anticipate here what I take to be a central theological axiom with regard to forgiveness: forgiveness concerns persons. It is a relational concept and names particular forms of inter-personal exchange. However we might come to define forgiveness, this feature must remain central to our definition. One important distinguishing characteristic between reconciliation and forgiveness, for example, might be said to be that ideas and ideologies can be reconciled, whereas the subjects and participants in forgiveness are always persons - human, and, we will want to add, divine.

Assessments differ as to the extent forgiveness is exercised in human life. Carnegie Calian writes that

We live in an un-forgiving society, but if we could learn again the basic elements of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, both our individual and social lives could be renewed.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to this view of an un-forgiving society, Haddon Willmer takes the view that forgiveness is common, though perhaps hardly recognised: forgiveness is 'one of the many little noticed necessities of life'.

People cannot live together with the degree of amicableness and co-operation that people do in fact live together with for a lot of the time unless forgiveness is operative.<sup>54</sup>

Two important claims are made in these two statements, though Willmer's opinion that people forgive one another enough to make for a moderately workable community is what is questioned by

Calian. In his view, communities often are not 'moderately workable', and forgiveness is absent. We need, then, to take his call for a recovery of a Christian understanding of forgiveness seriously in order to uncover what it might have to contribute to a view of communal life lived well. To begin, we can explore Willmer's stance by looking at some models of social interchange from the disciplines of social science which might throw light on how 'amicableness and co-operation' might come about without recourse to familiar words in Christian tradition. To do this I shall turn to Erving Goffman's Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order,<sup>55</sup> which outlines a notion of remedial interchange, a concept which is in some respects analogous to forgiveness.

Goffman understands remedial interchanges as social norms which guide actions with the support of social sanctions. These norms - 'sometimes referred to as demeanour, deportment, and manners'<sup>56</sup> - direct the behaviour of one in the presence of others, and involve the notion that those who fail to guide themselves by particular rules have done so through lapse or faulty character. Nevertheless, they maintain that though offenders have not conformed, they are 'capable of doing so, should have desired to conform, and, in any case, ought now to conform'.<sup>57</sup> Each failure to abide by a particular social norm introduces 'a dual set of issues for the offender and the offended',<sup>58</sup> who can then be identified as obligated, and 'expectant', respectively. Goffman holds that all social situations are 'settings for racing through versions in miniature of the entire judicial process'<sup>59</sup> though

because guilt and punishment in inter-personal matters are lesser than those which might be dealt with in many cases brought into legal confrontation, the concern of the parties is not so much to achieve proper attribution of blame but largely to 'get traffic moving again'.<sup>60</sup> This concern, he states, is likely to inspire 'tacit collaboration' between them.

Accounts and apologies are two central means of working towards this end. Accounts, in Goffman's view, are aimed at explaining behaviour or motivation and offering an alternative explanation to that which might be held by the offended. They are grounded in the reasoning that 'there is no act whose meaning is independent of reasons understood for its occurrence'.<sup>61</sup> Apology is a strategy by which the obligated person is able to identify himself or herself as guilty of an offence and at the same time seek to be disassociated from it. Apologies witness to the obligated person's belief in an offended rule, though Goffman suggests that characteristically the degree of anguish expressed by the apologising offender seems 'a poor reflection' of the variation in loss possible to the offended. A distinction between account and apology emerges with the former denying the offending action as a serious expression of self.<sup>62</sup> The latter affirms it as genuine, but begs sufferance, and exposes the self to the denial and rejection of the party one has offended.

In relation to accounts and apologies, Goffman admits that utterances may be 'performative', in so far as the termination of dialogue in which the parties have engaged generally signals the

start of a 'moral pacification' between the two, allowing troublesome matters to be dropped and other things attended to. So the acknowledgement and acceptance of an apology may facilitate peace. Equally, thanks and appreciation directed towards the victim may function to affirm the victim, by recognising his or her generosity, whilst also affirming the offender, by highlighting that trait of character ('aliveness to favours done for him')<sup>63</sup> which point to his or her worthiness.

There is much in this which is of value in contributing to an account of the experience of participants in what Christian talk calls forgiveness. Indeed Goffman might be helping explain to us in non-theological terms what Willmer labels forgiveness in the quotation above. The question then arises, following Calian, of what the Christian tradition has to offer to add value, challenge or refine this thinking. One point at which the Christian theologian might want to question Goffman's account of remedial interchange is with his notion of minimalization.<sup>64</sup> Minimalization is the victim's contribution to the social ritual of the remedial interchange which aims at diminishing the significance of his or her offender's act, in the dialogue of the two on the way to re-engagement.

The victim graciously makes light both of what he has forgone or suffered and of the quality of character he must have to make light of this sort of thing.<sup>65</sup>

"That's alright", "Think nothing of it", and "It's o.k." are cited as phrases which express minimalization. Christian theology cannot equate this with the act of forgiving, and requires a more flexible meaning to 'forgiveness', for whilst it might include

the minimalization of a fault it also carries meanings which cannot be contained by what is meant by this minimalization. I will examine this contention in the next section.

#### 1.5 TWO POINTS OF VIEW -

##### THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO FORGIVENESS

If I am right about the personal character of forgiveness, we need to be clear about the role we want to assign to individualism and how we choose to think about commitment to others. The question arises of how forgiveness might find a place in a theological anthropology. Goffman, for example, admits that individuals carry responsibility for their behaviour in the presence of others. Responsibility, as he understands it, concerns both one's responsibility for immediate causation, compensation, and so on<sup>66</sup> which might define one as an offender, but also the responsibility of both parties for engaging in the tacit collaboration aimed at 'getting traffic moving again'. Christians might wish to strengthen this claim to focus on the common theological axiom that (in the language of a feminist 'ethic of connectedness') 'we have the power through acts of love or lovelessness literally to create one another'.<sup>67</sup> The same thought finds expression in contemporary schools of theological anthropology which have sought to revive trinitarian doctrine and tie it in with ideas about the image of God.<sup>68</sup> The point of emphasising this 'dialogical' character of relationship is to resist atomic notions of selfhood, so that persons are defined as locations in communication contexts and not as static substances.<sup>69</sup>



Some of the weight which has been placed on this kind of thought can be explained as theological resistance to ideas gaining ground under the influence of the new political right, one of whose main exponents once preached that 'there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families'.<sup>70</sup> Theologians have questioned and criticised this kind of thought, pointing out also that modern concerns to 'possess' ourselves and so on are disturbingly similar to what earlier societies have defined as madness<sup>71</sup> as well as to what the Christian tradition has traditionally named as sin.<sup>72</sup> Two other impulses for this theological resistance might also be identified - searches to affirm worth in those who might benefit from liberation theologies, leading to a reappraisal of the whole notion of dependence,<sup>73</sup> and also the search to address some bludgeoning pastoral difficulties. For example, Stephen Sykes writes of preparing one student for marriage in the church, and finding that the student 'had never, in his entire 21 years years, known a couple whose marriage had lasted, neither those of his parents nor any of his friends'<sup>74</sup> and so could locate no role models to connect to traditional Christian teaching about fidelity. The point of this example is not to condemn the divorced and separated, for we may well be convinced that "'God has called us to peace" - not an ending state of marital warfare'<sup>75</sup> and aware of resources in the biblical tradition to support separation in some cases (Donnelly, for instance, relates Matthean and Pauline material on confrontation and separation to the moves which may have to be made by those with marital difficulties).<sup>76</sup> I am only

attempting to point out that a culture which either promotes or condones withdrawal from relationship as an appropriate option in response to wrongdoing is losing some moorings with traditions of forgiveness; and the divorce issue is one serious expression of some contemporary trends which might desensitise us to the potential relevance of forgiveness. My concern here is to note that forgiveness is a tactic perhaps becoming unfamiliar and strange to many today, and in this respect, we might come to see some truth in Calian's claims about living in an un-forgiving society. The present climate of individualism is no doubt at least in part responsible for this kind of rejection of a need for forgiveness, in that individualism might allow us cheerfully to believe that our commitments to others can be diminished and that those to whom we are not related cease to be our responsibility. Christians would surely want to argue rather differently in the hope that persons might strive increasingly to aim at expanding commitment to others, especially the unwanted and un-remembered. If they are not prepared to argue in this way Goffman's comments about mutual responsibility for amendment will be lost (see above, p. 27). If Christians intend to witness at all well to forgiveness they will need also to give clear signals about community, responsibility and social vision, and in this respect, I believe the influence of individualism is not unrelated to the language of forgiveness not being kept sufficiently in currency.

There seems to me to be some connections between Goffman's language of minimalization and elements in the biblical

traditions and the way they have been reflected on, which can be seen by posing the following question: if we were prepared to see our offender's perspective, effectively to 'step into his or her shoes', would not our judgement be swiftly curtailed and their need for forgiveness be redundant as we found a resource to help us 'minimalize' the significance of their offence? To return to, and expand on some of the findings of the biblical section above, people who listen to Jesus cannot presume to remove the speck in their sister's or brother's eye without first attending to the log which blinds their own sight (Matt. 7.3f). And as George Soares-Prabhu points out, the gospels associate closely forgiveness and non-judgement.<sup>77</sup> Texts we might contend with in this instance include the story of the would-be stone-throwers of John 8.1-11,<sup>78</sup> the teaching at the heart of the sermon on the plain (Luke 6.34; 6.37-38) and the Lucan tradition of the words of the crucified Jesus (Luke 23.34). One question for redaction critics might be whether some of the problems we encounter which cause us to examine the relation of forgiveness and minimalization actually arise at least in part due to different 'theologies' of forgiveness in the gospels. I have already drawn attention to the differing emphases in the the connections the evangelists make between divine and human forgiveness: there are clearly different levels of connection in Mark's hina: 'in order that' (Mark 11.25), Luke's kai gar autou: 'for we ourselves also' (Luke 11.4) and Matthew's hós: 'as' (Matthew 6.12).

When we look at how biblical texts have been appropriated, we again encounter confusion about the relationship between

forgiveness and minimalization. Preaching on a text which interestingly does not mention 'forgiveness' (Matt. 5.43-44 on 'loving one's enemies') the eighteenth century Bishop of Durham Joseph Butler proclaims:

If we could only place ourselves at a due distance, i.e. be really unprejudiced, we should frequently discern that to be in reality inadvertence and mistake in our enemy, which we now fancy we see to be malice and scorn. From this proper point of view, we should likewise in all probability see something of these latter in ourselves, and certainly a great deal of the former. Thus the indignity or injury would almost definitely lessen, and perhaps at last come out to be nothing at all. Self-love is a medium of a peculiar kind: in these cases it magnifies everything which is amiss in others, at the same time that it lessens everything amiss in ourselves.<sup>79</sup>

On this view, our lack of forgiveness is a form of projection, magnifying the failures of all but oneself. So we need to achieve a due distance on things, a 'proper point of view', one Butler later suggests is modelled by the dying Jesus praying for his crucifiers in the Lucan passion narrative.<sup>80</sup> He makes appeal to this particular memory of Jesus as an example of a refusal to manifest malice or resentment, for 'we ourselves shall one time be dealt with as we deal with others',<sup>81</sup> advice human beings need to heed if they are to survive their sure encounter 'naked and without disguise before the Judge of all the earth'.<sup>82</sup> A forgiving spirit<sup>83</sup> like that of the dying Christ, is necessary in those who hope to avoid this meeting, threatened by Jesus in Matthew 18.23-35.

Attending to Butler's appeal for awareness of how self-love distorts our perspectives and his commendation of 'due distance' in assessing the actions of others provides one Christian account

of forgiveness. His counsel may heighten sensitivity between people so that they indeed learn to cultivate a 'forgiving spirit' but his comments appear inadequate in the light of some comments made by C. S. Lewis which distinguish between forgiveness and excusing,

Forgiveness says, 'Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology, I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before'. But excusing says, 'I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it, you weren't really to blame'. If one is not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive.<sup>e4</sup>

Is the 'due distance' which Butler advertises identical with the 'excuses' Lewis refuses to name as 'forgiveness'? Lewis admits, like Butler, that 'in our own case we accept excuses too easily, in other people's we do not accept them easily enough'<sup>e5</sup> (see above, p. 31) but his understanding of forgiveness goes further than Butler's, in that 'real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin',<sup>e6</sup> and concerns what is inexcusable,<sup>e7</sup> perhaps only the one percent of guilt left over when the other ninety-nine percent has been explained away. Where Butler believes that a sympathetic perspective on the other will diminish one's sense of offence, Lewis can be said to hold that such a perspective does not constitute forgiveness, but is closer to excusing. And there is a sense, Lewis comments, in which 'forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites'.<sup>e8</sup>

I want to agree with Lewis that forgiveness must confront wrongdoing even if we want to say that it may also attempt to explain it away.<sup>e9</sup> If forgiveness is a means of mending what is broken, denying brokenness is unlikely to bring about that

mending. At their worst, excuses and denials of damage bring with them the denial and diminution of the person committing wrong and of the one being wronged because their shared past is not approached and assessed seriously. The end of this may be that both retreat from each other or at least meet on increasingly shallow and superficial levels because mending never takes place. Yet I also do not wish to undervalue Butler's argument. Butler deserves attention for insisting that resentment cannot be resorted to by those who wish to pay heed to the Pauline metaphor of 'the body, and every one members of one another'<sup>90</sup> or by those who consider humankind a community or family.<sup>91</sup> But whereas Butler promotes understanding of the other so as not to threaten the community shared by humankind, it is the failure to see humankind as a community at all which lies behind the contemporary trend towards a demand for such understanding (see above, p. 30).

It is only the one percent of an offence which cannot be explained away, to which Lewis points and with which Butler cannot help us. His strategy of distance and non-judgement might help us for most of the time, to recognise the devious workings of self-love in the humdrum but irritating situations which make up much of the relationships of daily life.

Finally with regard to Butler, it is worth pointing out that he regards the forgiveness of injuries as 'the same as to love our enemies'.<sup>92</sup> In answer to the question whether he had forgiven his captors during the second world war Primo Levi writes that he is unprepared to accept the Judeo-Christian commitment to forgive

until he is able to observe in the actions of the offender the 'condemnation and uprooting' of their crime from their own and others' conscience. He requires some repentance before he is able to offer any forgiveness, unlike Luke's Jesus and those who follow Butler's point of view. Levi speaks of the Judeo-Christian precept to 'forgive the enemy': yet notwithstanding this, as he reminds us, 'an enemy who sees the error of his ways ceases to be an enemy'.<sup>93</sup> Levi's belief might be said to be in reform, not forgiveness.

Can Butler's and Lewis' insights be reconciled? I think that they can. We need to see both as genuine attempts at forgiveness, but with Lewis pointing to a possibility for which Butler does not allow: that some injuries, even if only one percent, are intolerable and inexcusable and simply cannot be explained away, no matter how hard we try to understand, minimize or make light of the faults of others. Levi's experience might well be a case in point. In such a case, if forgiveness is to occur, it may have to face the inexcusable nature of an offence which will permit no explanation - however generous - and which still requires forgiveness as Lewis understands it. This element of forgiveness addressing the inexcusable marks a significant advance on the views of Levi, Goffman's minimalization and Butler's call for 'due distance,' among many others. Is it that, minimally, forgiveness refers to what Butler commends, or what Goffman names as minimalization, whilst a fuller yet more difficult sense of forgiveness still lies beyond the horizons of such tactics? I think that my discussion so far justifies such a conclusion.

## 1.6 'PEACE AT ANY PRICE'?

### PROFIT AND LOSS IN FORGIVENESS

I want to turn now to attempt to identify and clarify the roles and potential responses of those caught up in the movement of forgiveness which I have already characterised as 'dialogical' (see above, p. 4). I have learned much from Goffman's sociological analysis, but want to gather some theological reflections on the process. One way of making sense of the complexity of the personal exchanges which may take place on the way to achieving forgiveness is to envisage the process as a 'circle'. The offender impoverishes a pattern of relationality by his or her behaviour as the start of the circle. If the whole process is completed (and it may well not be) the victim's act of forgiveness unites the circle at the same point at which it was originally broken by the offender and a pattern of relationality can now be re-established, either on previous terms or else in some other creative form rendered appropriate by the recognition of their shared and broken past.

To initiate the 'circle' the offender damages his or her victim in some way. It is the offender's action which makes the designations 'offender' and 'victim' appropriate to each party. But it is worth noting Chris Wood's challenging insight which cautions against too easy identification of each party:

Some offenders can also be victims... Two rival gangs of youths set out one evening, deliberately armed with chains, knives, and other weapons to contest an area of disputed "territory" on a housing estate. At the end of the night,



one young man was in a hospital operating theatre, and another in Police custody. The first spent the next ten years in a wheelchair, the second served a sentence of life imprisonment. At first sight the one in the wheelchair is the victim. Yet both set off that evening with evil, if not murderous intent. Which ended up where is largely a matter of chance. Whichever way you look at it, two young lives were ruined by that evening's incident. "Labels" can be deceptive.<sup>94</sup>

Wood highlights some difficulties about the ambiguity that sometimes arises in identifying guilt. It remains the case that there clearly are instances where designations of victim and offender are proper and necessary. And offenders at least are guilty.

Guilt takes different forms. Richard Swinburne distinguishes between objective and subjective guilt.<sup>95</sup> He sees objective guilt as the consequence of failing to fulfil obligations and subjective guilt as the consequence of failing to try to fulfil one's obligations. The latter type is acquired by those who intentionally do wrong, and indicates that 'far more is wrong'.<sup>96</sup> Acquiring guilt is analogous to incurring a debt which renders the offender 'unclean'. The scenario is summed up by Swinburne as such: 'a person who fails in his obligations has got something wrong with him which needs dealing with'.<sup>97</sup>

The next movement in the process belongs to either offender or victim, and is complete when both recognise the wrong committed. If the imagery of 'drawing a circle' is to hold at all, we see here that as this stage involves mutual exchange the circular shape may be distorted and swirl off course wildly if one partner refuses to recognise the damage done and, where appropriate, their own responsibility for it. Some knowledge of Christian

theological themes will suggest that this brokenness implies the diminution of those involved in the brokenness. For instance, if forgiveness is withheld, the offender's status as divine imager is somehow challenged. For the offender, acknowledgement of the wrong done might be manifest in shame, for

It is good we believe ourselves objectively guilty when we are; it is good that we believe ourselves subjectively guilty when we are; it is good that guilt be accompanied by shame.<sup>98</sup>

Whilst the victim is agent of repair by attending to the task of overcoming retaliation, the offender is also an agent of repair - though in a clearly different sense - by attending to the cultivation and manifestation of repentance:

Repentance, as a response to my own wrong doing, looks both back (with pain) to that wrong doing, and forward (with hope and determination) to my own self reform, and to the restoration of those relationships which my wrong doing has damaged or threatened.<sup>99</sup>

Any actions towards this may be seen as an attempt to amend one's behaviour appropriately, so as to distance oneself from the act which establishes guilt.

Somehow we learn to see ourselves and our acts differently, and in that learning become capable of relating differently to our environment.<sup>100</sup>

In the categories of one current school of theological anthropology represented by Alistair McFadyen the offender might be said to be seeking to demonstrate the distance between his or her indexical and self-referential selves, embodying the testimony that 'I [indexical] know what I [self-referential] did was wrong'.<sup>101</sup> In this way the offender may own responsibility for an action but resist its 'sedimentation' as characteristic of him or herself. Such resistance may be seen as a way of

expressing shame, as outward behaviour and action are perhaps the only appropriate gauge of the extent of interior repentance and recognition of one's need to change (before oneself, others and God). As Richard Swinburne reminds us,

To give what we cannot easily afford is always a serious act. The penitent constitutes his apology as serious by making it costly.<sup>102</sup>

Notwithstanding this, it is one thing to suggest that repentance is sufficient for forgiveness, and another to purport that it is necessary for it, as Robert Enright and others point out (see above, p. 12). Whilst forgiveness depends upon the free choice of the victim, the teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth, at least if we follow Sanders, tend towards the ideal of forgiveness preceding repentance - 'I forgive you and now you should repent and mend your ways' (see above, p. 12).

Whilst only the offender can initiate a process of forgiveness, only the victim can complete it. Only the victim can perform the act of accepting his or her offender's attempts at amendment and so bring the process to a close. In the hope of enabling a future other than the one imposed by the past or by memory<sup>103</sup> he or she effectively cancels the other's guilt by refusing to assent to the logic of the deteriorating relational form previously imposed upon him or her.<sup>104</sup> The forgiver seeks to enrich the other with a new 'deeper' way of relating. One might expect that this may be extremely costly, for as Raymond Studzinski points out, this demands the overcoming of various obstacles. Studzinski argues that aside from the problems of projection, human selfishness may recognise the destructiveness of resentment but still refuse to

forgive, perhaps especially if one's resistance wins one the sympathy of the like-mindedly hostile, who may see one as 'weak' if one is seen to 'give in' to one's offender; the likely consequence might be the victim threatened with isolation on all sides.<sup>105</sup>

The end state of forgiveness is when 'not all wounds inflicted can be healed, but what matters is that there can be no further wounds'.<sup>106</sup> This may arise through the victim seeing the brokenness of the parties' relations as the greater loss than whatever personal injury has been caused to him or herself. The victim thus refuses to allow the past to define the future relation. This kind of refusal may be envisaged as a 'draining' and replenishing, whereby the victim chooses to absorb the effects of his or her offender's action and at the same time attempts to infuse the relationship with a more creative way of relating.

What exactly this will mean in practice will depend on the particular relation and circumstance, though telling stories may be a good resource for enabling understanding of what kinds of response may be entailed. Aside from some biblical stories of Jesus himself, others might point to the way in which biblical texts might shape habitual attitudes and behaviour in those who claim Christ's name:

A Turkish officer had raided and looted an Armenian home. He killed the aged parents and gave the daughters to the soldiers, keeping the eldest daughter for himself. Some time later she escaped and trained as a nurse. As time passed, she found herself nursing in a ward of Turkish officers. One night, by the light of a lantern, she saw the face of this

officer. He was so gravely ill that without exceptional nursing he would die. The days passed, and he recovered. One day the doctor stood by the bed with her and said to him, "But for her devotion to you, you would be dead". He looked at her and said, "We have met before, haven't we?" "Yes," she said, "we have met before". "Why didn't you kill me?" he asked. She replied, "I am a follower of him who said 'Love your enemies'".<sup>107</sup>

Whilst it might be said that this woman's courage embodied or 'performed' her scripture's witness to Christ,<sup>108</sup> other stories, traditionally seen as laudable, may in fact turn out to be deeply problematic.

David Nicholls recounts the story of an unnamed Sandinista leader who became Minister for the Interior and during a prison visit recognised some men who had tortured both him and members of his family. The minister frees them. For Nicholls, this 'nonsense'<sup>109</sup> raises the question of the moral credibility of the victim's acceptance of his degradation without retaliation. He locates contemporary trinitarian doctrine as one area where people may be damaged by the notion that in such a situation passivity is the only appropriate Christian response. The tradition, he argues, mistakenly, or at least lopsidedly expounded, does not offer them resources for conflict or resistance. The story just quoted, he posits, demonstrates little more than the arrogance of one member of the Nicaraguan elite in resorting to such an arbitrary action, and illustrates in his view that a so-called "politics of forgiveness" 'if it makes sense at all, does so only in the context of a politics of justice'.<sup>110</sup> Whilst Nicholls fights it out with one contemporary ('social') trinitarian model, others have located the 'faults' of other traditions of theology and spirituality which, it is

claimed, may do more harm than good. Ann Loades' argument with elements in both the eucharistic and 'imitation of Christ' traditions is a good example.<sup>111</sup> She argues:

It is one thing to employ the metaphors of the 'imitation of Christ' as the context of love and then be sustained by them in a situation of extremity, but quite another to make the bare possibility of being in that situation a focus of attention outside the context of love. Without that context, life may be eaten away by metaphor, with those who employ it literally tested to destruction by it.<sup>112</sup>

It is not difficult to see how this kind of argument may challenge those who believe themselves to be committed to forgive. The danger which Nicholls and Loades are trying to warn against might be compared to the dangers inherent in extreme cases of 'manic' and pathological forms of forgiveness identified by psychoanalysis. Reaction-formation is one type of resistance commonly recognised in pastoral counselling and defined simply as 'over-reaction to certain thoughts or emotions'.<sup>113</sup> In relation to forgiveness, R. C. A. Hunter describes it as 'a defence against vengeful aggression',<sup>114</sup> which is betrayed by 'tell-tale signs',<sup>115</sup> most obviously in the failure to cope adequately with one's own experience of being offended against by mistaking forgiveness for 'peace at any price' (see above, p. 2). In such circumstances, one's own defence mechanisms toward an other should never become redundant for one should not wish for peace without confronting the actual offence.

At least two effective criticisms can be levelled at this kind of relationality. The first has already been applied to talk about denial of which this is a form. It diminishes the importance of both persons by refusing to deal with a shared situation in an

adequately personal way. It places too little emphasis on the reality of one's own past and the other's. By detracting from the seriousness of these personal histories, it denies the worth of the persons. Indeed it may contribute to one's feelings of worthlessness (see above, pp. 32-33). The second problem with this counterfeit form of forgiveness arises if the offender is genuinely repentant, for in that case meeting repentance with a form of reaction-formation (see above, p. 41) harbours the memory of a past in a way which will prevent an enriched commonality between the parties.

It is worth mentioning at this point Beverly Wildung Harrison whose work may help us avoid some of the problems which might be encountered by responses to wrong engendered by reaction-formation. It is interesting to compare what, for example, Atkinson has to say about forgiveness (see above, pp. 2-3) with how Harrison writes about anger. She locates the place of anger in Christian ethics, insisting that

Anger is not the opposite of love. It is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring. To put the point another way: anger is -and always is - a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relationships in which we are immersed.<sup>116</sup>

She continues, the angry person is one

Demanding acknowledgement from us, asking for the recognition of their presence, their value. We have two basic options in such a situation. We can ignore, avoid, condemn or blame. Or we can act to alter relationship towards reciprocity, beginning a real process of hearing and speaking to each other.<sup>117</sup>

If Harrison is right about this positive thrust in anger, it

seeks the same kind of re-engagement which forgiveness seeks. It may be the case that anger takes the offender more seriously in some cases than does forgiveness where it might lead to the feeling that an offender is being treated too well. Dorothy L. Sayers, for example, discusses the possible need to speak about unforgivable sins,<sup>11e</sup> and where such a need is felt, anger may be an appropriate response to wrong in so far as it may help persons recognise their own worth in spite of violation, and help build up the strength and grace in them to release some of that worth to their offender. This defies the danger of 'making peace at any price' (see above p. 2, p. 41) at least, and strengthens the argument proposed by Donnelly that anger and rage are not incompatible with forgiveness. Donnelly snaps the cord of association between forgiveness and passivity and non-conflict, and we can fruitfully read her insights alongside those of Nicholls and Loades (see above, pp. 40-41). We need to bear their warnings in mind if forgiveness is to guard against the real possibility of the destruction of persons' worth.

Yet despite tactics to the contrary, it is not possible to remove all risk from the business of forgiving. Forgiveness is and will remain costly. Forgiveness may, however, yield rich rewards, as apart from the serenity that many victims witness to following their granting forgiveness, it has been argued that forgiveness may not only remove enmity but even strengthen love. Vincent Brümmer argues this, quoting John Burnaby:

We shall be to one another what we were before, save for one important difference. I know now that you are a person who can forgive, that you prefer to have suffered rather than to



resent, and that to keep me as a friend, or to avoid becoming my enemy, is more important to you than to maintain your own rights. And you know now that I am a person who is not too proud to acknowledge his fault, and that your goodwill is worth more to me than the maintenance of my own cause...<sup>119</sup>

I have used Nicholls' and Loades' arguments to suggest that one danger involved in forgiveness is that it may create more damage for the victim if other resources are not made available to them. A second danger may be that forgiveness can be seen as enforcing a form of enslavement and 'un-freedom' upon another, this time creating dependence not for the victim but rather for the one supposedly 'forgiven'.<sup>120</sup> Jan Peters, who points out this danger, seeks to counter it by insisting that genuine forgiveness encourages and enables persons 'to be themselves...to become autonomous in critical freedom'. The safeguard against the fear of enforcing un-freedom is, he suggests, to promote understanding of forgiveness as communicational. It cannot be a matter of egocentricity and domination, but rather concerns both other-centredness and enablement even if by means of 'small beginnings'.<sup>121</sup> Yet as Vincent Brümmer states, if the relationship prior to the breakdown belonged to the category he calls a 'relationship of fellowship' (in which 'I identify with you and your interest, [so] your value and the value of your relationship become intrinsic to me')<sup>122</sup> it involved the parties in a situation in which they had given up a degree of independence anyway, at least in so far as each was dependent upon the other's freedom and responsibility in the relationship.<sup>123</sup>

Jacques Pohier points out a third danger which is the opposite of

the above idea that forgiveness may create dependence in so far as it abused as a way to setting oneself up as superior to the other. He points out that a declaration of guilt on the part of the offender may actually amount to 'an attempt at seduction'.<sup>124</sup> Citing him at least illustrates how the devious may distort the workings of forgiveness from both sides of the relationship.

One important point arising from this discussion is the significance of the church in relation to forgiveness. For as various psychoanalysts have insisted on external and environmental factors as of first importance in how persons may learn to forgive, so questions may be raised about the kind of community the church is or ought to be in this connection. Stephen Fowl and Gregory Jones are inspired by a text from Isaiah (49.2) and the life and death of one modern 'performer of scripture', Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to insist upon the importance of what they label 'separate space', where the church can form and sustain Christian identity faithful to the inspiring character of Jesus Christ and some of his earliest followers.<sup>125</sup> They suggest, as Stanley Hauerwas notes, that 'training in the experience of forgiveness is required' if persons are to give and receive it.<sup>126</sup> As one contemporary theologian suggests,

To enter the church is... to enter a form of community in which the vicarious suffering of Jesus becomes the basis of a new form of life, one in which the offence of others is borne rather than avenged.<sup>127</sup>

These words of Colin Gunton relate us to the foundational events on which Christian faith is based, yet as Jacques Pohier's argument attempts to show, appropriating the biblical witness in

the church's sacramental and pastoral ministries may require a great deal of change from contemporary practice.<sup>128</sup> It is to the examination of this practice that I now turn in the next chapters.

\* \* \* \*

I shall conclude with a brief summary of my central contentions so far.

First, language about forgiveness is 'inclusive'. It embraces wide meanings: both monological ('my forgiveness of you') and dialogical (the transaction of forgiveness). This is resonant with wide meanings in the New Testament words for forgiveness. It also can be viewed in the theological and social science perspectives considered in this chapter, which speak of gaining a 'due distance', of 'minimalization', and of coping with inexcusable offences. The one word forgiveness harbours a wide range of different, though related, realities.

Second, although the meanings of the word are diverse, it is possible to exclude certain types of behaviour from its meaning. Psychology might help us to do this. I have noted three dangers which may render it counterfeit.

Third, it remains difficult to gauge what is genuine and what is counterfeit forgiveness in particular cases. Human beings' ability to forgive will correspond to their own psychological resources which have strengthened or disabled their propensity to forgive. Perhaps the point to draw from this is that it is often inappropriate to attach blame to persons' difficulties to

either give or receive forgiveness.

Indeed, fourth, when affirming psychological resources have been or are absent or scarce, we need to be awake to some dangers which might ensue if those concerned attempt to exercise forgiveness.

Fifth, forgiveness, at least that learned from the Christian gospel, precedes the offender's repentance or reform. Perhaps the point here is that victims are encouraged to make beginnings towards forgiveness prior to reform or repentance.

Sixth, there remain circumstances in which forgiveness cannot be assumed to be automatic. This does not mean that the offender is required to repent, but that forgiveness may genuinely be tempered by other resources - separation and anger would be two examples.

Seventh, forgiveness involves a level of personal relationship.

Eighth, there are currents in contemporary culture and society which at the very least may desensitise us to the potential relevance of forgiveness.

Sacramental approaches  
to forgiveness

2.1 TRADITION AND CHANGE -

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PENANCE

The sacrament of penance is one tradition in the Christian church which obviously relates to forgiveness. In this chapter I want to explore the sacrament as it has been and is today celebrated. I am interested in historical, doctrinal and ethical perspectives. First, I shall provide a historical overview of the church's penitential discipline. This will not be comprehensive or exhaustive. It would be unrealistic to expect to be either of these in only a few pages.<sup>1</sup> Rather, I note little more than major trends, shifts and contributions in the evolution of the rite, which aside from being interesting in itself lays some foundations for the discussion which follows about the issues which gather around the contemporary celebration of the sacrament. I concentrate on four broad issues before next devoting some special attention to the question of the inter-relationship of aspects of Catholic teaching about moral authority, which is relevant to the question of whether penitents are or are not granted absolution. My concern in the two sections focusing on contemporary celebration is to provide some resources for developing a responsible concept of absolution which accounts for some of the problems raised with regard to forgiveness in my first chapter. I close this chapter with a specific historical perspective by looking at one text which remains important advice

on preparation for confession - Purity of Heart by the Danish Lutheran Søren Kierkegaard.

\* \* \* \*

Awareness of some Reformation debates (aside from those which continue today) is enough to make one conscious that the biblical grounding for the 'sacrament' of penance is ambiguous.<sup>2</sup> Anglicans, for instance, apart from not calling penance a 'sacrament of the gospel' (Article XXV), continue to quibble over the priestly pronouncement in the absolution in the Book of Common Prayer's order for Morning and Evening Prayer, in which the claim is made that

Almighty God... hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins...

'Where?' is a question many Anglicans want to ask. A number of biblical texts figure within the theological rationales and groundings given to this assertion and others like it in the various Christian traditions. Two texts from the Matthean 'Sondergut' are particularly well-worn in this debate:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16.19).

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly, I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18.15-18).<sup>3</sup>

The Catholic Order of Penance asserts that 'The Lord instituted a special sacrament of penance for the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism (see John 20.21-23)' [Decree], a view perhaps surprisingly still held despite controversy earlier this century when Modernists challenged it, insisting that 'the Lord's words [in John 20.22ff] in no way refer to the sacrament of penance, despite what the Fathers at Trent wished to assert'. They were condemned in 1907 by Pope Pius X.<sup>4</sup> Officially, then, the Catholic tradition appeals to the following text:

As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' (John 20.21b-23).

The present Pope even calls this passage 'one of the most awe-inspiring innovations of the gospel'.<sup>5</sup> Many Catholics are no longer so certain as either of these Popes. One of the most important commentators on the modern Catholic practice of penance, James Dallen, echoes the Modernist contention: 'None of these texts refer to the sacrament of penance as we know it, pace the Council of Trent'.<sup>6</sup> Monika Hellwig seeks a compromise position, claiming that 'in the broad sense the sacrament of penance owes its origin to Jesus himself in his ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness which he entrusted to the Church'.<sup>7</sup> Note 'in the broad sense': she argues that quibbles over the exact formulation of the sacrament's origin are 'petty and inappropriate'. Interestingly, one modern Methodist theologian, Theodore Jennings Jr., gives a further twist to the debate by claiming 'as an action instituted by Jesus the forgiveness of sins actually has a clearer foundation in the New

Testament than either baptism or eucharist',<sup>8</sup> although he does not go as far as to correlate 'forgiveness of sins' with the Roman Catholic tradition's sacrament of penance. What we do see in his statement and in Hellwig's nonchalance about specific biblical grounding are two attempts to press for seriousness about liturgical expressions of forgiveness which recognise inadequacies in the present rationales characteristic of the traditions to which the authors belong. And Catholics and Methodists are not the only ones seeking to renew their own traditions of forgiveness in liturgy and devotion.

The meaning of 'binding' and 'loosing' can be gleaned by reference to rabbinic literature which is contemporaneous with the Matthean community. In that literature the terms are used in respect of legal interpretation. 'To bind' was to declare something forbidden, 'to loose' was to declare it permitted. The terms binding and loosing are also applied to describe the practice of excluding persons from community and for re-inviting them back into community. As Karl Rahner's study uncovers, 'to bind' meant to 'put under the ban',<sup>9</sup> prohibiting synagogue attendance. 'To loose' was to lift the ban and allow re-attendance. The usage of the two terms in at least Matthew ch.18 is probably derivative from these rabbinic meanings, and light can be shed on the passage in Matthew ch.16 (which is concerned with the authority of Peter specifically) by reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls where binding and loosing are the prerogative of the community 'supervisor' (mebagger), a word which is etymologically similar to the Greek episcopos used in



the New Testament and translated into English as 'overseer' or 'bishop'.<sup>10</sup>

Redaction criticism may also provide some further explanations for the Matthean community's practice of binding and loosing. It has emphasised Matthew's community's particularly strong interest in the character of ekklēsia as a fraternity of siblings, learning together from their wise pioneer, Jesus. Their memory of him, as it is codified in the gospel text, is ordered as a kind of 'manual of instruction' for believers, with what they receive as the Lord's words to Peter (16.19) being re-appropriated in the context of a 'manual of discipline' (ch. 18) by which all the household of faith are to live. The manual of discipline is concerned to provide advice on styles of behaviour and particular commitments which are to characterise the adelphos of the new church.<sup>11</sup>

Günther Bornkamm has studied the inter-relationship of these two texts<sup>12</sup> and explores the connection between the authority apparently given only to Peter in 16.19 and the authority apparently given to every member of the community in 18.18. Bornkamm regards ch. 18 as a theological construction created to address the particular needs of the new community. A synopsis of the chapter provides some insight into some of the marks of the local church which they thought would distinguish it from the separate Jewish communities. Matthew's group is to be one defined by repentance and humility (18.1-5), commitment to the love commandment (6-14) and a limitless willingness to forgive (21-

34). These three central features of the new church relate to the talk about true greatness connected to the children pericope at the beginning of the chapter and which, Bornkamm argues, acts as a standard for the whole manual.

Bornkamm explains ch. 18 as a construct built out of the tradition in ch. 16. He points out that ch. 16 was shaped after Peter's death in so far as it presupposes the resurrection, delay of the parousia and the continuation of the church. The church of which the chapter speaks, he notes, is 'ideal' and 'general'. He concludes from these observations that there is no evidence to suggest Peter historically held the kind of role assigned to him in the text. He understands the distinctiveness of each passage as follows: Peter's authority in ch. 16 is authority to teach Torah and the teaching of Jesus himself. Matthew's purpose in emphasising Peter is to provide certainty that the Matthean community is founded on Jesus' teaching; it is thus guaranteed through him who had stabilised the church as it prepared for difficulties during expected eschatological afflictions (cf. 16.20): 'the content and lineaments of the "rule for the congregation" are therefore the outcome of that teaching'.<sup>13</sup>

Ch. 18 reflects the changed situation in the primitive church when a group of leaders had taken Peter's place. By contrast with the earlier text, it has a definite local congregation in view in its talk of the church, and all members are now involved in decision making about exclusion from the community. Binding and loosing have been disassociated from their textual origin with one believer in Jesus and have become the responsibility of all.

Doris Donnelly's study of the Matthean manual of discipline has a different emphasis from that of Bornkamm. She is not concerned to the same extent with the origins and inter-relationship of the texts about the 'keys', but rather with digesting the practical advice which at least the latter text yields to contemporary readers. Her study also highlights some of the attitudes we might expect the early community to have taken to offenders, which is like that which we also find reflected in some of Paul's writing (see below, p. 55), as well as that found in some post-biblical records of the young church's attitude, such as Clement of Alexandria's story of St. John and the Robber Chief.<sup>14</sup> Studying 18.15-18, Donnelly expounds the following features of the teaching. First, the teaching is concerned with ending the negative behaviour of the offender. Second, she argues that there is maintained throughout the procedure suggested in the chapter a 'climate of conversion', intending to restore the offender to community and ensure his or her salvation. Third, the text encourages a 'climate of healing' for the victim, enabling him or her to forgive. She notes a sequentially ordered plan of action, in which the victim takes the first step towards re-engagement with his or her offender. The harshest measure involved in the process is the possibility of expelling the offender from the community - a tactic which, she suggests, 'may foster a sense of loneliness for the community that will accelerate a reunion'.<sup>15</sup>

One of the purposes of Donnelly's exposition is to dispel the notion that forgiveness is incompatible with confrontation (see

above, p. 43). She uses the Matthean manual of discipline to counter the emphasis of the first major discourse in Matthew's gospel on 'turning the other cheek' (Matt.5.39). Forgiveness is not, she notes, 'without backbone, spine, muscle or strength', as might be expected from an unsympathetic reading of the first discourse, and the manual of discipline provides an understanding of forgiveness which is 'firm and bracing but compassionate as well'.<sup>16</sup>

Both Bornkamm and Donnelly provide some insight into the disciplinary procedures of the early church which designated certain persons as either inside or outside the community. As well as Matthew's witness, two texts from Paul's Corinthian correspondence pinpoint the same kind of practice.

As if present I have already pronounced judgement in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (I Corinthians 5.3b-5).

If anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent - not to exaggerate it - to all of you. This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I urge you to re-affirm your love for him. ...Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ (II Corinthians 2.5-10).

As in the Matthean experience, Paul is severe and concerned for the offender. It is clear from his writing in the first letter that he is pronouncing what he believes to be the judgement of God. It is unlikely that both Corinthian texts refer to the community's behaviour towards one individual, but it does appear

from the text in II Corinthians that the severity of the community's judgement with respect at least to one person has succeeded in making the offender clear of his offence and evoking his repentance. Paul then advises the community that their rebuking must stop before other problems set in, such as despair on the sinner's part, or 'community sadism'<sup>17</sup> on the part of the others. As with Matthew's instruction, the exclusion of a member is not a signal for the final termination of relationship.

Luke 17.3-4 provides more hints in a similar vein of an activity in which the whole congregation may engage, because the whole congregation suffers pain because of one's sin. Also within the New Testament canon is James' counsel to his readers to 'confess your sins to one another...' (James 5.16) which has tended to be central in Protestant discussions of confession.

Two other very early witnesses suggest the young church practised a disciplinary procedure. First, the Didache (written probably between 90 and 100 A.D.) includes in the fourteenth chapter:

On the Lord's day, come together and break bread, and make a eucharist. But first confess your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Ignatius of Antioch, who died c.110 includes in his letter to the Philippians: 'To all, however, who repent the Lord grants pardon provided that through repentance they return to the unity of God and to the council of the bishop' (ch.8).<sup>19</sup>

The Shepherd of Hermas, which can be dated 100-140, lays some foundations for the later understanding of penance. The letter introduces a rule of a single opportunity for penance, which

became a model for the tradition in the west at any rate.

From some teachers I have heard, Sir, said I, that there is no other penance except the one when we went down into the water and received remission of our former sins. You have heard well, said he to me, for such is the case...

...Those who have just come to believe or who are about to believe, do not undergo penance for sins, but (through baptism) have remission of their former sins. It is then for those who were called before these days that the Lord has established penance.

It goes on to argue that penance was established by the Lord, who knew in advance human weakness and the devil's wiles.

But I tell you, said he, after that great and holy calling [of baptism], if anyone is tempted by the devil and sins, he has but one penance. For if anyone should sin and do penance frequently, to such a man his penance will be of no avail; for with difficulty will he live (Commandment 4.3).<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from this extract that the pattern of one baptism and a single penance became an early norm in the young church. As Clement of Alexandria (d.215) expands on this tradition, 'it is fitting that he who has received the remission of his sins [through baptism] should sin no more...'<sup>21</sup> clearly echoing the Shepherd. Clement gives a reason for the once only opportunity, as follows:

Continued and repeated penance for sins differs in no way from the case of those who have not believed at all, except alone in the consciousness that they do sin. And I do not know which of the two is worse, the case of the man who sins knowingly, or of the one who has repented his sins and afterwards sins again.<sup>22</sup>

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon c.180, is the first known source to introduce the word exomologesis by which the tradition of second penance came to be known. The word first appears in the story of Marcus and the deacon's wife (c.150) which recounts how the beautiful wife of a deacon in the Asian church was seduced by the devious Marcus, and when 'with much effort' (on their part) she

was brought back by church members, 'continued the whole time to make confession (exomologesis), mourning and weeping over the defilement she had suffered from this imposter'.<sup>23</sup> It is notable that by this time that the early church did not believe that sins committed after baptism could be forgiven by the church, but that forgiveness could only be granted by the performance of a penance before God.

The term exomologesis is next used in the known source documents by Tertullian, in his phase as an orthodox Catholic (c.193-207). His work On Penance is perhaps the fullest insight into penitential theology and practice at the end of the second century. Where Hermas had emphasised the interior work of repentance, Tertullian demands the expression of repentance in some external act (9.1). His rationale for penance is as follows: 'repeated sickness must have repeated medicine,'<sup>24</sup> but he insists, with the earlier tradition, that second penance is the final opportunity to repent, 'for the next time will be of no profit' (ch.7).<sup>25</sup>

Chapter nine of the same work outlines the system of public penance in use in his time. Penance is described by the term introduced by Irenaeus, exomologesis. 'By it we confess our sin to the Lord, not as one who is not aware of it, but inasmuch as confession prepares for satisfaction, from confession penance is born, by confession God is appeased'.<sup>26</sup> Tertullian explains that throwing oneself at the feet of the presbyter engages him in intercession on one's behalf, and the judgement one receives from

him is accepted by God instead of future divine judgement. Temporal punishment discharges eternal punishment. Exomologesis, he continues, casts one down, but raises one up higher, makes one sordid but cleanses one more, accuses but excuses also, condemns and absolves. Indeed, 'the less you spare yourself, the more believe me, God will spare you'.<sup>27</sup> Penance is perceived as no less than a 'second remedy against hell'. Tertullian came to reject this teaching in his Montanist phase, in which he introduced distinctions between sins which are remissible and others which bishops in the church have no authority to forgive, and must leave to the judgement of God alone. He also restricted the 'commission to Peter' to Peter alone and not his successors. Nevertheless, the Catholic teaching of Tertullian marks the beginnings of a tradition starting to take a definite shape. Already, we see the development of two distinct features which expand the New Testament patterns in the emphasis on a once only opportunity to repent and the emphasis on performing penance.

Origen (185-253) identifies various ways in scripture by which he believed sin to receive remission. The seventh form he identifies is penance, which he relates to the teaching of James 5: 'although hard and laborious, the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner bathes his couch in tears, and his tears become his bread by day and night, and when he is not ashamed to show his sin to the priest of the Lord, and to seek the remedy...'.<sup>28</sup> With Origen we also see the development of a period of time in which penitents were to show the genuineness of their conversion and which would lead to re-admission to the community.



It lasted for longer than the period of the catechumenate (probably three years). By contrast with Tertullian's later views, Origen's opinions on the power of the keys represent a more orthodox early perspective. He argues that the power of the keys is the prerogative of successive ministers 'provided they are of such character that Christ builds his church upon them, and that to them the saying ['Thou art Peter'] may worthily be applied...'.<sup>29</sup> Notwithstanding this teaching, it seems that the witness of Paul to the Corinthians occupied a more central place in Origen's thinking, for he makes central the advice Paul gives to the church at Corinth with regard to the incestuous member in I Corinthians 5 and this the model to be followed in the administration of penance. Origen is also especially interesting in that he appears to allow not only for public penance but hints also at an alternative practice of private penance for lesser sins. He praises particular qualities which one might hope to find in a good confessor, and advises the penitent to seek out such a one. If Origen's advice does concern a private confession, it was not standard practice for those sins which came to be labelled the 'canonical triad' - apostasy, adultery and murder - which were known as mortal crimes, and may have been thought appropriate for lesser sins - mortal faults - which could be countered by repeated penance. Vices of speech and habit are cited as examples of these less serious sins. Origen writes that 'it is only for graver crimes that an opportunity for penance is conceded only once; but these common faults which we often commit always allow of penance and continually find remission'.<sup>30</sup> With this, a third feature characteristic of the early rite emerges.

A definite influence on the development of the penitential discipline came with the Decian persecutions of 249-250 which victimised those who did not possess a certificate (libellus) to affirm that they had sacrificed to the Roman gods. This systematic and empire-wide persecution demanded some pastoral response from the church. Novatian adopted a rigorous approach to those who had lapsed during persecution, denying them re-admission to the church, and although the church which he headed was to survive into the eighth century his rigorist position was outlawed by the majority of bishops after the Decian trauma. Cyprian of Carthage (c.200-258) is the best known of the majority who opposed Novatian. He responds to the circumstances of those who had lapsed by actually sacrificing (sacrificati) and those who had attained a document which said they had sacrificed though they had not done so, but gained the document illicitly (libellatici). In 251 the First Council in Carthage, chaired by Cyprian, took the view that those who had paid for a libellatici could be re-admitted to the church immediately, and those who had actually sacrificed were to be subject to penance for the rest of their life and only re-admitted to the church just prior to death. Cyprian illustrates the way in which the discipline evolved in response to pastoral needs.

The exomologesis tradition developed into a lengthy and complex system. By the fifth century recognisable stages developed in the penitential process, and these stages found elaborate expression in the liturgical action of the churches. An example which

illustrates well the liturgical celebration of penance is that of the system used in fifth-century Asia-Minor. Four grades in the order of penitents may be identified. Penitents' participation in worship corresponded to their growth towards reconciliation and renewed welcome in eucharistic fellowship: 'weepers' remained outside the church building, 'hearers' stayed at the back of the church during the ministry of the word, 'kneelers' worshipped with the main body of the congregation but were dismissed with the catechumens and so received the bishop's blessing, while 'standers' stayed for the whole liturgy but did not receive the eucharist.<sup>31</sup> It seems that this discipline was given a theological rationale by reference to scriptural texts integral to the liturgy, such as Matthew 25.31-46 and Ezekiel 34.11-46, which were read together to suggest that penance was one way in which God searched for God's sheep and returned them to God's fold prior to the day when sheep and goats must be decisively separated. The episcopal action of holding a right hand over the penitent as a signal of their reconciliation was established in this period and was given a rationale as an invocation for God to 'place his compassionate hand in our hand'.<sup>32</sup> A further feature of the early rite was also the association of penance with Lent, which emerged as the time of the year deemed particularly significant for its celebration.

Joseph Martos writes of the developing system of penance that

It was a richly symbolic and impressively rigorous system, but it did not last. Its origins lay in the church of the martyrs, when becoming a Christian meant risking life and property, and when being excommunicated seemed to be a fate worse than death. But now Christianity was the official religion of the Roman empire... if few people undertook

public penance in the early days, now even fewer did.<sup>33</sup>

To meet the needs engendered by this decline, Cyprian points one way forward, in that he also witnesses to a more unfamiliar discipline. He names this confessio.<sup>34</sup> This appears to have involved the consultation of clergy in private to discuss problems of conscience and seek advice. If this tradition is distinct from that which had grown to be general practice, it marks the first of a number of significant trends which splinter the exomologesis tradition. Cyprian writes,

Though bound by no crime of sacrifice or certificate, yet, because they had contemplated such a crime, with sorrow and candour confess this very thing to the priests of God, make an exomologesis of their conscience, cast off the weight that burdens their minds, and even for such slight and moderate wounds seek out a remedy.<sup>35</sup>

This system was thought appropriate for lesser sins than demanded engagement in the public system. It is properly distinguished from the public system in that although this ministry involved the imposition of a public penance, the confessional element was confidential. It appears that by the sixth century this private form of penitential exercise was more prevalent in the church than the earlier public and unpopular exomologesis, which by that time had retained little place in the lives of many ordinary Christians.

Gregory the Great (d. 604) also points to another splintering of the tradition. He compiled some guidelines concerned with ascribing penances to fit particular crimes<sup>36</sup> and among these he included some instruction on clergy who had committed serious sin. He writes that they were to be 'degradated, but they are not to be deprived of fellowship with the faithful'.<sup>37</sup> This clerical

tradition evolved into the pattern where 'fallen' clerics would retire from public life, perhaps into a monastic setting, in order to perform penitential activities for the duration of the degradation.

As clerics were not allowed to do penance, neither were penitents allowed to become clerics. Other consequences of engaging in penance forbade engagement in commercial or military professions. Single penitents were bound to be celibate and married penitents encouraged to abandon sexual activity with their spouses.<sup>38</sup>

As the exomologesis tradition splintered into other models of discipline within the mainstream western tradition, a major challenge arose from Celtic Christianity - soul-friendship. The Calendar of Oengus catches the importance with which this practice came to be regarded - 'A person without a soul-friend (anmarcha) is a body without a head'.<sup>39</sup> Soul-friendship was the most salient influence on the growth of private confession in the wider church. Its origins lie with Irish missionaries of the fifth century who sought to develop a mode of penance rooted in a monastic tradition which laid emphasis on continual metanoia. The notion of constant conversion contrasts sharply with the Roman model of reconciliation being offered only once, and spread from religious communities into the general observance of the laity in the form of private and repeated confession made to travelling religious. These religious carried copies of penitential literature which were held to deal out appropriate penances for particular sins and keep some kind of uniformity and fairness in

their imposition: a task related to talk of binding and loosing. The growth of this movement may be explained in terms of a pastoral response to a shortage of priests, a poor infrastructure and the difficulty of travel in regions where it sprang up. One of its distinctive marks came to be confession to a fellow layperson. Diarmuid O'Laoghaire's study of the tradition cites St. Columbanus asking the rhetorical question 'when is a person competent to answer for the souls of others?' and answering 'when he is competent to answer for his own soul first...'.<sup>40</sup> The confessor must also be 'learned in the rules of conduct laid down in scripture and the rules of the saints'.<sup>41</sup> No mention is made of a need to be priested. As well as mutual soul-friendship among laypeople<sup>42</sup> it also appears that women could take on the role of anmarcha. Pat Starkey cites some examples to make this point: St. Brigid is said to have heard the confession and assigned the penance of one boy, and St. Brendon is said to have confessed to St. Ita.<sup>43</sup> The tradition, however, never involved the anmarcha pronouncing absolution over the friend, as it was often understood that absolution was granted in the liturgy of the mass. This understanding allowed for the practice to develop into an increasingly frequent occurrence: 'as the floor is swept everyday so is the soul cleansed everyday by confession'.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst the Celtic tradition intended to promote the understanding that penances were effective only in so far as they enabled genuine contrition and change of heart, they also perpetuated a legalistic and rigid approach to sin in so far as outward conformity to sometimes lengthy and intense penances rather than

interior repentance again became the focus. Two features of this trend can be seen in the wearing of hairshirts and having ashes imposed on the forehead becoming part of the popular observance of penance in this period.

With time, this Celtic tradition came to shelter a number of trends which were later understood as abuses. Towards the close of the eighth century the practice of arrea ('substitutes' which evolved into indulgences in the later tradition) is recorded.<sup>45</sup> This involved those unable to finish their penance, perhaps on account of a threat of death, being able to substitute a lengthy penance with a heavier and more intense one. It was also possible to substitute other individuals to endure a penance on behalf of the sinner. Sometimes the rich were able to hire the poor to accept penances on their behalf, a trend well illustrated by the story cited by Martos of a wealthy person hiring an army to fulfil a seven-year penance in the space of three days.<sup>46</sup>

In response to this kind of 'abuse' the Catholic hierarchy sought to bring penitential systems more directly under control by having Celtic books withdrawn. Other regulations imposed upon the practice by the Roman authorities were the eighth century recommendation that confession of grave sins be made prior to reception of the eucharist, whilst some official canons made confession mandatory up to three times annually. However, the Fourth Lateran Council represents the most structured attempt in the medieval period to counter unofficial penitential systems. It has been described as 'perhaps the most important legislative act in the history of the church'.<sup>47</sup> It insisted that the

'saving' statute of 'Easter duties' be observed, whereby all the faithful 'of either sex, on reaching the age of discernment' are to confess all their sins in private to their own priest as a condition for being able to enter the church whilst alive or be granted a Christian burial at death.<sup>48</sup> The council set standards for clergy listening to confessions and spawned a number of Summae for confessors. It marks a significant turning point in the history of penitential discipline inasmuch as before the council private confession to a priest had been unofficial, whereas with the council, it was endorsed officially and effectively replaced public penance as the official sacrament of the church.

The period around the Fourth Lateran Council was also an important time for discussion about the understanding of forgiveness in the rite. A tendency emerged to displace confessors' prayers for divine forgiveness of the penitent with statements of absolution. Charting this trend in the history of the rite is difficult, as the meaning of the word 'absolution' gradually gathered more weight, and cannot be read as holding one fixed meaning across many centuries. Gregory the Great<sup>49</sup> is probably the first author to refer to the priest's ministry as absolution. He writes of the 'absolution of the president' following 'the decision of the eternal judge', i.e. God. The eleventh century Sacramentary of Arezzo marks a significant point in the liturgical usage of absolution formulae. It adds an indicative formula of absolution to the deprecative prayer or prayer for pardon. The novel section is as follows:



And I Christ's priest, through the intercession of blessed Peter the Prince of the Apostles, to whom God gave the power of binding and loosing, and through whom this same power has been given to Christ's bishops and priests, and in accord with my ministry, absolve thee from all sentences with which I have bound thee for thy sins...<sup>50</sup>

The Synod of Nimes was important in the move towards the usual usage of an indicative formula. Held in 1284, it outlined a prayer of absolution which began as a depreciative prayer and then shifted into indicative mode.

One major shift involved in this was that the penitent received absolution now as an immediate response to his or her confession of sin, and penance followed rather than preceded the statement of, or prayer for, forgiveness. The church's teaching on penance subsequently became more defined. Clement IV insisted on the necessity for salvation of confessing all sins to one's own priest, or with his permission to another priest. The Council of Constance in 1415 condemned the views of the sacrament's detractors, including John Wycliff (c.1330-1384). The Council of Florence in 1439 is especially important in the definition of subsequent Roman Catholic position as it represents the official legitimation of one approach to the sacrament after some time in which the rite was subject to diverse theories.

Prior to the Council of Florence two schools of scholastic thought emerged in relation to the priestly performance of the ego te absolvo formula. The first school is represented by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and Peter Lombard (c.1100-1159) who saw the acts of the penitent as the sacramental sign, with divine forgiveness arising from confession and contrition. Abelard's

eighth sermon speaks of reconciliation to God occurring when one is resolved to confess and undertake satisfaction. He states that 'with true repentance... sin does not remain'.<sup>51</sup> Abelard understood the power of the keys being given to the apostles and not equally to their successors. Bishops and priests do not exercise the same power as the apostles were granted. His later stance held that they could reconcile to the church but not to God: bishops and priests were to excommunicate and lift bars of excommunication in a non-arbitrary fashion.<sup>52</sup> Lombard gives weight to elements within this tradition. He states that 'from the moment that anyone with contrite heart proposes to confess, God forgives...'.<sup>53</sup> If one intends to confess in one's heart, forgiveness is granted. Lombard also allows for confession to a layman if no priest is available (compare above, p. 65). In such cases, the penitent is worthy of pardon because he or she desires to confess to a priest. The priest, however, must be 'sought zealously,' because God has granted him the power to bind and loose, and hence, whom he forgives, God forgives. Again agreeing with Abelard, Lombard writes that although a person may be loosed before God, he or she is not loosed in the eyes of the church except by the priest's judgement.<sup>54</sup>

The second school ascribed more power to the priest in so far as it underscored his role as effectively forgiving sins by virtue of his standing in line with those apostles addressed by Christ who granted the power of God to bind and loose. This second school is associated especially with Hugh of St. Victor (c.1096-1141). Hugh argues that God's own decision regarding forgiveness

follows that of the confessor. God has effectively 'delegated' all responsibility in this respect. He argues, however, that 'men' have no power of themselves, but that they receive it all from God.

Attempts to reconcile these two positions led to the formal distinction between mortal and venial sins, perfect and imperfect contrition, and temporal and eternal punishment. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was to champion an approach to the sacrament which found universal acceptance by holding together the main tenets of both Lombard's and Hugh's approaches. Aquinas argued both for the value of contrition and attention to penance and distinguished between form and matter in the sacrament, both of which he said were required to establish its true efficacy. The matter, he argued, was the action of the penitent (felt sorrow, confession, performance of penance) and of the priest (listening to the confession and pronouncing absolution) whilst the form was the formula of absolution itself which effects God's forgiveness. Remission of sin requires whole-hearted contrition, which Aquinas understood to be enabled by divine grace mediated and signified through the priest's absolution.<sup>55</sup>

Through the Middle Ages, however, and despite the Council of Florence giving weight to the contritionist emphasis of Abelard, absolution increasingly became the focus of the rite.

Reformers' critiques of penance were directed both against the teaching of the Catholic Church on the sacrament and against the abuses which became entangled with the practice of the rite, such

as indulgences, sometimes sanctioned by Popes (e.g. Calixtus, 1447; Leo X, 1515). Martin Luther (1483-1546) himself advocated the practice of auricular confession:

The secret confession... although it cannot be proved from scripture, is in my opinion highly satisfactory and useful and necessary.<sup>56</sup>

His argument for the retention of confession had two central tenets - that its shame was a way of carrying one's cross, and that in absolution one received a clear assurance of pardon. He produced an examination of conscience in 1523 and his views were crystallised in the Augsberg Confession of 1530. Article XIII states that 'the genuine sacraments, therefore, are baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence...)'.<sup>57</sup> As Luther understood the rite, it was the true contrition of the penitent which evoked the forgiveness of God, and in turn enabled the personal experience of peace and joy on the part of the penitent. Luther identified the question of penance after absolution as a central difficulty, taking this to imply some diminution of the satisfaction for sin accomplished by the death of Jesus. In terms of how the rite was to be performed these shifts in understanding involved more emphasis on sins which troubled the conscience of the penitent as opposed to the recitation of all sins held in his or her remembrance, for (as Luther puts it) 'when we sincerely desire to confess everything, we desire in effect to leave nothing for God's mercy to forgive'.<sup>58</sup> Luther also sought to emphasise not the imposition of a penance but the proclamation of God's forgiveness.

John Calvin (1509-1564) appears to advocate some form of

confession and absolution as preparatory for eucharistic participation, although he was clearly critical of contemporary Catholic practice.<sup>59</sup> Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) represents the most distinct reform of the sacrament and writes that 'auricular confession is nothing but a consultation in which we receive from him whom God has appointed... advice as to how we can secure peace of mind'.<sup>60</sup> These Reformed approaches may be seen to prefigure the kind of spirituality characteristic of the Protestant churches and which is well encapsulated in John Bunyan's (1628-1688) Pilgrim's Progress - that of the solitary journeyer. Certainly, this kind of individualistic emphasis is less imaginable in the context of a spirituality centred on the Catholic sacrament.

The position taken at the Council of Trent (particularly in October and November 1551) in response to the Reformers' evaluation of penance stressed its sacramentality and understood it as a means of appropriating the benefits of Christ's death by those who had fallen after baptism. Thus penance was a 'second plank after shipwreck' and necessary for the salvation of such sinners. It is likened to experience of a tribunal, with the penitent as the accused and the priest in the role of the judge whose sentence frees the sinner from sin. The teaching of the Council Fathers affirms the Thomist synthesis of scholastic views (see above, p. 70), with the sacrament's form defined as the absolution formula, and the 'quasi-matter' identified as the penitent's own contribution, which is also integral to the accomplishment of real forgiveness.<sup>61</sup> Contrition and confession

are defined and the ancient idea of priests and bishops being conferred with power to forgive sins by virtue of their ordination and as distinct from laypeople are all expounded in the council documents. Penance retains a central place as that which detaches the sinner from sin, encourages future faithfulness and vigilance, and conforms the believer to Christ who made full satisfaction for sin by his passion.

The shape of penance was now largely defined in the Roman Catholic tradition and remained to a great extent the same down to the mid-twentieth century. Significant exceptions to this observation are Pius V's cancellation of every indulgence for which money had been offered in 1567 and the 1614 revision of the Roman sacramentary which made mandatory the use of a screen between priest and penitent. Change came to Roman practice this century in 1905 with Pius X encouraging the faithful to receive the mass more frequently, which in turn fostered more frequent confession (at least for a time). The Second Vatican Council led to a revolution in the Catholic practice and understanding of the sacrament. A thorough-going revision of the rite came with the publication in December 1973 of the Order of Penance, which offered three liturgies, one for the reconciliation of individual penitents, a second form for individual confession and communal absolution, and a third for general confession and absolution. This marked a definite move away from some elements in the theology of the medieval rite.

## 2.2 'OCCASION OF GRACE'?

### CONTEMPORARY CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

In order to address some issues surrounding the contemporary celebration of the sacrament of penance I shall use as my starting points the four aims with which those commissioned in 1966 to create the new Roman Catholic rite the Order of Penance set about their task.<sup>62</sup>

Their aims arose in response to the call of the Second Vatican Council document Sacrosanctum Concilium, paragraph 72. It identifies a need to express more clearly both the sacrament's nature and effect.<sup>63</sup> The group's aims were expressed largely in terms of one paragraph from another document of Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, paragraph 11 of which reads

Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offence committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, example and by prayer labours for their conversion.<sup>64</sup>

The group's first aim, then, was defined as expressing more clearly the nature of sin as an offence against both God and the church. Their second aim was to clarify the idea of reconciliation with both God and the church in the sacrament. Third, the notion of the whole church working with the sinner's effort through charity, example and prayer was to be emphasised. Fourth, they wanted to be clear about the value of the sacrament's contribution to fostering Christian life, a theme also adopted from the 11th paragraph of Lumen Gentium which

records at its close that 'strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful... are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity, by which the Father himself is perfect'.<sup>65</sup>

The new emphasis on sin against others as well as against God marked a shift away from the post-Tridentine emphasis on personal sin, in that it sees the sin of one as damaging to the community of the church as a whole, as Paul taught the Corinthian congregation (cf. II Cor.2.5). This emphasis is not only biblical, but also a dominant feature of patristic thought, as Ambrose's comment illustrates: 'It is the church that is wounded by our sins'.<sup>66</sup> As well as Lumen Gentium 11, another impulse towards this theological movement can be noted in the Vatican II documents in Sacrasanctum Concilium 109 which speaks of the 'social consequences of sin' as well as of penance as 'a detestation of sin because it is an offence against God'.<sup>67</sup> These insights reflect the theological influence of Karl Rahner (1904-1984) on the new understanding of the rite. As well as being one of those commissioned to construct the new rite, he had been an official theological consultant to the Second Vatican Council since 1962 and his own work was encouraging new perspectives on sin. He states that

Sin is opposition to the holy will of God... the offence against God is the very essence of sin. Over and above this, sin is however not only an offence against the nature of man and against his supernatural calling to grace, and against the growth and ever deeper personal acceptance of this grace, sin is also an offence against the holy communion of the redeemed, which is the Church... the baptized sinner becomes guilty in regard to the Church by his sin... He for his part renders the Church itself sinful in some regard.<sup>68</sup>



Hence, following Rahner and the stance adopted by Vatican II, paragraph five of the Order of Penance (hereafter O.P.) speaks of the sin of one being harmful to others and of people co-operating in wrong-doing. Paragraph seven speaks of the 'wounds of sin' being many and varied for both the sinner and for the community to which the sinner belongs.

Responses to this emphasis have been mixed. An assessment of Catholic devotion by Margaret Hebblethwaite (in her contribution to a comprehensive volume on modern Catholicism) suggests that alongside renewed participation in the eucharist there has been a marked decline in attendance at penance.<sup>69</sup> It is likely that the former initiated the second to some extent, for as Wolfhart Pannenberg observes, contemporary eucharistic spirituality centres on participation in the communion of Christ's body whereas the older piety of penance is focused on consciousness of sin and separation from God.<sup>70</sup> The two forms of spirituality do not sit easily side by side, and though I doubt that it was intended (see above, p. 73), the shift to a new eucharistic focus in spiritual life may well have changed the way people approach the idea of sin, either against God or others.

It does seem as if the older piety of penance had promoted what for many Catholics have been unwelcome feelings of guilt and fostered a ('shopping-list') approach to sin which they felt to be inadequate. An additional factor in the decline of the rite (at least in Catholicism) has undoubtedly been a widespread refusal to accept the wisdom of the church's hierarchy on issues of morality, which I shall shortly address in more detail (see

below, pp. 96-106).

It certainly is the case that many confessors witness to the difficulty many penitents experience in identifying and confessing specific sins. Instead they bring a general sense of sinfulness to confessional experience.<sup>71</sup> This betrays a changing shift of consciousness which is expressed in terms of confessing not what 'I have done', but rather, in some way, of being aware of the flaws in 'who I am'. Ladislav Orsy notes that the new rite may ascertain not only the sins of the penitent but also his or her 'direction in life',<sup>72</sup> though others are not so optimistic about this. The distinction is clarified by John Mahoney by way of analogy between depressing forms of recollection of sin likened by him to framing stills on a cinematic picture, and the 'plot and theme'<sup>73</sup> approach to one's life which the new rite does not ignore, at least according to Orsy. Mahoney himself is one of those more sceptical about this. Either way, what is clear is that many modern people understand that personal life is in need of gracing in terms of 'problems' rather than 'sins'. And for people who do experience this, the fifth paragraph of the O.P. may be of some help in articulating their experience.

I think that this point is enormously important. This shift of consciousness is well illustrated by the personal testimony of a writer who relates her own difficult situation to sacramental experience. Tracy Hansen reflects on how she had to re-appropriate the sacrament of penance after being the victim of rape as a child.

I had not thought of the sacrament of reconciliation... as a healing sacrament until this aspect was explained to me. I had thought of it only in terms of forgiveness, and thus the only things I thought I should speak of were things I regarded as my own personal sins. But once the trauma [of abuse] began, I had trouble deciding what was and what was not my fault. Then the healing aspect was explained to me, and I began to see the sacrament differently: usually I divided my confession into two areas, very roughly,... first, there was the area of personal sin, and secondly, there was the area of things that I knew were not my fault, but needed healing...<sup>74</sup>

Thankfully, not all persons face such great 'problems' and although the sins and sinners involved in Hansen's situation may not be characteristic of all experience brought to the confessional, she may have made some connections which many others may also need to make if the sacrament is going to be an 'occasion of grace' for them, though their circumstances may be less distressing.

Theologians of liberation might especially be seen to have promoted and popularised the notion that sin may manifest itself in social or structural forms. Jon Sobrino, for example, suggests that Jesus' 'harshest condemnations are not directed against the individual sinner who does not fulfil the law out of frailty; they are directed against the collective sins that create a situation contrary to the kingdom...' so that the basic moral virtue espoused by Jesus is seen to be 'recreative justice'.<sup>75</sup> This kind of tendency in interpreting the gospel traditions has been tempered by the restraint of its critics, such as David Brown, who points to the historical improbability of this interpretation on several grounds.<sup>76</sup> John Macquarrie is also cautious about talk of 'collective sins' of the kind made central in Sobrino's understanding. Macquarrie wants to encourage

more vigilance about the employment of the word 'sin' and suggests that properly speaking sin refers to our defiance of God. He expands: 'it is a misuse of language to talk about sinning against our fellow men and women. We harm them, offend them, etc., and all that is at the same time a sin against God, but it is against God only that (in the strict sense of the word) we sin'.<sup>77</sup> Macquarrie (an Anglican) departs from the official Catholic stance in this respect, and whether he is correct or not on his point about sin, we need to note the recovery of the biblical and patristic notion above, so that even if damage to others is not named as sin, we are clear about the the harm it may cause other human beings.

However, other questions may be begged concerning the way such a social emphasis may be seen to encourage 'uncritical sentimentality' (to employ Brian Horne's phrase) in people by perhaps facilitating a shift in focus away from a personal need for self-searching and for owning responsibility. Brian Horne's challenge is simple and striking: 'in the end, who does sin, if not the individual?'<sup>78</sup> In this light Brown and Macquarrie's restraint can be praised as their criticisms are much to the point (see above, p.78-79). More alarming, in my view at least, is the papal discouragement of emphasis on social sin, which Catholicism was recently coming to accept. The Pope has discouraged the use of the third order in the O.P., 'The Reconciliation of a Group of Penitents with a General Confession and Absolution', which has been appreciated especially for fostering a sense of social sin by those who seek to address it.

Typical of the Pope's view is the comment in Reconciliatio et Paenitentia (hereafter R.P.) that 'the confession of sins must ordinarily be individualistic and not collective...'.<sup>79</sup> The Pope refuses to recognise exactly what John Gilbert, for example, praises in the third order. Gilbert points out that the detractors of the third order are often those not working in parishes and he wants to present his readers with some of his own reflections on pastoral experience. He argues that some penitents are compelled to refuse to use the rites for individuals because they find the idea of individual confession 'morally impossible'. The only clause which allows non-attendance at individual confession since the Fourth Lateran Council, as O.P. 34 states, is inability to do so 'for some just cause'. Gilbert wants to get over this difficulty by arguing that

perhaps some psychological weakness is the cause. But, whatever the reason (and we who are pastoral persons are not expected to be a competent judge of this), many persons in fact find it morally impossible to confess their sins to the priest individually. Clearly, the third rite is an enormous blessing for these persons. Whether their number be great or small, the church, concerned with each person and his or her saving journey, rejoices that the sacramental doors are now open to him or her.<sup>80</sup>

He adds that many use the third order as one way of approaching the priest for informal sharing in response to their involvement in the order, and he wants to see this sharing established as a legitimate alternative to the sacrament administered individually. Again, what this seems to show is that people may experience difficulty in naming their own specific sins (see above, p. 77), but continue to hope for the grace of God and the guidance and care of the church. I am aware that there is a

complex debate which needs to be explored here about the extent to which sin which is publicly acknowledged can ever be countered without transformation which is personal, yet to draw to a close my comments related to the first aim of the creators of the O.P., it seems to me that the closing of options by the Pope loses some of the needed balance which might otherwise have been encouraged.

The second aim of the compilers of the O.P. was to clarify the idea of reconciliation with both God and the church. Because sin had begun to be given wider meanings in Catholic devotion and understanding, the theological approach to reconciliation also developed. One shift of massive significance in the O.P. has been the consistent use of the terminology of 'reconciliation' at the expense of that of 'forgiveness of sins'. Much in the rite reflects a move away from an emphasis on the purification of the individual penitent prevalent since the medieval period. The shift to this broader understanding of what is happening in the rite is underlined at the outset of the O.P.'s doctrinal introduction as it reflects on the character of Jesus' own mission:

Jesus... not only exhorted men to repent so as to leave their sinful ways and turn to God with all their hearts. He himself welcomed sinners and reconciled them to God. Moreover, he healed the sick,... and finally died for our sins... (O.P.1)

Christian Duquoc, writing after the Second Vatican Council but before the publication of the O.P., notes that hostility to the sacrament of penance could be explained by reference to many Catholics believing it to be too narrowly concerned with personal

forgiveness. Instead, he suggests, there is a recognition by such persons of the need to attend to social injustice as more important. So,

The more seriously a Christian takes the historical struggle for reconciliation, the less he perceives the meaning of the existing forms of sacramental reconciliation.<sup>a1</sup>

Duquoc argues that people who take this view understand forgiveness as being obsessed with the past, with the sacrament seen as confining reconciliation to an unhealthy and inward return to the past. Some of the complaints he raises - such as the rite being robbed of its social character and its being perceived as a 'private affair' - were directly addressed by those commissioned to reform the rite, and we may note as especially significant O.P.5 which correlates the sacrament and work for social justice for the first time in an official Roman Catholic document. It remains telling, however, that many of the complaints Duquoc made vocal prior to the reform continue to be voiced today, particularly in response to the R.P.

James Dallen comments on the papal position as follows: 'it is as though sacramental piety requires privacy and isolated individualism'.<sup>a2</sup> I have already briefly noted the individualistic bent of the document which certainly attempts to withdraw some of the connections between social action and the sacrament made in the rite itself. Indeed, the Pope warns against a 'watering down' of personal sin and rules out the possibility of an affirmation of 'only' social guilt.<sup>a3</sup> Dallen continues on the content of the R.P.,

The points that are emphasised are those most prominent in the teaching of Trent: individual confession and the

priestly ministry of absolution. Vatican II's focal themes, reconciliation with the church and the sacrament's social and ecclesial natures and effects, are put into the background...<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, the Pope is trying to revive interest in forgiveness,<sup>85</sup> which he wants to confine to non-social spheres, and he concentrates his attention on the element of absolution, identifying a three-fold priestly action of imposing a hand whilst making the sign of the cross and reciting the formula 'I absolve you...' as the sacramental 'moment' of encounter with the triune God when God gives the saving power of Christ's death and resurrection to penitents who believe that there and then sins are forgiven by their saviour.<sup>86</sup> With these comments, the Pope is reflecting one understanding of O.P.20, that with absolution in the triune God's name 'the penitent's sins are now forgiven'. In this respect he is not undermining the theology of the O.P., only choosing to emphasise what others have 'neglected' in recent times and which he feels needs to be redressed.

Of the papal teaching I would want to say, with Joseph Schaller, that 'we can neither collapse the complex process of reconciliation into the ritual enactment itself, nor can we divorce that enactment from all that surrounds it...'<sup>87</sup> It seems to me that those who follow the Pope in his emphasis may, without care, make both of these mistakes, and fail to attend to the possibility of making connections many contemporary penitents are also unable to make, yet which I think need to be made.

On the latter issue to which Schaller points us, that of relating to 'all that surrounds' the ritual, we might now turn to consider



what is being thought and said about penance at the present time. J. D. Crichton, for instance, notes that penance is 'a good bridge between celebration and life'.<sup>88</sup> The O.P., at paragraph 18, insists that penance is 'not to be thought of as an expiation for past sins, but as a help in starting a new life and a remedy for human weakness' and which ought to 'correspond as far as possible to the nature and gravity of the sins committed'. Penance taking the shape of service of others are considered especially helpful in that they 'bring out the fact that both sin and forgiveness have a social dimension'. Hence Bernard Häring insists that penances need to be more creative, aimed at repairing damage our sin has done,<sup>89</sup> a comment which corresponds to Dallen's argument that we need to understand that sin is countered not so much by ritual cleansing but by the rebuilding of relationships.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps such insistence is a helpful response to Rahner's important suggestion that the word 'repentance' ought to be ditched for fifty years 'because it has come to be regarded only too easily as a regret, a cheap desire that it might have been otherwise'.<sup>91</sup> He argues that the word 'repent' needs to be replaced with something more like 'change your life', which signals a need to show by actions a desire to change. O.P. 5 teaches that 'penance always implies reconciliation with one's fellow-men, who have suffered the effect of one's sins', and that emphasis stands in a long established tradition of caution in the church about affirming forgiveness without signs of penance. The ancient-ness and the continuity of this tradition can be illustrated by reference to Abelard's re-employment of an argument already in Augustine:

How very many indeed do we daily see dying, groaning deeply, reproaching themselves greatly for usuries, plunderings, oppressions of the poor, and all kinds of injuries which they have committed, and consulting a priest to free them of these faults. If as is proper, the first advice given to them is this, that selling all they have taken - in accordance with Augustine: 'If something which belongs to another is not returned when it can be returned, repentance is not done but is feigned' - instantly by their reply they declare how hollow is their repentance of these things.<sup>92</sup>

On such grounds, some theologians argue that the place for penance must shift from after absolution to before it to make the process more in line with the practice of the church prior to the medieval period (see above, p. 67), as it was only the medieval church which made satisfaction follow absolution as temporal punishment. Hence Dionisio Borobio argues about the need to offer 'space for the genuine internal and external process of conversion',<sup>93</sup> that is, for time between confession and absolution to amend one's life and make satisfaction. Tad Guzie argues in a similar vein when he suggests that 'people no longer go to confession to "get" forgiveness, they go there to proclaim it sacramentally, which means that in the liturgy of confession they are proclaiming a process going on in their lives',<sup>94</sup> that is conversion/contrition (which Guzie uses interchangeably). Confession, in his view of the new rite, provides contexts to externalise internal experiences of penitential life and hence, one only attends confession when one has begun to make amends.

It seems to me that the problem with these arguments is that they temper what I have wanted to say is true about forgiveness in my first chapter. The least of the problems is that they risk collapsing belief in forgiveness into belief in reform (see

above, p. 34). Is the model for the rite proposed by Borobio, for instance, offering guidance towards forgiveness, or reform? What are those who require restitution before words of forgiveness to do with the gospels' witness to Jesus' own practice (see above, p. 12)? Attention to Jesus would suggest that repentance cannot be required before a declaration of forgiveness, though repentance following it is of course not ruled out. The emphasis of the O.P. that penance is not concerned with expiating past sins is surely both correct and commendable in this respect, as are the Pope's comments that penance needs to be adopted out of love not fear in order to testify powerfully to personal commitment.<sup>95</sup> Yet how penance as precisely concerned with expiating past sins might be banished from popular thought I am less sure.

A related issue arising from contemporary celebration of penance which threatens the understanding of forgiveness established in chapter one concerns how people might be convinced a general absolution is genuine absolution if they continue to be required to confess 'forgiven' sins privately (O.P.34). How it can be affirmed that either penance or general absolution do not make absolution conditional or counterfeit I am not clear, as it seems to me that either may at least be perceived as distorting the clarity or assurance persons might expect to receive through absolution.

One alternative to the emphasis on restitution and penance prior to absolution is to follow the path promoted by Michael Schmaus. In Schmaus' view there is no obligation on the penitent to do

anything apart from receive the gift of forgiveness in humility and thankfulness. Brian Horne notes some of the advantages of Schmaus' position: there is no question of earning forgiveness, no danger of believing satisfaction must be made before God is willing to welcome the sinner back out of estrangement, no danger of the sinner believing he or she can cause grace.<sup>96</sup> But if forgiveness is so deeply embedded in the character of God that God refuses to allow a past from which a self has turned define and confine the future, any notion of penance would appear to be redundant. Horne himself, however, wants to correct Schmaus by reviving the Thomistic synthesis Schmaus loses by relating absolution and penance to the notions of God's mercy and judgement respectively. He affirms, with Monika Hellwig, that without personal transformation the sacrament remains a hollow sign,<sup>97</sup> but wants to add that penance may function as a sign of accepting God's judgement, as absolution may function as a sign of divine mercy. Penance is conceptualised as the means by which we 'lay hold of the knowledge' of past sinfulness. For Horne, 'Christian forgiveness must redeem the past by the double exercise of justice and mercy', justice being needed to counter 'complicity in a lie'.<sup>98</sup>

All of these positions have problems attendant upon them. We see at least that the difficulty experienced in chapter one of relating forgiveness and justice together (see above, p. 40) is no less complex in sacramental practice. Perhaps the best that can be said is that penance in the future will need to be accepted voluntarily, rather than imposed by the minister of the

sacrament, if it is to make genuine sense for penitents. Theologically, we need to take account of the perspective that is suggested by a reading of scripture which learns from the biblical scholarship I have emphasised (see above, p. 12). Then we will see that people need to be freed from compulsion to perform penance, though in order to responsible in practice I think that there is a need to continue to ascribe weight to the insights of Augustine and Abelard (see above, pp. 84-85) and others into the motivation of those who fail to perform penance.

Borobio is on the way to an answer which is, in my view, theologically satisfactory when he suggests that forgiveness does not require 'immediate horizontal reciprocity',<sup>99</sup> an insight which might take us close to what we want to affirm in Jesus' practice. However, I would want to place a question-mark against his contention that reconciliation with the church is achieved by absolution and reconciliation with others by satisfaction. This appears to me to amount a power-game, saying that even if God believes in forgiveness, nobody else does! I am also unsure why he argues that immediate horizontal reciprocity is not required when he argues for 'penitential space' prior to reconciliation by absolution.

The place of absolution itself is a further matter of controversy. Francis Mannion's proposals for the restriction of the use of absolution are radical in the present climate of opinion - especially in the light of the Pope's re-affirmation of its centrality. Mannion identifies three functions the present

rite is expected to perform: first, reconciliation of serious sinners; second, meeting the needs of those engaged in ongoing penance; and third, meeting the needs of those seeking spiritual growth and direction. He concludes from these diverse expectations that 'that it is possible for a single ritual form to perform these various functions is seriously doubtful'.<sup>100</sup> He suggests that the rite as it stands is problematic especially as its framework of movement from alienation to reconciliation engenders conflict which is not good for those who use the rite for 'confession of devotion'.

Mannion argues that one rite is needed for reconciliation and another for penance. In his view, sacramental confession should become exclusively associated with the purpose of reconciling those in serious sin, while other forms are produced to aid ongoing penitential conversion. He suggests that the rite at present needs to be reserved specifically for confession of serious sins, while a new rite is needed for confession of devotion. This would require two forms of ministerial pronouncement at the close of the rite - one for those in serious sin, with absolution, and a second with the blessing of persons engaged in ongoing penitential conversion.

In my view, Mannion suggests an appropriate and responsible way through a present difficulty. I recognise that it steps outside a line of traditional Catholic argument, represented recently by the papal appeal that 'great importance must continue to be given to teaching the faithful also to make use of the Sacrament of Penance for venial sins alone',<sup>101</sup> but it also helpfully relates

to the kind of contemporary spirituality Catholics enjoy. It would enable confession of devotion to find a useful and welcomed place in the context of eucharistic spirituality. In such a context, a new or reformed rite could provide non-sacramental assurance for those engaged in spiritual direction, where many at present make confession without a felt-need for a sacramental pronouncement. Monika Hellwig in particular draws attention to this role of spiritual direction and suggests that modern Catholics are likely to use prayer groups, Bible studies and such like as a means towards confession and reconciliation, as much as formal sacramental rites. Indeed, she identifies 'lay and mutual confession that takes place over the kitchen table between neighbours and friends used to giving one another support and encouragement'<sup>102</sup> as one means Catholics may now substitute for sacramental rites, though she suggests that the hearer of confession in such cases 'may be startled if told that she is ministering a sacrament of reconciliation and conversion, but in the broad sense of the word that is what she does', adding that 'the church is built and maintained by ministries such as these'.<sup>103</sup>

Hellwig talks of sacramentality 'in the broad sense' and represents a growing number of Catholics happy to think in terms of sacramental 'breadth'. Disassociating the exclusive connection between the term 'sacrament' and seven particular ministries or rites has been encouraged to some extent since Vatican II and is evident in the arguments of those who want to affirm the genuine grace available in penitential rites without the absolution

formula usually located as central to the rite's sacramentality. Because many contemporary Catholics are able to think in such a way - and find encouragement from many of their theologians for doing so - distinguishing between absolution and non-sacramental blessing for committed penitents may also help revive some credibility for statements like that made by Colman O'Niell on the effect of absolution: that the 'creative forgiveness of God is creative because, unlike human forgiveness which at best can encourage a change of heart in the one who is forgiven, the divine forgiveness makes itself known in the change of the sinner's heart'.<sup>104</sup> At least, it would lift absolution out of a routine which may have become stale or humdrum and help people relate more easily to claims about the special-ness of sacramental forgiveness, even if they don't regularly require it.

Hellwig's comments move us to the third aim identified by the reform group - that of clarifying the notion of the whole church working with the sinner's effort through charity, example and prayer. Hellwig's particular contribution to thinking about this issue is the way she has illustrated and defended ways of being alongside one's fellow-Christians other than those envisaged in the official documents (see above, p. 90). The official writings maintain the distinctive role of the priest, in line with the distinction between the 'common priesthood' and the 'ministerial priesthood' retained by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>105</sup> In the confessional context the priest 'reveals the heart of God the Father to men and acts in the likeness of Christ the good shepherd' (O.P.10a). He 'acts in the person of Christ'



(O.P.6b).<sup>106</sup> The change that is effected with the new official documents is that the priest is now envisaged primarily as healer as opposed to judge. O.P. 10a, for instance maintains the image of judge, but emphasises the healing role of the priest, for reasons perhaps explained by the Pope when he writes that 'modern man is perhaps more sensitive [to the healing aspect of the sacrament], seeing as he does in sin the element of error but even more the element of human weakness and frailty',<sup>107</sup> a point I have already explored (see above, pp. 77-78). Zoltan Alszeghy, one of the those on the commission to reform the rite, identifies the change of emphasis from judge to healer as 'the principal feature of the new rite'.<sup>108</sup>

Though the Pope has also identified the mass, services of atonement, pilgrimages and fasts as para-liturgical forms of penance, thus pointing to wide means by which penitents may be encouraged in line with the aim of O.P.5 of one persons's penance helping others, Hellwig deliberately goes further.<sup>109</sup>

John Hater highlights some of the problems which she brings to the fore in her suggesting that laypersons, not least females, may perform a sacramental ministry to others in hearing confession in non-liturgical contexts, such as her 'confession over the kitchen table'. Hater follows the distinctions of the O.P. 8 and 9 by suggesting that the entire Christian community has a share in the work of reconciliation entrusted to the church, while only bishops and priests have a proper, representative role at liturgical rites. He argues,

These liturgical actions most adequately ritualize God's forgiveness when the Christian community acknowledges how forgiveness and reconciliation happen in the broader context of the common priesthood.<sup>110</sup>

To this extent he follows the papal line in the R. P. in identifying the primary role of the sacramental rite as facilitating forgiveness from God. He develops a system of identifying and distinguishing different pronouncements of forgiveness, some of which he suggests are appropriate to all Christians, others of which he argues are reserved for some of the ordained. He suggests that 'exhortatory' and 'declaratory' expressions of forgiveness might be shared by laypersons but that 'performative' expressions need to be restricted to bishops and priests in that they may 'adequately symbolize God's forgiveness' being able, as they supposedly are, to be a community symbol and represent the community to which they minister. This point also coheres with the papal understanding that 'through the minister... it is the ecclessial community... that welcomes anew the repentant and forgiven sinner'.<sup>111</sup> Performative forgiveness is adequately symbolised, according to Hater, only by those designated by the community sacramentally to forgive sins, hence laypersons are excluded from that particular form of ministry. Robert Kennedy, by contrast, questions some of the assumptions on which Hater works, noting of O.P. 9, that 'we may groan at these heirarchical connections and questionable criteria for competency',<sup>112</sup> though he does do some important work in providing ideas for a theological rationale for Hater's polity by working with the the image of the priest as hospitality-offerer<sup>113</sup> and community host. Despite this, he challenges the

assumption that existing forms of penance adequately express these themes. Nevertheless, I would guess that the theological contribution he provides is likely to make Hater's rigid law-making approach considerably more appealing to many and may provide some inspiration for laypersons who might otherwise be hostile to continued restriction of 'performative' functions. While restriction to the priest may have been supposed to signal that absolution is entrusted to the whole Christian community, to many contemporary minds it has given very different signals, being perceived as having precisely the opposite effect. I think that John Macquarrie's suggestion that various forms of absolution all carry 'one fundamental communication'<sup>14</sup> despite their theological nuances is likely to represent the perspective of many laypersons frustrated or uneasy with arguments which load certain forms with particular meanings. Hater, in my view, is unlikely to do very much to counter their frustration or unease.

The creators' fourth aim was to show how the rite might foster Christian life. I have already discussed the place of penance in the new rite and in recent debate (see above, pp. 83-86). To add to this, it is important to point out O.P.44 which speaks of the sacrament being a 're-enactment of the paschal mystery' and which might provide some further clues to what we want to say about penance. O.P.44 also deals with the question of counsel in the sacrament which is important in respect to the fourth aim. Counsel in the confessional context is sometimes identified as a particular characteristic of the 'sacramental' practice of the Anglican tradition which does not want to limit the Prayer Book

provision for confession, nor requires a 'particular or detailed enumeration' of sins, nor private nor habitual confession,<sup>115</sup> though, somewhat contrary to this, Gaume's manual for confessors which came into use among Anglicans involved in the Oxford Movement promoted the view that 'any who use confession for advice rather than absolution, should be sent back to learn what all sin is...'<sup>116</sup> Thankfully, in my view, Gaume's opinion appears to be on the wane, probably because his comments about knowing 'what sin is' are no longer as relevant as they perhaps once were (see above, pp. 75-80). Karl Rahner also reminds his readers that the priest is not a psychotherapist, 'but a priest - though that wholly' and so one who lends 'historical tangibility to God's effectively forgiving words. As such the priest has 'one word the psychotherapist doesn't: God's word, which forgives sin'.<sup>117</sup> Yet, this said, it can only be very unwise to expect to engage with those persons who cannot entertain what Rahner believes about sin and priesthood without reference to some kind of counselling, especially as therapy is becoming increasingly influential and apparently appealing as compared to traditional confessional experience (see below, pp. 149-150).

The sacrament's role in fostering Christian life can also be related to calls for better education of penitents. Education in this context entails more than teaching on preparation for and celebration of the rites themselves. It involves a more demanding need to enable persons to recognise sin, or (in Gaume's terms) to know 'what sin is', at a time when appeals to ethical absolutism are under threat. In respect of this question, I want to look at

the question of how the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance relates to the teaching authority of the church's magisterium. This issue is of enormous significance in the decline of the practice of penance and hence for the future of the rite.

### 2.3 OPTIONS 'FOR THE LORD' -

#### MORAL AUTHORITY AND FORGIVENESS

Gaume encouraged confessors reading his manual to

never let any human respect hinder you from warning them earnestly, or pointing out their evil condition, and the most suitable means for breaking the chains of their evil habits. Be firm in refusing absolution when it is necessary to do so.<sup>118</sup>

I want to consider what significance a model of ethics which receives and adheres to gives for behaviour from its tradition has for an understanding of the sacrament. To take an example which is as obvious as it is controversial, a Roman Catholic couple using artificial birth control are theologically guilty in the view of their tradition, though many may have an argument with that tradition at this point and refuse to own this ethic personally, despite the Pope's declaration that disputing the teaching of Human Vitae is 'the equivalent of refusing to God himself the obedience of our intelligence'.<sup>119</sup> By contrast, the Anglican couple using birth control are in no sense theologically guilty in the view of their tradition, but may regard themselves to be and, as the Prayer Book puts it, suffer from an 'unquiet conscience'. My question arising from this contrast of moral norms in different Christian traditions is: how are persons to distinguish between theological and neurotic, or objective and

subjective, guilt? How are they to know what is sin and so appropriately brought to confessional experience so that forgiveness may be sought? Perhaps more to the point, what resources are available to them if they struggle to accept the wisdom of their tradition? I want to explore some implications of the way persons are affirmed and supported through their involvement with their church's ministries of forgiveness and not least the disturbing question of whether those ministries may be interpreted as a tool of enslavement, denying the autonomy of those supposedly 'loosed' and demanding dependence on an authoritarian other. 'Forgiveness,' one suspects, in some cases may be experienced more as a curse than a blessing (see above, p. 44).

Perhaps this issue is felt to be most acute in relation to the Roman Catholic tradition, in so far as what is defined as sin is done so by reference to the official teaching authority of the church, the magisterium. It is worth noting here that the imposition of moral absolutes is not confined to the Church of Rome as many forms of Protestantism remain tied to a biblicism or fundamentalism which frequently employs the 'the Bible says' rubric in attempts to assert unquestionable authority in morals (as in all else). But, at least until the papal acceptance of some critical biblical approaches in Pius XII's Divino Afflante Spiritu of 1943 and indeed 1962's Dei Verbum, Protestantism has in the main been more open to the findings of biblical criticism on the one hand, and more diverse Enlightenment critiques of authority on the other, both of which may erode confidence in

claims to moral absolutism. James Barr has popularised the onslaught on fundamentalism and the following quotation from his 'pastoral' book concerned to help persons 'escape' from fundamentalism illustrates both the liberal critique of the fundamentalist position and the non-fundamentalist position itself: a

very substantial gap... exists between biblical command and modern ethical application, a gap that is just as glaring in fundamentalist practice as any other. This shows that in practice the Bible is dealt with as if it was theologically imperfect, even if this is not admitted in principle... In principle ethical questions cannot be answered from the Bible alone... <sup>120</sup>

Rather, the 'critical operation of full theological consideration'<sup>121</sup> is needed.

The terminology of fundamentalism came into being with the American booklets called The Fundamentals published between 1910 and 1915, though its commitments are of course more ancient. The roots of the movement as such can be located in the flourishing of revivalist and conservative groups of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which resisted the developments signalled by the Enlightenment.<sup>122</sup>

Perhaps somewhat parallel to this in the Roman Catholic Church was the loss to the church of numerous European universities in the period after the French Revolution. From the mid-eighteenth century, under growing Ultramontane influence, there followed the definite concentration of the magisterium, on Rome. The term magisterium had historically been applied to a number of groups and bodies, including during the middle ages, the universities, and so this shift marked a definite change of direction on the

papal judgement on previously controversial matters prohibits free discussion of the subject among theologians.

Vatican Two made the Catholic position more open, affirming that

it is for God's people as a whole, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and especially for pastors and theologians, to listen to the various voices of our day, discerning them and interpreting them, and to evaluate them in the light of the divine word, so that the revealed truth can be increasingly appropriated, understood and more suitably expressed'.<sup>125</sup>

The document teaches that clergy and laity are understood to have just freedom of enquiry, thought and 'humble and courageous expression' in those matters in which they are competent. The church is seen as the guardian of the deposit of God's word, which draws religious and moral principles from it. The church, however, does not always have a ready answer to particular questions and the laity should not expect their priests to provide concrete and ready answers to moral concerns. The laity have their own part to play in exercising their own Christian wisdom as well as attending to the teaching of the magisterium.

Appeal is also made to the laity to adhere to their bishop and the Pope, even when not speaking ex cathedra, in issues of faith and morals. Indeed, it is necessary to balance the shifting emphases of teaching on ecclesiastical authority and personal judgement in moral issues between the two conciliar documents on the church, Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes. Interestingly, the first is 'dogmatic' and the latter 'pastoral'.

The fullest explanation of ordinary magisterium given in the documents of Vatican II is in the context of writing on the



collegiate teaching of the whole college of bishops throughout the world which, it is stated, in defined circumstances can be exercised infallibly. Moral theologians are enjoined to obey and justify totally the documents of the magisterium. As Yves Congar responded, this was 'not exactly' the role of teachers in the church of the previous nineteen centuries.

John Mahoney points out that the consistently heavy emphasis on the church's magisterium in the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church constitutes a working through of Matthean ecclesiology (see above, pp. 49-53). Mahoney, however, is keen to explore the implications of other 'scriptural presentations of the Christian's moral life,' citing Johannine and Pauline models as reference points with radically different theologies of moral behaviour 'with Christ and his Spirit as internal Teacher, and with the notion of conscience and subjectivity' as their guiding themes.<sup>126</sup> He tests his hypothesis in the light of the encyclical published in July 1968, Humane Vitae.

Humane Vitae's publication resulted in enormous questions of conscience for many Catholics, and focused the issue of the status of the magisterium in moral issues. The relation between the individual's exercise of conscience ('a right conscience is true interpreter of the objective moral order instituted by God') and the official teaching authority ('the interpretation of the natural moral law pertains to the Church's magisterium') is ambiguous in a way which might be paralleled by the shifting emphases of Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes (see above, p. 100).



The claim to the Holy Spirit's guidance for the magisterium as at least equal to the authority of intrinsic reasoning has not quelled the assault on moral absolutism in the Catholic tradition since the document's release. Whilst the papal line has been as inflexible as ever under John Paul II (decreeing as we have seen (above, p. 96) that disputing the Encyclical's teaching was tantamount to refusing God the obedience of one's intelligence) Catholic moral theology has concentrated on the question of dissent and of strategies for it, resisting the apparent position of the Vatican which is caricatured by Gabriel Daly thus:

You have freedom of conscience, but you must see that your conscience comes up with the same conclusions as those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith!<sup>127</sup>

Catholic teaching on conscience is deeply indebted to the studies of Thomas Aquinas. His position can be seen as the synthesis of the teaching of Paul in the New Testament, who understood conscience basically to mean applying inner convictions and principles in concrete actions, and Jerome's notion of conscience as an intrinsic spark retained in all, despite the reality or gravity of sin. Aquinas appropriated these earlier views to distinguish between a person's intuitive grasp of first principles for action, that is, natural law, and conscience in the narrower sense of applying such knowledge to definite situations. With this background, Aquinas held that the first principles of natural law do not change, but the secondary precepts, or conclusions in action, are subject to change in some cases. So traditional Catholic moral teaching has distinguished between objective morality and subjective responsibility or

culpability with the acknowledgement that factors may reduce or lessen the extent of subjective culpability. Hence confessional practice has taken into account a person's particular circumstances in assessing the gravity of their sin.

It is also possible to make further distinctions, and it has become common in recent Catholic moral thinking to distinguish between moral theology and pastoral counselling. Bernard Häring has done much to advertise and so to modify or develop the Catholic position on moral teaching. In his view, moral theology looks at the objective morality of particular situations, whilst pastoral counselling concentrates on the data of moral theology alongside questions of subjective responsibility and of the genuine possibilities for growth in the subject's future actions. Haring grounds this ethic in his understanding of the Jesus of the gospels; 'there are many things I could say to you, but the burden is too great for you to bear at the present time' (John 16.12). His viewpoint is evident in this prayer:

Lord Jesus,  
When you met sinners, you gave them trust.  
When you said, 'sin no more',  
You had already told them, 'your sin are forgiven'.  
You corrected the faults of your apostles  
But in a way that they felt your friendship even more,  
And desired to be more worthy of it...<sup>12a</sup>

This central concern for growth in Christian life refuses to see static external norms as adequate guides for pastoral and confessional practice, but rather talks in terms of growing into a life-style characterised by 'a fundamental option for the Lord'. In striving for this ideal one must go through imperfect steps and stages, so a 'law of gradualness' comes into play which

distinguishes short-term and long-time goals for moral behaviour.

Charles Curran cites a number of salutary examples where some pastoral affirmation of this kind might help enormous numbers of people. He cites the address of the archbishop of Chicago to an international synod of bishops in 1980. Archbishop Quinn discussed a study of fertile American couples which revealed that 79.9% used some form of birth control, that 76.5% of American Catholic couples used some form of birth control and that of the latter group 95% employed a method of control condemned by Humane Vitae.<sup>129</sup> One strategy for addressing the pressing question of moral guilt associated with the use of contraception was controversially aired on British television recently, as Victor Guazelli, one of the more liberal among the English hierarchy of bishops, discussed the question of Catholic couples choosing to use prohibited methods of contraception on the Channel Four series Catholics and Sex. If a couple felt that they were not in a position to raise a child, he argued, 'there is no question of mortal sin'. On the issue of condoms being used to slow the spread of A.I.D.S. he advocated the strict definition of the contraceptive's purpose: 'what is a condom? A rubber envelope to prevent conception? But if people are using it to prevent disease.. it is not a contraceptive at all'.<sup>130</sup>

Curran also takes up the issue of divorced (and remarried) Catholics using the sacraments of the church, and cites the 1980 Pastoral Congress of England and Wales which recognised the growing number of people the sacramental ban affected and asked

bishops to consider the situation of such persons with compassion. He also notes, interestingly, that the widespread questioning of the American bishops' teaching on nuclear weapons indicates that the laypeople's concern in matters of authority extends beyond sexual questions.<sup>131</sup>

Curran argues that the magisterium itself can be said to recognise the distinction between doctrinal and pastoral norms, and so be in harmony with such as the law of gradualness (see above, p. 103). He notes that the section divisions of Humane Vitae distinguish between 'doctrinal principles' (section II) and 'pastoral directives' (section III).<sup>132</sup> The latter section specially addresses those troubled by questions of birth control as well as their pastors and encourages couples for whom the teaching may cause serious difficulties to be drawn humbly to the mercy of God given in the sacrament of penance. Priests are advised to proclaim the full Catholic teaching in the confessional context but also to act with patience and goodness characteristic of that shown by Jesus to those in need.

This kind of distinction between doctrine and pastoral directives which recognises differences between the moral and pastoral orders is a definite feature of Catholic moral teaching highly relevant to confessional practice. It allows that one may commit objective wrong but remain morally good, in so far as there are legitimate reasons for risking dissent and that persons have acted in 'right conscience'. As such this is a highly significant approach to 'sin' and guilt as it arises in ministry where priests must both adhere to the teaching of the church they

represent and respect and affirm the persons they pastorally care for.

It is worth noting also that, seemingly typical of the present Pope, he has spoken of the danger of 'confusing' the 'law of gradualness' with 'gradualness of the law', the mistake in the latter being in his opinion that it supposes that the objective order of morality is affected by such a distinction.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to argue from within the Catholic tradition that those who use sacramental means of forgiveness do not need to understand themselves as enslaved to definitions of sin provided by the magisterium. They may act on the convictions of their responsibly educated conscience when it opposes official teaching. And the magisterium itself gives some implicit backing to such a view, as I hope I have illustrated.

Up to this point chapter two has considered historical, theological and ethical perspectives on the sacrament of penance. In my final section of this chapter I shall consider one specific text which is of historical, theological and ethical interest, though it is primarily devotional.

#### 2.4 'THE ELEVENTH HOUR' -

##### KIERKEGAARD'S APPROACH TO FORGIVENESS

Søren Kierkegaard's Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing remains classic advice on preparation for confession. It is the first of two specific texts I wish to consider in my thesis, not least because Purity of Heart is not discussed widely at the present

time, and Kierkegaard's thinking on forgiveness is largely unexplored. I propose now to note the salient features of Purity of Heart and to place that work in the context of his own life and thinking on forgiveness.

I shall start by outlining some significant landmarks in Kierkegaard's personal history. He was born in Copenhagen in 1813. His home background was a great influence on him and his work, and was in many senses tragic. His father, Mikael, was an intellectual, and had since his own childhood been ridden with guilt for believing himself to have cursed God. It seems that this guilt-feeling engendered a sense of personal un-forgiveness which was to stay continually with him. As we might expect, this kind of black mood and sense of anxiety had a definite effect on his children.

Søren was one of seven children. Five of his siblings died in his childhood, resulting in the boy's feeling (recorded in his later journals) of 'the silence of death' gathered about him.<sup>134</sup> Søren himself was deformed in an early accident - another significant factor in his growing sense of isolation and strangeness. This feeling culminated in his childhood with the disillusionment which followed the moral downfall of his father, one consequence of which was the collapse of the dominant authority figure in his own life. The beginnings of Søren's lifelong quest for self-discovery can be located in these childhood events. All contributed to his search to live authentically as an existing individual (den Enkelte). As he was later to write in his journals, his concern was about 'being sharpened into an "I"

rather than being dulled into a third-person'.<sup>135</sup>

Three other factors in his later life suggest the same kind of development. First, the termination of his relationship with his fiancée Regine Olsen. Søren withdrew from the engagement, interpreting his withdrawal in terms of 'sacrifice', and making comparisons with the patriarchal tradition of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22.1-22). Søren understood this sacrifice of his fiancée to be a mark of authentic discipleship and genuine responsiveness to the call of God. Almost at the same time as this ending came his withdrawal from preparation for pastoral ministry in the Lutheran church.

Second, Søren's one sibling who survived childhood, Peter, became a bishop in the Lutheran church which Søren left. Lutheranism was the established Christian tradition in Denmark, and Søren was to become increasingly hostile to it. He labelled those who adhered to the tradition 'name Christians', and voiced reservations about the lack of connections between his experience of contemporary Christendom in Denmark and the 'original gospel' of Jesus of Nazareth as he understood it. Although his doctrinal positions continued to be shaped by Lutheranism, his polemic against the superficiality of contemporary piety became stronger, and his own work evolved as a direct challenge to the nominality he perceived in his contemporaries. His controversial opinions in this regard became increasingly well-known and one Danish journal, The Corsair, regularly caricatured Kierkegaard - a factor which served to increase his experience of isolation. He died in 1855,



aged 42.

The talk (as he called it) Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing was written in 1847, eight years before Kierkegaard's death. Essentially the book is a collection of personal meditations on one verse from scripture, James 4.8:

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The title of the meditation also echoes the advice of Jesus to Martha in Luke 10.38-42, 'who worried and distracted by many things' would do well to learn from her sister Mary who sits and listens to their guest. The kind of quietness displayed by Mary is 'the one thing needed' on Martha's part also. The sub-title of the book points to its intended function as 'spiritual preparation for the office of confession' and its dedication 'to that one solitary individual' also betrays some of its central concerns.

Chapter twelve is perhaps the most important part of the work, entitled 'What then must I do? The listener's role in the devotional address', and outlines the role both of the listener and of himself as writer. He develops his understanding of these respective roles by analogy to roles in theatre - those of actors and their 'prompters'.

On the stage... as you know well enough... someone sits and prompts by whispers: he is the inconspicuous one, he is and wishes to be overlooked. But then there is another, he strides out prominently, he draws every eye to himself. For that reason he has been given his name, that is: actor. He impersonates a distinct individual. In the skilful sense

of this illusory art, each word becomes true when embodied in him, true through him - and yet he is told what he shall

say by the hidden one that sits and whispers. No one is so foolish as to regard the prompter as more important than the actor.

...The speaker is not the actor - not in the remotest sense. No, the speaker is the prompter. There are no mere theatre-goers present, for each listener will be looking into his own heart. The stage is eternity, and the listener, if he is the true listener (and he is not, he is at fault) stands before God during the talk. The prompter whispers to the actor what he is to say, but the actor's repetition of it is the main concern - it is the solemn charm of the art.

...The speaker is then the prompter, and the listener stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor, who acts in all truth before God.<sup>136</sup>

Kierkegaard sees himself in writing as the prompter nudging his readers into encounter with God through his meditation: 'the main concern is earnestness: that the listeners by themselves, with themselves, and to themselves, in the silence before God, may speak with the help of this actor'.<sup>137</sup> Kierkegaard hopes that God is present at the devotional address because

God's presence is the decisive thing that changes all. As soon as God is present, each man in the presence of God has the task of paying attention to himself.<sup>138</sup>

Kierkegaard understands himself as sitting 'in the wings', as it were, enabling the direct interchange between God and human being. To change the analogy, the writer's role is compared to the reader of liturgical prayers in church. Properly speaking it is not him or her who prays, but the listeners who sit and open themselves to God as they hear the prayer read aloud.<sup>139</sup> So the contribution of Kierkegaard himself - writer, prompter, liturgical leader - are only the whispers of an 'insignificant one'.<sup>140</sup>

Kierkegaard's talk 'must unequivocally demand something of the listener',<sup>141</sup> that is, their own decisive activity, a reaction against one of the flaws he noted in those who belonged to the

established church. He or she must 'listen in order to act'<sup>142</sup> by accusing him or herself in confession.<sup>143</sup> He stresses that the talk is not intended to inquire into the details of the listener's life.<sup>144</sup> In that sense it is not a 'priestly' role. In the encounter Kierkegaard is trying to encourage, there are no third parties (priests or otherwise). Readers must do their own work.

It is possible to identify several focal themes in the book. The first is repentance and remorse. Referring to the thought of Koheleth that '[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men' (Eccl. 3.11),<sup>145</sup> Kierkegaard regards repentance and remorse as two divine gifts which belong to the eternal in humankind.<sup>146</sup> Repentance works to call one forward into new life, its counterpart calls one back into an old way. Both become active in human hearts at 'the eleventh hour': 'the call to find the way again by seeking out God in the confession of sins is always at the eleventh hour',<sup>147</sup> they recognise there is not a lot of time in which to act, they are not deceived by a false notion of a long life. God's call is to 'obey at once', and hence, sobriety and seriousness characterise the genuine expression of repentance and remorse. The two virtues are not, in Kierkegaard's view, to be confused with impatience. Impatience is the counterfeit, indeed the opposite, of genuine repentance. It lacks 'blessed fruitfulness'.<sup>148</sup>

Genuine repentance is dependent on the penitent's aliveness to

his or her guilt.<sup>149</sup> Where real guilt is recognised, the dangers of impatience can be avoided because one is able to recognise the intensity of the repentance which is needed to cope with such guilt. Genuine repentance, unlike its counterfeit, does not want to get away from guilt, but wants to recognise and remember guilt and then resign the self to God to deal with that guilt. False repentance is said to be selfish and lacking in inwardness, concerned perhaps that one's improvement be recognised by society, but lacking all reference to guilt before God. Repentance in such cases is forgotten when one's restoration to worthy conduct is acknowledged by others. But this strategy for coping with guilt is flawed to the extent that the 'terrifying memory' of 'miserable days' may be brought back by others from the past: in short, the past might catch up with one, bringing with it despair and suffering.<sup>150</sup> Guilt, then, ought not to be forgotten. On the contrary, such forgetfulness is 'loss and perdition'. 'It is a gain to notice that a man has grown older by the deeper and deeper penetration into his heart of the transformation wrought by remorse'.<sup>151</sup> And the measure of the length of a person's commitment to the good is the intensity of his or her repentance.

For the one who learns to live creatively with guilt in this way, 'punishment itself becomes blessing'<sup>152</sup> and 'consequences becomes redemptive'.<sup>153</sup> The remembrance of guilt involved in remorse and repentance is a boon in that it frees one to see the true state of things, without deceit or confusion. Sorrow becomes milder and deeper, and the longer one 'treasures' repentance, 'the better it

becomes'.<sup>154</sup>

A second theme is the emphasis on quietness and self-awareness. Essential for the preparation for confession is a quietness and stillness which abandons the busyness of daily life in order to focus on the matter at hand.

As a man changes his raiment for a feast, so is a man changed in his heart who prepares himself for the holy act of confession. It is indeed like a changing of raiment to lay off manyness, in order rightly to centre down upon one thing...<sup>155</sup>

Martha (see above, p. 109) is no role model for the one who wants to come to confession, in that she is busy and anxious. Those who rush about like Martha risk missing doing anything well: one may 'begin many things, do many things at once, and only half do them all'.<sup>156</sup> Instead, what is needed is an at-oneness with the self, a gathering of the self, which resists the 'dispersal' of self brought on by being busy. Silence will help, according to Kierkegaard: one needs to be 'hidden in the silence, to become open'<sup>157</sup> to eternity.

The tirade against busyness continues:

It is true, that a mirror has the quality of enabling a man to see his image in it, but for this he must stand still. If he rushes hastily by, then he sees nothing.<sup>158</sup>

At the base-line, busyness is exposed as 'time wasting'.<sup>159</sup> Hence the need for time and for quiet to attend to appropriate preparation for confession.

Tendencies towards busyness are best curtailed by paying some attention to the way others suffer, by sharing with another suffering human being in the common lot of humanity.<sup>160</sup> Unlike

the majority, the one committed to the good must extend sympathy to the sufferer when it lingers and the interest of others subsides.<sup>161</sup> Busyness, Kierkegaard asserts, has nothing all at to do with the eternal. Jesus' ministry consisted in part of countering the busyness of others - when the disciples began to seem busy, Jesus put a child in their midst,<sup>162</sup> giving them reason to pause. 'Pausing' is a central aim of confession, and pausing is described, paradoxically, as being a movement - the inward movement of the heart, the movement which deepens the self in inwardness.<sup>163</sup>

The confessing person is not like

One that confides in a friend to whom sooner or later he reveals things that the friend did not previously know. The all-knowing One does not get to know something about the maker of the confession, rather the maker of the confession gets to know something about himself.<sup>164</sup>

The point of confessing to God when God already knows is that the confession-maker benefits from greater self-awareness. 'The prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who offers it'.<sup>165</sup> Much of what has previously been hidden in darkness is known to the maker of the confession first of all in opening the self before God.<sup>166</sup> Confession is one way to cope with the ignorance of self-deceit.

A third emphasis is that of single-mindedness. Chapters three to seven are concerned with insights into 'barriers to willing one thing'. They tackle, respectively, failure to will only what Kierkegaard calls 'the good' (ch. 3), willing the good with a view to reward (ch. 4), willing the good out of fear of punishment (ch. 5), willing the good out of self-centered service

of the good (ch. 6), and willing the good out of weakness which engenders commitment only to 'a certain degree' (ch. 7). All of these barriers are symptomatic of what James contrasts with purity of heart: double-mindedness (James 4.8).

To will one thing, by contrast, requires single-mindedness. Chapters eight to ten consider the cost involved in this. They concern readiness to suffer for commitment to the good (ch. 8), the need to expose evasions which might resist whole commitment (ch. 9), and 'an examination of the extreme case of an incurable sufferer' (ch. 10). The crucified Jesus is the key to knowing what suffering all for the good entails. He exemplifies in Kierkegaard's view the tactic of taking an eternal view of things, as opposed to a temporal and limited perspective. Hence, in Jesus' case, his death could be viewed by his spectators and opponents as the end of a fool (cf. Matt. 27.41-44): 'The result shows that he has been hunting after phantasies; he should have married. In this way he would now have been a distinguished teacher in Israel'.<sup>167</sup> Yet an eternal perspective on the death of Jesus reveals one who had accomplished all, saying 'with eternity's wisdom,' 'it is finished' (John 19.30).<sup>168</sup> Suffering for the good requires the perspective of eternity in which to see the things of earth, as perceived by Jesus. This puts human merit and accomplishment and one's standing before others in a fresh light.

The exposure of evasions requires conformity to the eternal vocation of each one as given at birth.<sup>169</sup> Humans need to use

their cleverness to devote themselves totally to the good, and avoid half-measures which result in counterfeit remorse and repentance.

The end of single-mindedness is to will the good in truth,<sup>170</sup> and according to whether one is an active one or a sufferer, to be willing either to do all for the good or suffer all for the good, and in either case to remain committed to it.

Having outlined Kierkegaard's main thought in Purity of Heart I want to raise some questions in response to my reading of it. One question concerns his emphasis on individualism. One consequence of encountering God in confession and committing the self to the good in a genuine way is the responsibility to 'live as an individual', the concern of the thirteenth chapter. Living as an individual means, for Kierkegaard, each one's discovery and conforming to the eternal vocation particular to him or her.<sup>171</sup> Some of Kierkegaard's comments on the individualistic character of commitment are startling: 'the all-knowing One... does not desire the crowd. He desires the individual'.<sup>172</sup> God will deal only with the individual. No third-person can venture to intrude on an individual's account to God. His talk is concerned with reminding each and all of the ruinous evasion of being hidden in the crowd in an attempt to escape God's supervision of him or her as an individual.<sup>173</sup> 'For in eternity, there is no mob pressure, no crowd, no hiding place in the crowd...'<sup>174</sup> and conscience is the connection between the eternal and temporal life: 'eternity seizes each one by the strong arm of conscience, holding him as an individual'.<sup>175</sup> In this life the call of conscience demands



attention and obedience. The individual must heed conscience although its witness is frequently over-ruled by the majority around, for the conscience provides an eternal perspective: 'in eternity, conscience is the only voice that is heard'.<sup>176</sup>

Kierkegaard advises his readers that 'you do not carry the responsibility for your wife, nor for other men... but only as an individual, before God'.<sup>177</sup> Each one is wholly responsible for their own conscience and actions, and the failure to act as an individual and hide in the crowd is the responsibility solely of the individual.<sup>178</sup> Although in this life people grow cowardly in the face of others, in eternity each is forsaken by the crowd and 'in eternity each one is asked solely about himself and his life as an individual' (compare above, p. 82-83).<sup>179</sup>

Whilst an eternal perspective judges all clannishness as dangerous and the enemy of universal humanity,<sup>180</sup> Kierkegaard's individualism is not one which cuts all ties with responsibility for other human beings in the present order (see above, p. 113).

One question which arises in the course of his meditation is of the reader/actor's attitude towards others. The aim of willing one thing is to be at one with all. Willing one thing is an activity which fundamentally unites.<sup>181</sup> Clannishness is disparaged, and hence Kierkegaard discourages his readers from conscientiously belonging to one party. All must wish for all what they wish for themselves. It is not appropriate for those who will one thing to wish the highest only for themselves and their own. For instance, there is to be no consoling the poor,

but at the same time no consoling the self by the fact that one's wealth assures oneself against becoming poor. There is to be no additional or further consolation for the self above others.

At the same time, each one is to become the subject of their individuality, and the purpose of confession is defined in these terms.<sup>182</sup> Those coming to confess do not belong together in a society: each comes individually. 'a man and wife may go to confession in beautiful fellowship with each other, but they may not confess together'.<sup>183</sup>

Whilst Kierkegaard's concept of the individual is clearly influenced by his own experiences, perhaps especially those of his childhood, an interesting question might concern the extent his philosophical system was an attempt to engender some self-acceptance in an environment permeated by his sense of disappointment and isolation. Although his view of the individual is in some respects disturbing, perhaps too sharply focused on interiority and introspection, he does maintain an interest in a notion of the common good in so far as philanthropy might also find a place in his ideas (evident in some of the thoughts in the thirteenth chapter of the book). To affirm Kierkegaard's position, we might ask how the common good is to be encouraged without prior individual transformation. However, on the other hand, to test some of his thought we might beg a question about whether individual goodness can be expected naturally to flourish unless attention is first paid to the wider environment where some social or structural expression of goodness might be required (see above, p. 79-80). We have seen from my discussion

in ch. 2.2 that many Christians today might want to affirm that responsibility for oneself is always 'a good start,' but are likely to deny the appropriateness of Kierkegaard's talk of selves bearing responsibility only for themselves (see above, pp. 78-83). What of the insight of one later existentialist, the tradition of thought in which Kierkegaard was a forebear: 'there is no obedience to God which does not have to prove itself in the concrete situation of meeting one's neighbour, as Luke ... makes clear by combining the illustrative narrative of the Good Samaritan with Jesus' discussion of the greatest commandment'?<sup>184</sup>

One especially disturbing thought on reading Purity of Heart is that forgiveness as distinct from confession is not mentioned once on the book's pages. If forgiveness is essentially a relational term (see above, p. 23), concerning the relationship between one and another, we begin to see how his individualism might militate against the affirmation of the importance of forgiveness. Repentance and remorse (his phrases) remain for him things contained within the self, or at most the self-God relation. No mention is made of divine forgiveness for the individual. Rather it seems that Kierkegaard expects transformation to occur over time as one learns to somehow cope with one's guilt. We might wonder whether all have resources to do this, especially as contemporary readers are likely to be more sensitive to some psychological categories which define many forms of guilt as neurotic. And when guilt is not neurotic, might not absolution be good news? The Christian tradition has usually wished to assert that forgiveness is rather more than a growing

into self-awareness. An appropriate challenge to Kierkegaard at this point, and one which relates also to Kierkegaard's refusal to give a place to third persons, might be voiced by his fellow Lutheran of one century on, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose Spiritual Care outlines a threefold argument for why confession to God in the presence of another is needed. Two of his reasons are specially useful. First, to provide certainty and to minimise chances of all becoming lost in personal reflection. As Bonhoeffer puts it, 'it is quite treacherous if we find it easier to confess our sins before the Holy One than before a person who is no different from us'. Second, because confession of sin in another's company has a singular power to break the arrogance of pride which keeps people egocentric and cut off from community.<sup>185</sup>

On the inter-human level, there is no mention of forgiveness either. Also, apology to a human being one has harmed apparently has no place. Each must shy from the crowd, yet aim at equality for all (see above, p. 118). Vigilance and self-criticism are encouraged, but what of strategies for when vigilance and self-criticism fail to produce equality, and people, put simply, make mistakes? Can all human woundedness be healed by reference to God alone, without reference also to those human beings who have hurt or been hurt. One definite flaw in the work as I understand it is that Kierkegaard fails to affirm that human beings have resources both to hurt and heal each other. His own life bears plenty of marks of the former of these two human potentials. What of the latter? And is it not forgiveness which is one of the central

resources for doing so (see above, pp. 2-3, 43-44)?

A glance at some of Kierkegaard's other writings which concern forgiveness perhaps sharpens our understanding of the thought on forgiveness offered in Purity of Heart. My observation that the absence of the language of forgiveness implies an attempt to cope with guilt (see above, p. 119) is confirmed by some comments found in his Journals and Papers. He writes there that Christianity is hard because 'no way is shown for working off your guilt'.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless he insists '...but you shall believe that there is forgiveness of sins'. His lack of clarity about how forgiveness takes place is perhaps countered to some extent by his test of assurance. One may rest assured of one's forgiveness when 'the thought of God does not remind [one] of the sin but that it is forgiven'.<sup>187</sup>

Looking to his other writings show that Kierkegaard believed that only guilt is forgiven. The consequences of guilt remain after forgiveness for

Forgiveness of sins cannot be such that God by a single stroke, as it were, erases all guilt, abrogates all its consequences. Such a craving is only a worldly desire which does not really know what guilt is. It is only the guilt which is forgiven; more than this the forgiveness is not. It does not mean to become another person in more fortunate circumstances, but it does mean to become a new person in the reassuring consciousness that the guilt is forgiven even if the consequences of guilt of remain...<sup>188</sup>

In respect to the guilt itself, God's forgiveness literally 'uncreates' it. As God created out of nothing, so God is able to uncreate guilt in the act of forgiveness. For this reason, forgiveness involves forgetting of sin. A fascinating footnote to

'The Woman that was a Sinner' provides a partial insight into Kierkegaard's thinking on forgetfulness as integral to forgiveness. It suggests that 'S.K. had recently been transformed by the sudden experience that his sins were not only forgiven by God but "forgotten,"' though no further clues are given.<sup>189</sup> If nothing else, this comment shows how his thinking on forgiveness is grounded in experiential rather than primarily doctrinal reflection, perhaps one consequence of his quest to counter what he regarded as 'name Christianity' in the national church.

In respect of the consequences of guilt, Kierkegaard envisages a 'transformation' in forgiveness which enables one to see consequences no longer as punishment but rather as a 'vicissitude of life'.<sup>190</sup> One need 'no longer bear it burdened with the thought that it is the expression of God's wrath, but I bear it with God as I bear other suffering'.<sup>191</sup>

His 'Love Covereth a Multitude of Sins' confirms the distinction established in ch. 1 of my dissertation between different gracious ways of relating to an offence (see above, pp. 31-35). I associated these positions with Joseph Butler and C. S. Lewis. Kierkegaard calls them 'lenient explanation' and 'forgiveness',<sup>192</sup> and although the boundaries he draws around genuine expressions of forgiveness are narrower than my own (see above, p. 34), he does recognise a distinction which is often blurred in a good deal of writing on this topic.

Finally, as Purity of Heart reveals the central place given in his thought to the portrayal of Mary of Bethany in Luke 10.38-42,

his third of 'Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays' from Christian Discourses and the 'Edifying Discourse' found in Training in Christianity betray a fascination with another gospel character who similarly sat at Jesus' feet. The sinful woman of Luke 7.36-50 is often traditionally, though erroneously, identified as Mary of Magdala,<sup>193</sup> and whether Kierkegaard makes this inaccurate connection is unclear. Nevertheless, he regards her as 'a parable' of confession.<sup>194</sup> In her 'great love' she 'forgot herself entirely'<sup>195</sup> and this act of self-forgetfulness provides the central clue to Kierkegaard's understanding of forgiveness. The woman at Simon's house 'was granted the grace to weep herself out of herself'.<sup>196</sup> He notes that forgiveness comes to the woman - and to others - as they, like her, are able to 'love their Saviour more than their sin'.<sup>197</sup> In this respect, the sinful woman is a 'pattern' and 'guide' for those who come to Christ with confession on their lips: 'She is more of an incentive than the incentives of all orators'.<sup>198</sup> Again, this illustrates a devotional use of scripture which looks for reflections of his own experience rather than a theological use concerned to construct doctrinal positions.

For Kierkegaard, to make confession is to 'love much,' because it represents an emptying of oneself before Christ. Another elusive footnote to this text, which is especially interesting in relation to Purity of Heart, suggests that Kierkegaard understood himself never to have made such a confession. The translator notes Kierkegaard's sympathy for the Catholic sacrament of penance, of which he never made use, as well as his ongoing

feeling of a need to make a public confession. Kierkegaard never did this either, and the translator notes that in the end he no longer felt the need, adding that the literature he produced was itself a confession.<sup>199</sup> It is worth adding to this comment that Erik Berggren regards written correspondence as one of two ways - the other being spoken disclosure - which meets a felt need for confession and absolution.<sup>200</sup>

Perhaps Kierkegaard's reluctance or inability to outline the process of forgiveness is one characteristic most relevant to contemporary readings of his work. In this second chapter one of my concerns has been to underline the diverse perspectives on 'what happens' in confessional contexts. My first chapter underscored a contemporary lack of clarity about forgiveness in wider circumstances. Kierkegaard represents one attempt to struggle through some of these dilemmas. And although there is much in his work which will not commend itself to readers conscious of a need to assert human inter-relationship and inter-dependence, perhaps his writing remains an example of a common method of coping with guilt in ways which exclude or deny a place to traditional forms of Christian piety.

\* \* \* \*

To conclude my second chapter, I wish to reiterate the following points -

First, the rite of penance has undergone considerable development. Meanings and emphases have changed. As Sandra DeGideo notes, it has evolved in cycles of recognising flaws and pastoral deficiencies in present forms, correcting them with new



emphases, with those being challenged in turn by new needs and new circumstances.<sup>201</sup>

Second, this historical reminder is an important resource for offering ways forward for the sacrament's celebration at the present time in which attendance and interest is clearly on the wane. Among many issues, I would underline four as particularly significant:

One concerns lay involvement in what is affirmed as genuinely sacramental. How long it will be possible credibly to restrict sacramental functions to clerics is, to my mind, an open question. Certainly, I have noted trends which threaten the relevance of the rite in its present form.

Another concerns the variety of needs which penitents in diverse situations bring to the sacrament. It is not only used by serious sinners seeking forgiveness, but also by those who want and need encouragement and praise in their ongoing Christian commitment. And whether another kind of spirituality is more appropriate for this latter group is again an open question.

A further issue concerns penance. How it is possible to avoid presenting penance as a condition for absolution which might so easily be perceived as negating God's ready forgiveness is a continuing difficulty.

Another concerns the place which counsel may find in the theory and practice of the sacrament. A more focal role will I think be needed in the future shape of the sacrament: yet there remains

the danger of this being only a half-committed attempt to appropriate the insights of social science. Questions as to the extent it is or is not appropriate to attempt to confine the choices, behaviour or decisions of penitents are especially pressing.

Third, in order to address the fourth contemporary problem I have identified, I examined the question of moral authority in the Catholic tradition. While I have not wished to question the church's entitlement to provide guidance in ethical questions I am uneasy with the belief that it may demand assent and I have illustrated how there are precedents within the Catholic tradition for dissent from hierarchically established moral positions, at least in certain cases. In my next chapter I expand this interest to consider the same cluster of issues with regard to pastoral action outside the Catholic tradition.

I have considered Kiekegaard's work to provide one specific historical and theological focus on some questions which have recurred throughout this chapter and pointed to areas of his thought I think are useful or otherwise for the present debate.

I would suggest that there needs to be a genuine recognition that people 'present' different needs and difficulties in their confessional experience. To attempt to cope with this, diverse forms of rites which have been affirmed as genuinely sacramental need to continue to be embraced and others developed where these are inadequate. Apart from arguing that a historical perspective on the rite provides some justification for responding to present

needs in this way, I have also underlined some pastoral reasons.

As with my previous chapter on forgiveness, I want to say that, as regards the sacrament, we need to be more generous about what we affirm as genuinely belonging to sacramental reality and less judgemental about what we perceive to be its counterfeits. The fact that my previous pages argue against some positions and trends, however, illustrate that I do not believe that the rite can take just any shape.

Having focused in this chapter on the sacrament of penance, I turn now to wider pastoral perspectives on forgiveness.

Pastoral Approaches to  
Forgiveness

3.1 'LIBERATED FROM AUTHORITARIANISM' -  
APPROACHES TO PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING

This chapter addresses three pastoral approaches to forgiveness. First, I explore some contemporary literature about pastoral action and pastoral counselling, look at the rationales which might be given to each and examine the contention that the latter at least is a Protestant alternative to the Catholic tradition's sacrament of penance. Second, I examine the second of the two texts on which I focus in this thesis and use a little-known work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to outline an approach to pastoral ethics characteristic of some of the more conservative strands of Protestantism and certainly quite distinct from the approach I looked at in ch. 2.3. Finally, my focus turns to the question of how one specialist pastoral context may deal with forgiveness. I examine some facets of psychoanalytic practice and attempt to identify some connections between transference, forgiveness and confession.

\* \* \* \*

As with sacramental forms of the forgiveness of sins, pastoral action also searches for roots in the words of Jesus to his friends. Appeal is made in particular to the Johannine appendix's breakfast-time dialogue between Jesus and Peter:

"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"  
"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you". Jesus said to him,  
"Feed my lambs". A second time he said to him, "Simon son of

John, do you love me?". He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you". Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep". He said to him a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?", Peter felt hurt because he said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you". Jesus said to him "Feed my sheep..." (21.15-17).

Like many of those quoted in relation to sacramental practices, the historicity of this text may be doubted and the exegetical questions it raises are manifold. The point I want to underline is that appeal is in the main made to Matthew's tradition and to the Johannine tradition of the 'pentecostal' and empowering Christ with respect to sacramental forms of ministry, whilst with respect to pastoral ministry appeal is by and large made to the Easter story of the last chapter of the fourth gospel. It is perhaps especially interesting in this respect that one great interpreter of both John and the synoptic tradition, Rudolf Bultmann, parallels this passage with the tradition of Jesus giving 'the keys' to Peter in Matthew 16.19. Peter, who is wavering and weak in the synoptic passion narratives' accounts of his denial of Christ, is commissioned here as a shepherd or pastor ('pastor' being the Latin for 'shepherd') responsible for the sheep who belong to the Good Shepherd (John 10.11-18).

That reference is made to these different texts in the defence of these forms of church care raises questions about the inter-relationship of sacramental and pastoral activity (perhaps especially in the light of Bultmann's reading of the relation between Matthew 16.19 and John 21.15-17). In this section I work towards clarifying that inter-relationship. First, I outline some major trends and themes in pastoral theology and action; second,

I examine pastoral counselling as arguably the most important element in contemporary pastoral care; finally, I focus upon the distinctiveness and connections between pastoral counselling and sacramental confession.

What we speak of as two traditions, the 'pastoral' and 'sacramental', were once more closely inter-linked in so far as ancient Christian writers focused their pastoral thinking on the work of the priest (the classic example of which remains St. John Chrysostom's On the Priesthood). Medieval writers also focused their pastoral thought on the work of the priest and his ministry in the sacrament of penance, and in the Catholic tradition, it was perhaps this priest/penance model which remained the 'classical' form of pastoral care until at least the Second Vatican Council.<sup>2</sup>

It has been argued that the Reformation churches placed alongside this so-called Catholic approach an alternative model of pastoral care. This is derived from the Protestant churches' emphasis on pastoral visitation, which Thomas Oden argues 'substituted' the penance-centred form of care and 'effectively replaced' it,<sup>3</sup> preserving from penance its best aspects of personal pastoral dialogue, but ditching a claim to sacramentality. Also, significantly, this new emphasis on visitation shifted the locus of pastoral care from an ecclesiastical environment into persons' own homes. Despite retaining a place for private confession, though clearly claiming less authority for it than the Catholic tradition, the movement towards a visitation model of pastoral care can be traced in the evolving Anglican liturgy from 1549-

1662. What is of special interest is that the rubric of order for the Visitation of the Sick in the 1549 ritual book envisages that the form of absolution used with sick persons would also be used in all private confessions. In the changes of 1552 the rubric was dropped, and by the time the Book of Common Prayer was formed in 1662 reference to private confession aside from the 'special' confession made by the sick is absent from the visitation liturgy. The 1662 order for the Visitation of the Sick, though it conflates older traditions of unction and confession, includes the only indicative absolution maintained between the pages of the Book of Common Prayer. Confession is then reshuffled into the context of special preparation for reception of Holy Communion where no particular liturgical words are provided.<sup>4</sup>

A distinctive discipline of 'pastoral theology' did not emerge until the sixteenth century with the implementation of the reforms of the Council of Trent, and it was not established as a major focus of theological concern until the mid-to-late eighteenth century, when a need for clergy guidance led to a need for a new form of study and care.<sup>5</sup> It arose in an American Protestant context, and initiated a shift towards a claim for 'professional' status for clergy. The movement evolved in the distinctive form of clinical pastoral education. It was this genre of pastoral theology which was to spawn the pastoral counselling tradition. Pastoral counselling learned much from a growth of interest in psychology and various kinds of therapy. This alliance with types of 'secular' care marked a movement away

from the historically close relationship between pastoral theology and its moral counterpart, where both were centred on the confessional.

In contemporary practice, therapeutic theory and techniques may have become the pastoral theology tradition's closest associates in Protestantism, and latterly in Catholicism also. Carl Jung makes this point, in relation to Protestantism at least. Examining the resources available to Protestant ministers which might correspond to the Catholic tradition's sacrament of penance, he suggests that

The Protestant minister, rightly seeing in the cure of souls the real purpose of his existence, naturally looks round for a new way that will lead to the souls, and not merely to the ears of his parishioners. Analytical psychology seems to him to provide the key, for the meaning and purpose of his ministry are not fulfilled with the Sunday sermon, which, though it reaches the ears, seldom penetrates to the heart, ... The cure of souls can only be practised in the stillness of a colloquy, carried on in the healthful atmosphere of unreserved confidence. Soul must work upon soul, and many doors be unlocked that bar the way to the innermost sanctuary. Psychoanalysis possesses the means of opening doors otherwise tightly closed.<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, the influence of therapy-centred approaches is most deep rooted in the United States about which Philip Rieff has made the interesting claim that psychology has replaced theology as 'the unitary system of belief'.<sup>7</sup>

Since the 1970's, a further emphasis has arisen in pastoral theology and pastoral care. This has called for a shift from the individualistic bent of most of the forms just mentioned, seeking instead to attend to the so called socio-political aspect of pastoral action. The lessening of concentration on the individual



might be said to be resonant with the early Church's exercise of binding persons from eucharistic fellowship and the public forms which penance took, as well as being a salutary counterbalance to the dangerous expectations of 'the individual' in much modern thought. In the context of contemporary pastoral action, the focus away from the individual is related mainly, first, to an awareness that the church's care always belongs to a specific social and political context; and second, to a desire to bring together the caring and kerygmatic tasks of the church in order to render its vocal and embodied witness consistent. However, as noted in chapter 2, in the Catholic tradition at least some authorities are attempting to reverse this trend by encouraging renewed emphasis on the individual (see above, p. 82).<sup>8</sup>

In the light of this outline of the history of pastoral practice which, like the history of the sacrament of penance, is evolving (see above, p. 124), it is not possible to provide a 'control' to measure the 'purity' of forms which have evolved in its development. And it may not be desirable to look for such control measures. Yet it does seem reasonable to hope that the discipline can be seen to rest on a thoughtful rationale and some consensus about its constitution. A challenge to this hope arises out of the writing of James Woodward, editor of one recently published volume seeking to reflect theologically on the H.I.V. virus. Woodward points out in his introduction that

few authors seem willing or able to elaborate a full theology of pastoral care, in an age liberated from authoritarianism, paternalistic text book answers and more inclined to the pragmatism which relies upon client-centred counselling... It is unclear where the bounds of [pastoral care] lie.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, it would appear that the shape of pastoral theology defies stricter definitions of 'systematic'. As Frank Wright contends 'it is bound to be untidy and imprecise, an uneasy attempt at integration which must always be changing and shifting in emphasis' (see above, p. 2).<sup>10</sup> Woodward may be acknowledging something like this in his stating a 'conviction that we need to recover our commitment to theology and its place in shaping and forming the human person', so that 'theology, as here understood, is not so much a rigid collection of principles, concepts and history, as a way of exploring life in the light of our sense of faith in God'.<sup>11</sup> The distinctiveness of pastoral theology might then be located in the way it approaches and appropriates the Christian tradition. How we go about thinking theologically depends on the reasons why we do it. This may be illustrated in two ways.

First, one's starting point may be doctrinal, and then one notes attempts to correlate doctrinal themes with particular persons and their circumstances. Clues to such an approach are given by Alistair Campbell. He gives some sense to what might be involved in exploring life in the light of a sense of faith in God by bringing resources from a doctrine of incarnation to bear on issues of sexuality, and relates eucharistic themes to experience of bereavement and grief.<sup>12</sup> His point about the pastor's need to personalise theology<sup>13</sup> takes us close to the heart of his view of pastoral theology. The pastor brings resources in the Christian tradition to bear on the personal circumstances of those for whom he or she cares. The question must then be raised as to how, if

at all, this appropriation of scripture and tradition differs from those reading the Bible at what we might label a 'popular / practical' level, that is, believers seeking answers to questions about life and faith, God and humankind. The possible similarities between these ways of relating to scripture are perhaps especially significant in the light of the sub-theme which runs through Campbell's work, that is, the sense, if any, in which pastoral care can be properly 'professional'.

A more complex (but more systematic) account is to be found in Anthony Dyson's study of pastoral theology. Taking H.I.V./A.I.D.S. as his example he suggests that pastoral theology might move 'to and fro between the actual experience of sin and suffering in the Body of Christ... and the accumulated theological sediment which we call 'doctrine' or 'doctrines' in the teaching or confessional offices of the Church'.<sup>14</sup> The present situation and the doctrinal sediment relate by way of 'mutually critical correlation'<sup>15</sup>. Dyson quotes the American pastoral theologian Charles Gerkin to underline his point about the hermeneutic he proposes, Gerkin himself drawing on John McIntyre's talk about narrative collision which is proving so popular at the present time:

[Pastoral] theology is... appropriately a generalist discipline that draws freely upon the specialised knowledge of many different, more narrowly structured perspectives and ways of accumulating knowledge about the world. That appropriation of specialised knowledge must, however, be a disciplined appropriation that is itself shaped by the process of mutually critical correlation which tests the perspectives of other narratives by their abrasion against the Christian narrative, even as that narrative itself is tested and re-interpreted.<sup>16</sup>

The essential difference between pastoral and other forms of theology is defined in terms of their commitment to the tradition as central, though in an interactive model. Doctrinal theology, in Dyson's view, is primarily a past-centred norm, whilst pastoral theology is different in being primarily present-centred<sup>17</sup> - in the particular context in which we find his argument, addressing those presently involved in suffering and sin caused by one death-dealing illness.

Combining the insights of Campbell and Dyson, we might say that the essential task of pastoral theology is to bring the resources of the tradition to bear in the service of (a) particular person(s) in particular circumstances, the pastoral theologian drawing on the documents and thinking of the tradition in order to ensure that the contemporary locus of reflection is not 'inflated' to the extent that it displaces the contribution to understanding of doctrinal and systematic resources.<sup>18</sup>

In order to further clarify the distinction between pastoral and other forms of theology, it is helpful to look at the way pastoral theologians reflect upon the actions they seek to engender. Two broad positions, one more directive and one less so, emerge among those writing on pastoral theology in Britain at the present time. Pattison, for example, defines pastoral care as

That activity undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God.<sup>19</sup>

The reference point of the somewhat opaque idea of people being perfect in Christ is the Pauline talk of 'presenting everyone

mature in Christ' in Colossians 1.28. And it is worth noting here that Wright develops a similar Pauline maxim to do with 'maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' in Ephesians 4.13.<sup>20</sup> It can, of course, be highly problematic to introduce talk about Christ, for the Christ we 'employ' may be much like those looking to him (see above, p. 14). It is possible, however, to accept some basic characteristics as real features of Jesus' life and death and to take these as a goal for personal development. Jesus may, for instance, be seen to measure what it means to share one's own resources with others and to model a way of sustaining others in their brokenness and suffering by becoming broken and suffering in oneself. This kind of understanding could be said to give sense to what it means to follow, or be conformed to, Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Explaining his own position, Pattison suggests that pastoral counsellors need to hold on to a Christian vision, and spiritual life, with a sense of 'being rooted, grounded in and orientated towards God'.<sup>22</sup> He then goes on to make the point that 'the end which is sought, and the means used to attain it may not be externally significant in care, but their underlying significance cannot be ignored'.<sup>23</sup> He states that the carer's orientation towards God may not be significant for the recipient of care though he is clear that this does not mean that confrontation is to be excluded from the carer's task. Though he sees it as often inappropriate to make confrontation shelter a call for the one seeking help to accept the donation of new life through the Christian gospel, it is necessary in order to enable the

recipient of care to enlarge their own horizons in a way which empathy alone cannot facilitate.<sup>24</sup> It is argued by those who take this view that pastoral care demands a challenge to the life-style of an individual or group,<sup>25</sup> because the eschatological framework with which a Christian pastor works seeks the yet to be and not just the given.<sup>26</sup>

A second, less directive perspective can be seen in the specific example of an exchange between a psychiatric hospital's chaplain and one of its patients, named 'Edward'. During the conversation, the chaplain makes reference to Paul's letter to the Romans to throw light upon Edward's current experience. John Foskett, who cites this example<sup>27</sup> comments that the chaplain

Would have been better advised to keep his theological understanding as a comfort to himself, and as a support for his ministry to Edward, and not to presume that it would help Edward at this point.<sup>28</sup>

In this instance, he thinks that the tradition ought to be used in a 'second order' and where it may animate the pastor but is not used as an over-arching framework to be enforced upon the client. In this respect there is common ground with some of Pattison's comments. Yet Foskett makes his point most forcibly in his comment that

When we find ourselves as pastors breaking into a sermon or a prayer, it is important to ask ourselves for whose benefit we are praying or preaching.<sup>29</sup>

The extent to which Foskett's definition gives leeway to the norms of secular counselling are obvious. Michael Jacobs, the author of an introduction to pastoral counselling, also aligns himself with the less directive school when he writes,

Counselling is characterised not by active intervention,...

it is a way of helping others which stresses the gentle stillness of the helper in listening, absorbing, containing and understanding.<sup>30</sup>

Jacobs goes on to speak of the helper as one who helps clients to 'help themselves', to come to their own conclusions and to decide in what ways they might begin to change their circumstances and themselves.<sup>31</sup> Yet there is a question here as to whether forms of secular counselling are, as is so often imagined, either wholly 'non-directive' or free from the possibility of the counsellor's own beliefs and values 'distorting' the other's self-understanding and development.

These questions are in the background of Thomas Oden's remarks that whilst a wealth of material has been produced about what is called pastoral counselling, the question remains as to what is meant by the word 'pastoral' in that context.<sup>32</sup> How does the qualifying 'pastoral' lend a sense of anything distinctive? Jacobs offers several possible solutions. He distinguishes pastoral counselling from, on the one hand, the work of psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychologists, and on the other, from educational contexts and such like, where 'pastoral' has come to mean care and welfare of some description. As Jacob's defines his terms, pastoral counselling refers to the work of women and men

for whom religious faith is a major concern, for whom theological reflection is important, and who perhaps work in the context of a religious setting.<sup>33</sup>

On this view, it is a close connection with a Christian community which renders the qualifying word appropriate for such counsellors.<sup>34</sup> An alternative model he offers of the pastoral

counsellor is of one who takes 'ultimate concerns' seriously, and is prepared to accept questions about life, death, meaning, existence and values as valid ones.<sup>35</sup> This openness to such questions, he suggests, may be grounded in an incarnational principle which demands that humanity needs to be taken seriously.<sup>36</sup>

After having made this distinction between counselling and pastoral counselling, Jacobs then makes a helpful distinction between pastoral counselling and pastoral care. Recognising overlap, he locates the essential difference in the former referring to a specific task - 'what we might call formal counselling'<sup>37</sup> - whilst the latter refers to informal counselling.<sup>38</sup> For Oden, such distinctions will not do. He views the professionalisation of pastoral care in pastoral counselling as having led to a loss of what he calls 'pastoral identity'. Pastoral counselling, in his view, sits loose to 'anything resembling historical pastoral identity'.<sup>39</sup> Oden associates pastoral counselling with an unhealthy 'anti-nomianism', which it may appear to entail as it refuses to 'direct'. He accuses pastoral counselling of confusing the gospel with a free-wheeling 'grace without law' ethic which licenses apathy and other forms of 'cheap grace' against which he tirades. He counts as evidence for this observation the way in which ethical judgements may be withheld by Christian pastoral counsellors, which in turn means that those counsellors who are also preachers may also refrain from moral evaluation in their sermons in order to appear consistent. On both of these counts, he accuses pastors of



failing in the prophetic task with which they are entrusted. However, the issue which Oden takes up here seems in the eyes of other pastoral theologians to be not that moral evaluation and the like are to be blocked out from pastoral practice, but that the commitments of the over-arching tradition (i.e. Christianity, in this case) to which the pastor adheres are not to be imposed upon clients. It is also notable that what is perceived and dismissed as anti-nomianism might in fact be not as modern as its critics like to think. It can be sympathetically paralleled to elements in monastic rules, such as St. Benedict's, which urges the subservience of judgement to mercy. Hence it may have deeper historical roots than many responses to it.<sup>40</sup>

In a parish situation the role of both pastoral carer and pastoral counsellor may often focus on one person: an ordained priest or deacon. The parish itself is significant for the forms care may take in that, unlike most other carers, parish clergy, apart from not being paid directly by those who receive care from them, live within the community for which they care and may be the focus of some attention in that community. It can be expected that they may have relationships at different levels with those they 'formally' counsel. In the theology of ministry embedded in the Anglican Prayer Book tradition, for example, the parish clergy are responsible before God for every soul in the parish and not only those who worship in the parish church, as O. C. Edwards underlines. In the Church of England's Alternative Service Book:

A deacon is called to serve the Church of God, and to work with its members in caring for the poor, the needy, the

sick, and all who are in trouble. He is to strengthen the faithful, search out the careless and the indifferent, and to preach the word of God in the place to which he is appointed. A deacon assists the priest under whom he serves,... it is his general duty to do such work as is entrusted to him.

A priest is... servant and shepherd among the people to whom he is sent. He is to proclaim the word of the Lord, to call his hearers to repentance, and in Christ's name to absolve, and declare the forgiveness of sins. He is... to teach and encourage by word and example. He is to minister to the sick, and to prepare the dying for their death. He must set the Good Shepherd always before him as the pattern of his calling, caring for the people committed to his charge, and joining with them in common witness to the world.

...You are to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; you are to teach and admonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations and to guide them through its confusions, so that they may be saved through Christ for ever.<sup>41</sup>

In this respect, clergy status may not provide 'professional' distance between helper and helped and may generate greater vulnerability on the part of the ordained counsellor whose clients belong to the same parish. At least, personal friendship and professional concern may intertwine<sup>42</sup> which must colour the extent to which they are willing or able to assume the detached perspective or role which normally characterises those who formally counsel others.

Tension can be expected if pastoral counselling and the ministry of mediating sacramental grace in confession and absolution collide in the ordained person. In order to attempt to test the claim that forms of counselling are taking the place of the sacrament of penance (see above, p. 130) or indeed whether it is possible that they can do so, I want to clarify the distinctiveness of pastoral counselling and sacramental

confession.

First, pastoral counselling has a double structure, in that it is offered both in and by the church. It might be used by persons belonging to the church and regularly attending worship and in eucharistic fellowship, or may be offered by a 'representative Christian' to a person with no active connections with church life. By contrast, those engaged in the sacrament of penance are likely to participate in wider sacramental life. This can be seen in the Anglican tradition, where confession finds its meaning in preparation for the eucharist, while Roman Catholic writers are keen to speak of eucharistic celebration as the 'summit and source'<sup>43</sup> of the sacrament of penance. In this respect, pastoral counselling has a larger 'hinterland' than the sacrament and does not demand of those who adhere to it a commitment to the worshipping life of the church. In so far as this is the case, pastoral counselling can be seen to be entirely consonant with the Prayer Book tradition's concern for the clergy's task of caring for all in the parish (see above, p. 141), aside from their involvement in worship and so forth. It does, however, beg questions of the clerics' capacity to adopt a role which distances them from the commitments of their tradition.

Second, a difference can also be seen in the way people become involved in either pastoral counselling or the sacrament. Those who receive pastoral counselling are likely to have been referred to a counsellor or else to have initiated the process themselves, perhaps through more informal connections with clergy. By contrast, confession may be laid upon persons as an obligation

and is so at least in the Catholic tradition where annual confession of mortal sin is mandatory (see above, p. 67). The situation is different in the Anglican tradition where no demand to confess is made but the option is open to all whose conscience requires some sort of catharsis.

Third, a distinction between the two forms of care might be made in that pastoral counselling arises in response to problems and focuses upon problems, whereas the sacrament is an ongoing and long-term feature in their life, concerned with larger questions of guidance and spirituality. This is especially the case in the Catholic tradition where 'confession of devotion' is encouraged, though it does not appear to me to be the case in more general Anglican practice which emphasises the need for confession only in response to a demand of conscience. One strength of the first model of confession, however, may be that it provides active or pro-active, as opposed to re-active, care.

Fourth, the presence or absence of absolution drives a definite wedge between the two forms of care. Whilst pastoral counselling may provide a note of confrontation, most models stress the need to help the clients 'help themselves'. Self-understanding and self-refinement are the guiding concepts. Absolution, by stark contrast, points away from claims to self-help and ascribes power to change to the grace of a justifying God. Writing about sacramental spirituality, Kenan Osborne sees its base-line in the claim that 'we see the sign, but we must believe in the reality'.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, we have seen that pastoral counselling

does not necessarily engage with questions of belief and the counsellor's religious and ethical beliefs may not be shared with clients.

Fifth, questions about absolution also point out some issues to do with the 'goal' of each kind of ministry. A clear goal of the sacrament of penance is forgiveness. In the words of Karl Rahner, the essence of the sacrament is that 'God forgives our guilt by the grace of Christ and the word of the Church'.<sup>45</sup> We have seen in ch. 2 how Rahner urges priests to hold on to the distinct ministry of forgiveness offered in the sacrament (see above, p. 95). Later in this chapter I shall show how forgiveness may enter into some forms of pastoral counselling, though it is not necessarily referred to the divine and in most cases is likely to be wholly in inter-human terms and concern the breaking out from a past pattern of relationality. By contrast to the central issue of relation to God in the sacrament, the immediate aim of pastoral counselling may appear to be simply adjustment to society.

Sixth, the delineation of the deacon's and priest's roles as defined in the Alternative Service Book are problematic. Both the deacon and the priest may be competent in informal and formal counselling, but at least in the Church of England, only some of those ordained may perform the act of absolution. And of course, up until now, this has excluded women from one of the ministries with which I am concerned.<sup>46</sup>

This points up one reason for a rationale for pastoral ministry

to be developed apart from confessional documents about priesthood or ordination. Another is that many pastoral carers are lay people: so a rationale loosed from traditional ties might prove an enormous encouragement to those concerned with genuine 'every member ministry'. James Mathers points one helpful way ahead by defining the Christian counsellor in relation to what his or her humanist counterpart is not.

He understands that religious themes are clearly on the pastoral counsellor's agenda, and I shall concentrate on his comments on forgiveness. His proposal is that the humanist counsellor may offer forgiveness by his acceptance, but makes no room for talk about God in this offer of forgiveness. By contrast the Christian counsellor offers forgiveness, though not as his or her own contribution but rather that of Christ. Presumably, he or she facilitates the forgiveness of Christ by directing the pastoral conversation along particular avenues and such like. We shall examine the ways in which counsellors, Christian or otherwise, might introduce talk of, and enable, forgiveness later in this chapter, but here I want to draw attention to Mathers' contrast between the humanist counsellor's 'own contribution' and the Christian counsellor's commitment to humility and self-abnegation. The distinction between the secular and Christian counsellor might then be construed in terms of the Christian being clear that any benefit comes from God, not self. Hence, Mathers notes: 'the blind leading the blind' is more appropriate than a 'good Samaritan' model.<sup>47</sup> The counsellor's value system is the source of any healing, not his technical skill. Whether or

not we regard at least this last statement as unrealistic or at best expressing false humility, we may appreciate Mathers' demand that the Christian counsellor have a Christocentric, rather than an egotistic identity.

Mathers' colleague, Bob Lambourne, argues that a 'trinitarian Christology' provides a rationale for pastoral counselling.<sup>48</sup> For Lambourne, Christ is recognised as the other 'for me' but always transcends the 'other and me', and precisely this affirmation resists the loss of theology into anthropology. We see then how one may draw on two models for pastoral identity. The first is grounded in the imitation of Christ tradition, hence the emphasis on humility and self-abnegation. Some of the dangers of this tradition were noted in ch. 1 (see above, p. 41) and we will at least wish to hold it in balance with a salutary reminder that Jesus was a confrontational and non-conforming figure, so that we do not associate it with collusion in pastoral action. Alternatively, the second model draws inspiration from themes found in elements of the trinitarian tradition, though this too could diminish resources for conflict (see above, p. 40). The redress required of the trinitarian model might be provided by the renewed vision of the imitation model suggested above and so oscillation between the two may be the best way forward.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the imitation and trinitarian tradition expounded by Mathers and Lambourne, Campbell gathers alternative resources for envisioning the pastoral task by developing the image of the pastoral carer as shepherd, as well as the more novel images of fellow journey-maker and companion on the way, fool and wounded

healer.<sup>50</sup>

Seventh, differences can be seen in relation to the concept of sin. In the sacrament of penance sin is likely to be regarded as an offence against God, against others and against the church. In pastoral counsel, the word 'sin' may not be introduced by the counsellor to explain a situation as it might be seen to imply a value judgement which would be inappropriate for the counsellor to impose upon the client. What the priest labels 'sin', the counsellor may seek to explain in terms less loaded with religious connotations. The counsellor is likely to view his or her task as attending to the person as a 'victim' of forces of oppression acting upon the life of the client, whether from internal or external sources, which he or she then enables the client to understand and manage. From the perspective of sacramental ministry, sin needs to be forgiven, not explained.

Eighth, an important question is raised in this respect concerning what constitutes sin and who defines what sin is. Ch. 2.3 was concerned with this question in the Catholic tradition. Notable theological challenges are also being made to traditional Christian claims by feminist theologians.<sup>51</sup> But interestingly, Martin Smith seems able to provide an examination of conscience apparently suited to female penitents which accepts much in feminist critiques of the doctrine.<sup>52</sup>

Ninth, pastoral counselling is concerned to respect the autonomy of individuals in a way which may be incompatible with traditions of ethics related to confession, at least to those Catholics who



are more conservative than Curran, Mahoney and others examined in the previous chapter. Pattison suggests that asking a client questions will deter the pastor from preaching in the context of pastoral care encounters,<sup>53</sup> indicating at least that even those who jettison talk of non-direction are only prepared to direct by some means and not others. The counsellor, of course, does not act as 'judge', though this image is also now displaced from a central position in contemporary Catholic theology of penance. Neither can he or she 'bind' or 'loose' persons in the sense intended by the use of these words in sacramental contexts, though, ironically the term 'analysis' so frequently used in forms of counselling comes from the Greek verb 'to loose'. Pastoral counsellors are more likely to understand themselves as meeting emotional needs rather than pointing up ethical demands.

Yet despite these differences, counsel, at least in some form, does have a central role in the sacramental act. I looked in ch. 2 at the role of counsel in rites of penance (see above, pp. 94-95). At this stage I want to highlight how much attention various contemporary liturgies actually give to this question. The growth in expectation of counsel in confession has undoubtedly arisen in recent years as a response to the growing influence of pastoral counselling, and counsel is now widespread in confession. It is more difficult to assess the nature of the counsel which one can now expect in the various traditions. The Roman Catholic O.P. provides room for the priest to give 'suitable counsel'<sup>54</sup> in the sacrament of penance, and the American Lutheran liturgy of 1978 expects minister and penitent to engage in pastoral

conversation.<sup>55</sup> The Church of Wales' 1984 liturgy also provides for 'opportunity to ask for informed counsel when in doubt or difficulty'.<sup>56</sup> Other traditions are less certain about the place of counsel. The 1987 rite of the Church of Christ in the United States views pastoral conversation as appropriate to confession only in instances when the minister knows the penitent person,<sup>57</sup> whilst other traditions take a more rigorous line. The Episcopal Church of America includes in its rubrics the point that 'the content of a confession is not normally a matter of subsequent discussion',<sup>58</sup> perhaps indicating the necessary initiative demanded of the penitent if issues are to be taken up in a pastoral framework apart from a sacramental context, and the Canadian liturgy of 1985 is adamant that 'not every priest is, or should be, a counsellor'.<sup>59</sup> In relation to the comment in the Canadian liturgy, I would add that at the time of the reform of the Roman Catholic rite it was suggested that some priests might be acknowledged as especially gifted confessors and exercise that particular ministry while other priests concentrated on other aspects of ministry.<sup>60</sup> To my knowledge, this proposal has never been endorsed.

The forms of counsel commended by some liturgical traditions in the above paragraph are not necessarily to be correlated with pastoral counselling in the 'narrow' sense defined by Jacobs, but even this brief survey of traditions suggests a blurring of the ministries of sacramental confession and pastoral counselling in the contemporary church. Before developing some of the ways in which particular features of counselling scenarios and elements

within the sacrament of penance cohere and correspond, I will first turn to an important text in the pastoral action tradition which both challenges much of what is currently accepted as constituting pastoral care and also much that is characteristic of the Roman Catholic sacrament.

### 3.2 'YOUR ANXIETY IS YOUR SIN' -

#### BONHOEFFER'S APPROACH TO 'SPIRITUAL' CARE

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) is best known for works other than his Spiritual Care. Whilst these more famous works were translated into English in the late 1950s and 1960s, helped (in this country at least) by radical Anglican bishop John Robinson's preoccupation with Bonhoeffer's thought in his Honest to God (1963),<sup>61</sup> Seelsorge, the writing most directly related to pastoral concerns, did not emerge in an English translation until 1985, when it was translated by Jay C. Rochdale. The copyright holder and publisher, Fortress Press, is based in Philadelphia, which perhaps helps explain why reference to this work is curiously absent from recent works of pastoral theology by British authors.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany from London to take on teaching at the Confessing Church's seminary in Zingstof towards the end of April, 1935. The seminary soon moved to Finklewalde a little over two months later. Aside from The Cost of Discipleship being written and published during his time there, his reflections on the experience of seminary life were written (published in English as Life Together) in 1937 shortly after the place was

forcibly shut down by the Gestapo.

It is from this same background that Spiritual Care emerged, and its emphases and themes are consonant with these more well-known works. Its distinctive contribution to the body of Bonhoeffer's work focuses the themes with which he has taken up elsewhere - Christocentricity in all things, the truthful proclamation of the Word of God, the integration of spirituality and practical discipleship, and so on - on the tasks of those engaged in the cura animarum.<sup>62</sup>

There are several reasons why this text is relevant to my study. First, Bonhoeffer stands as a twentieth century representative of the tradition noted in chapter 2 of forms of church care shifting from the church building into people's own homes, as well as being a test-case for Oden's claim that visitation, central in Spiritual Care, has effectively replaced the Catholic sacrament of penance (see above, p. 130). Second, he presents a confrontational and rather aggressive model of pastoral action which contrasts well with some of the contemporary approaches I outlined in the previous section, as well as those in ch. 2.3. (see above, pp. 98-106). Third, I think that this confrontational approach to pastoral ethics is by no means obsolete in some contemporary Christian traditions: in chapter 2, I briefly touched on the heavy-handed ways in which biblical interpretations might be applied in some Protestant traditions in order to bring out a parallel with the way some Roman Catholics approach the sources of authority in their own tradition (see

above, pp. 97-98). And later in ch. 3, I shall refer to the story of one woman - 'Sylvia' - who might well have been subject to some very aggressive methods of pastoral action in the evangelical Pentecostal tradition in which she was nurtured (see below, pp. 179-180). The author who examines Sylvia's experience notes that she may be typical of many who 'the more they swam in the river of forgiveness the more they seemed to be drowning in guilt'.<sup>63</sup> James Jones' comment here points up a fourth relevant feature of Bonhoeffer's work. Whereas contemporary churches of the kind I have in mind do not engage in confessional encounters, Bonhoeffer makes confession central to the practice of pastoral action as he understands it. And those authors in contemporary evangelicalism and elsewhere who might hold a similar approach to Bonhoeffer on pastoral ethics might then wish to learn something from him about finding a place for confession. As far as I am aware, Richard Foster is something of a lone voice urging the re-evaluation of confession in evangelical circles.<sup>64</sup> Having noted these possible connections, we might now proceed to Bonhoeffer's text.

The phrase 'spiritual care' is itself important, translating 'Seelsorge', and meant to distinguish his subject from 'pastoral care', which for Bonhoeffer carried implications of psychological counselling and which he wished to keep distinct from his own concept of explicit Christian care - the 'cure of souls' - though we may well expect Bonhoeffer to have later changed his views on the relevance of these forms of care when we learn of his arguments in Letters and Papers from Prison which state his

belief that the world had 'come of age' and that 'religionless Christianity' was now required to reach contemporaries with good news. In this respect we find in Spiritual Care insights into the Bonhoeffer who is not so well known, and which makes study of Spiritual Care interesting and worthwhile, providing scope to chart development and change in Bonhoeffer. So in the Finklewalde period of his life and thought at least he was able to write that 'the pastor can know very little from the psychologist' (compare Rahner, above, p. 95).<sup>65</sup> Bonhoeffer gives three reasons for this, all of which we may now regard as dubious. First, psychologists are 'distant' from their patients, supposedly wanting to overcome evil by their own powers, which distinguishes them from pastors who are supposedly self-effacing. Second, the psychologist is at the same time 'too close' and immediate in the psychologist/patient relationship, where the pastor approaches the other through Christ. Third, the psychologist's work is 'erotic' (presumably as opposed to 'agapaic') on account of building on human relationships, a failing the pastor avoids by attending to the love of Christ.<sup>66</sup> Bonhoeffer can think of no reasons why the pastor needs to heed psychological methods of counselling. Rather, the pastor is to be 'pre-methodical' and 'pre-psychological' - 'in the best sense naive'.<sup>67</sup> In his view, spiritual care involves the address of the gospel to the individual, and the locus of the action and communication of God to particular human beings: 'caring for souls is a proclamation to the individual which is part of the office of preaching'.<sup>68</sup> Spiritual care is part of the church's mission of proclamation, and is quite markedly distinct from psychological approaches and

so-called spiritual direction. Unlike these two disciplines, which in his understanding work on a plane between two persons, 'in spiritual care, God wants to act'.<sup>69</sup> There is a blatant 'vertical' dimension (based, presumably, on the 'givenness' of scripture) missing in the 'horizontal' exclusivity of the other forms.

Carers attempt to tackle the specific problem of persons being unable to hear the word of the gospel, which is blocked because of the person's sin, for 'sin is what blocks people from a fruitful hearing of the word'.<sup>70</sup> Their task is orientated toward the goal of 'a new and right hearing of the sermon'<sup>71</sup> and expressedly not to bring about competence, build character, or produce 'a certain type of person'. Creating hearers of the gospel is Bonhoeffer's goal.

Spiritual care is, however, not simply one-way from carer to client. Bonhoeffer emphasises the listening ministry of those who exercise spiritual care.<sup>72</sup> Yet the point of listening is to enable the pastor to preach with more power, exposing and banishing sin with greater clarity and force. According to Bonhoeffer, only the clearing out of sin by dependence upon the forgiving word of God can engender attentiveness to the divine word, and hence specific and particular sins need to be confronted. Bringing sin to light and banishing it means for him that confession is at the heart of such care. Bonhoeffer identifies the value of confession in spiritual care and pastoral visitation over general confessions in the particular opportunity

it affords to cut through the facade that confession can be unrelated to obedience.<sup>73</sup> Confession must be understood as a complete surrender of self to God. Bonhoeffer set a framework for this kind of thought by asserting at the same time that 'the demand for obedience without forgiveness would drive a person to perplexity.'<sup>74</sup> 'The law cannot be offered without the gospel, and vice versa',<sup>75</sup> which in practice might be taken to mean that to be other than radically open to a confrontation with the forgiving grace of God is a sign of falsely attempting to reduce divine grace to 'grace I grant myself'.<sup>76</sup> The reverse of this is also acknowledged, that 'God is not taken seriously when one's own lostness is taken more seriously than God's grace'.<sup>77</sup> The challenging statement that 'your anxiety is your sin' is the starting point for such a ministry.<sup>78</sup>

Bonhoeffer understands that opposition to God needs to be transformed into submission. When locating the pastor's task to the need to tie forgiveness to the divine demand for obedience he is deeply resonant with what is perhaps the most powerful passage in The Cost of Discipleship:

Grace is costly because it calls us to follow, it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. Grace is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us...<sup>79</sup>

In Spiritual Care Bonhoeffer quotes Voltaire to make the same point. 'God forgives because it is God's business' illustrates how 'we may deal with grace too easily'.<sup>80</sup> And he notes too, with realism, that 'disobedience, as well as obedience, has the power



to transform a person completely'.<sup>81</sup>

Prayer is a definite prerequisite for spiritual care in so far as it plays a key role in discernment of the other's situation and needs, helps one to calmly recognise sin in self and others, facilitates listening and relates the pastor's role to that of the most important mediator in the pastoral encounter: Jesus Christ. The pastor must never allow him or herself to believe that they may usurp Jesus' place as real mediator or healer. Loss of clarity about who really mediates can only, in Bonhoeffer's eyes, arouse expectations which it is impossible for the pastor not to disappoint. This special characteristic of the pastoral task is one way in which Bonhoeffer distinguishes the pastor from the doctor, who is in most cases perceived as healer by his or her patients.

Who is the carer, or may be one, in Bonhoeffer's view? The diakonia of spiritual care is not to be correlated with those ordained to ministry in the church, for the ordained person's office rests on a commission. The spiritual carers depends on the universal priesthood of believers and is based on faith.<sup>83</sup> Spiritual gifted-ness and extensive experience do not qualify one for such a ministry for 'only love of Christ does',<sup>84</sup> creating, as he believes it does, wise carers and enabling incisive understanding of self and others.

As spiritual care engages the carer in hearing confession and dispensing a personally addressed absolution to the penitent, it follows that confessions can be heard and pardon assured before

any Christian person (or at least those qualified for care as outlined earlier). Because the ministry belongs to the universal priesthood it makes for 'mutual consolation between Christians'<sup>e5</sup> and he sees this as requiring that only those who make confessions hear them in order to safeguard the love of Christ from the dominion of others.<sup>e6</sup>

He distinguishes confession in spiritual care from daily confession of sin before God in private prayer and liturgical confessions in the church's worship. He understands the first to relate the sinner directly to God. The penitent speaks to God when he or she speaks to the confessor, who stands in God's stead.<sup>e7</sup> A vocal and concrete mode of confession in the presence of a fellow-believer is good in so far as it assures the Christian that 'God is not a phantom' and guards against reality being lost in pure reflection.<sup>e8</sup> It assures the penitent that forgiveness does not come from the self nor rests on the delusion that transformation can be self-generated.

Good reasons are given for confession with another. First, Bonhoeffer sees it as 'treachery' that some find it easier to confess to a 'holy God' than to a person 'no different to themselves'. Second, in the light of the eschatological exposure of secret sin (cf. II Cor.5.10) he argues that it is better to deal with it in the present. Third, confession with another has the potential to break the power of pride, the root of all sin (see above, p. 120). The necessary degradation involved in the penitent's act associates him or her with the disgrace of Christ

intelligence office (Abwehrdienst).<sup>91</sup>

Bonhoeffer's understanding of ethical confrontation also challenges the Roman Catholic approach explored in ch. 2.3 and the predominantly liberal Protestant authors discussed earlier in this chapter (see above, pp. 137-140). Bonhoeffer writes:

The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge. Christian ethics... professes to be a critique of ethics simply as ethics.<sup>92</sup>

Bonhoeffer's Ethics begins with this statement. An imaginative appropriation of the Genesis fall story then leads him to state that 'in becoming like God man has become a god against God'.<sup>93</sup> He argues that because the image of God in humankind has suffered distortion this state of affairs between the divine and humans can be no basis for ethics because God's authority is compromised and 'man's life is now disunion with God, with men, with things, and with himself'.<sup>94</sup>

Conscience is seen as a mark of the disunion in the divine/human relationship. Conscience is concerned not with a human being's relationship to God and to other humans but with a human's relation to self.

It derives the relation to God and to men from the relation of man to himself. Conscience pretends to be the voice of God and the standard for the relation to other men. It is therefore from his right relation to himself that man is to recover the right relation to God and to other men.<sup>95</sup>

Yet he does not reject conscience. Readers of the book from which this quotation comes have also found the counsel that 'it is true that it is never advisable to act against one's own conscience'.<sup>96</sup> Robin Gill points out that Bonhoeffer's

and constitutes an act of discipleship to the cross. Finally, it is claimed that the practice encourages genuine community - 'one is never alone' where confession is established and practised.<sup>89</sup> He even goes so far as to relate lack of confession to the apparent lifelessness of the church.<sup>90</sup>

Bonhoeffer does not claim that Spiritual Care is a systematic treatise, and some elements within it require further elucidation. In particular, I would point attention in this respect to the way Bonhoeffer expounds the inter-relationship between Christ, confessor and penitent. He insists the two human parties meet 'on the level,' we might say, expounding Christ's role as sole mediator, yet he holds the understanding that the confessor stands in Christ's stead. We might expect that he would explain this position in terms of the fellow-Christian being animated by the love of Christ and in this sense 'imitating' him. Whilst his position on this issue lacks clarity, criticism of him here is perhaps unfair, in so far as we might suppose him to have understood himself as being 'naive' or at least not overly concerned with methodical strictness or systematisation in writing on a task he characterises as 'naive'. Also worth keeping in mind on this count is the immediate situation of the Confessing Church at the time of his writing, and Bonhoeffer's own contribution to the task of defining Christian fidelity and the nature of the church from his own position as opponent of the German Church's acceptance of the Third Reich's authority in ecclesiastical matters, which was to make him redundant as a teacher of theology and led to his involvement with the military

disparaging statements are best seen as a rejection of the adequacy of secular ethics, against which he clarifies his own view.<sup>97</sup> What is that?

Bonhoeffer's sermon 'What is a Christian Ethic?' (preached to the German congregation in Barcelona towards the end of January 1929) prefigures his major work in Ethics and illustrates the continuity of the conviction he was later to address in 'ethics as formation':

There are countless ways of man to God, and therefore there are also countless ethics, but there is only one way of God to man, and that is the way of love in Christ, the way of the cross.<sup>98</sup>

In Bonhoeffer's view, the 'boundless love of God towards man' must displace appeals to conscience and other supposed sources of ethical direction. A Christian's ethical method ('method' not being the best word in the light of the above) must be grace-centred, seeking to re-focus on the original, 'childlike' communion of God and humankind 'in the beginning'.

He goes on to ask in that same sermon: if it is correct to see the notion of 'ethics' itself as exalted and stretched to perform a function it properly understood, simply cannot, why then are the gospels full of evidently ethical directions? It is at this point that Bonhoeffer betrays his interest in Jesus' sermon on the mount, with which he engaged more deeply in The Cost of Discipleship. He takes it that the significance of Jesus' ethical commandments lie in their direct address to hearers that:

you stand before the face of God, God's grace rules over you; you are at the disposal of someone else in the world and for him you must act and work. So be mindful of your actions that you are acting under God's eyes, and that his

will must needs be done'.<sup>99</sup>

The nature of this will of God can only be clear in the moment of action, which betray his approach as 'situationalist' as well as highly personalist. For Bonhoeffer, ethics cannot happen in a vacuum because they are relational. Jesus' teaching is not to be viewed as a set of principles, but to be 'understood in their spirit, not literally'. It might be argued that this doesn't really help much in terms of actually translating reflection into behaviour, but Bonhoeffer's central point thus far is clear: moral renewal through Jesus means for him the renunciation of generally valid principles and of rulings. 'Good' and 'evil' exist for Bonhoeffer only in the actual performance of an action, not in things themselves. Goodness and badness are determined by the faithfulness to God, or otherwise, which governs an action.<sup>100</sup> He argues that if there was a generally valid moral law, then that would be a way of human beings to God. And no such thing exists.

By the time of Ethics, this view is clarified and deepened. The Christian way in ethical issues is to blend 'simplicity with wisdom'. To be simple is 'to fix one's eyes solely on the simple truth of God at a time when all concepts are being confused, distorted and turned upside-down... to be single-hearted and not a man of two souls... not fettered by principles but bound by the love of God...'.<sup>101</sup> Wise ones are commended as those who 'see reality as it is... who see reality in God'.<sup>102</sup> The interpretation of Jesus' sayings is to be found in only Jesus himself and so attention must be given to him: 'whoever sees

Jesus Christ does indeed see God and the world in one. He can henceforth no longer see God without the world or the world without God'.<sup>103</sup> Conformation to Jesus Christ ('when the form of Jesus Christ... moulds our own form in its own likeness') displaces all ethical methods. Such conformation takes shape as the believer attends to the radical call of Christ,<sup>104</sup> as that is mediated through scripture (presumably read 'over against oneself').<sup>105</sup>

Of course, not all of these ideas which Bonhoeffer was to develop only after Spiritual Care can be read into his approach to the confrontation of sin and facilitation of God's forgiveness through confession in pastoral action. But they do cast light on an approach to ethics which stands in contrast to those approaches associated with the official Catholic position as it is generally understood and which also diverges from liberal Protestant reluctance to employ the category of 'sin' in pastoral care, as well as from secular counselling. It remains to be seen whether Spiritual Care will begin to be used in pastoral theology in this country in the future, and it may well be that others have noted problems with the work before myself, but having noted the some reasons why I think it to be worthy of attention, I will close with a number of reservations about the book.

I have already noted confusion in Bonhoeffer's exposition of the relationship of penitent, pastor and Christ. On the one hand, Bonhoeffer appears to me to evade the responsibility of the pastor in the actual pastoral encounter by talking about it in

terms of self-effacement and the elusive 'real' mediation of Christ. On the other hand, an enormous weight of responsibility falls on the pastor to open the scriptures appropriately and to challenge and confront anxiety and sin, especially as he also believes that principles and rules are excluded. On the one hand we find personalist ethics and on the other the carer's task is to identify sin in order to banish it. The identity he is prepared to ascribe to the pastor is of course determined by his central commitment to a word-centred theological system, but for our time, I would suggest that Spiritual Care cannot provide an adequate rationale for pastoral action, though we may wish to learn things from it. The central difficulties with his text as I perceive them are, first, as an argument in favour of shifting ministries of forgiveness away from only the ordained his thought remains hierarchical and authoritarian. When compared with the vision of Hellwig (see above, p. 90-91), for instance, following Bonhoeffer appears unattractive, whatever problems attend to Helliwig's thinking. At least she perceives confession in what appears to be a more genuinely mutual way. If both want to locate rationales for confession which are detached from theologies of ordained ministry, she at least is not as open to the charge of reinstating authority with potentially damaging consequences. Claiming effectively that 'it's not me, it's Jesus' who confronts the penitent in confession may be a poisonously arrogant form of manipulation, whether it involves the ordained or not.

Second, in the light of the discussion in ch. 3.1 about 'second order' resources for care (see above, p. 138), Bonhoeffer



commends an approach to the carer's use of scripture in pastoral action which cannot but pass without serious questioning today. For example, those who find in scripture the diversity I have affirmed within it (see above, pp. 5-14) with regards to forgiveness will wish to regard his confident encouragement of the use of scripture as misplaced.

Third, and most importantly, I would question the appropriateness of his pastoral approach in the light of Woodward's comments at the outset of this chapter which note a supposed 'liberation' from authoritarianism and textbook answers (see above, p. 133). How Bonhoeffer's approach might be squared with this insight is a major question which I doubt can be convincingly answered to encourage conservative supporters of confrontational pastoral policies. Scripture is not a textbook for ethics.

To conclude my reflections on Spiritual Care, I would caution those who might wish to be uncritical about the relevance of Bonhoeffer's thought. While they may agree with one contemporary pastoral theologian that 'it does not show much respect for a person if a pastor refuses to be honest about ethics as well as emotions',<sup>106</sup> if they are able to engage their contemporaries at all, they may well lead to those persons' feeling themselves to be 'drowning in guilt,' as happened in the case of the woman I have already mentioned, subject to a rhetoric of forgiveness being used to oppress and confine her (see above, p. 153).<sup>107</sup>

3.3 REPLACING POOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES -  
A PASTORAL COUNSELLING APPROACH TO FORGIVENESS

After this interlude concentrating on one contribution to the history of literature in the pastoral action tradition, I want now to attempt to address a contemporary issue, which seems to me to be very important as it plants us back with our central concern - forgiveness. I hope that I might show one particular way forgiveness may be approached from a pastoral care perspective.

Most people who attempt to write about forgiveness note fairly early on how difficult a concept it is to grasp (see above, p.1). The purpose of this section is to explore how forgiveness might be approached via the psychoanalytic technique of transference. While I have noted Jacobs' distinction between pastoral counselling and the work of psychoanalysts (see above, p. 139), the insights of the pschoanalytical tradition are much to the fore in pastoral counselling and transference is a reality of pastoral encounters whether it is recognised or not. A small number of authors, both psychoanalysts and theologians, have made a connection between the two concepts, but it has remained largely undeveloped. My central question is - does transference helpfully animate our understanding of forgiveness, or does it emerge as a counterfeit of forgiveness? And underlying that particular question are others, about the relationship between theological and therapeutic perspectives.

The relationship between theological and therapeutic perspectives

is, for many, an uneasy one. Pragmatic and humanistic approaches to psychoanalysis have manifest an indifference to religious traditions - a point made by Robert Hogan. He suggests,

Religion is the most important social force in the history of man... but in psychology, anyone who gets involved in or tries to talk in an analytic, careful way about religion is immediately branded a meat-head; a mystic; an intuitive, touchy-feely sort of moron.<sup>108</sup>

In relation to forgiveness, for example, it has been noted that 'no formal therapeutic schools of thought today provide direct insight into the process of forgiveness'.<sup>109</sup> Perspectives on forgiveness are absent from virtually all psychoanalytic literature, probably due to a reluctance on the part of psychoanalysts to employ a word loaded with religious meaning.<sup>110</sup> However, it is becoming increasingly recognised at least in some areas of therapeutic studies that psychoanalytical theory and technique are value-laden,<sup>111</sup> which suggests at least some openness to dialogue with theological concerns.

The reluctance of one discipline to engage with the other is two way, however. Some pastoral theologians have vigorously resisted others who might allow psychoanalysis to define what pastoral care is<sup>112</sup> and have seen interest in therapeutic concerns as efforts to cover embarrassment about the distinctive identity they want to claim for forms of care by church representatives. Thomas Oden is one vehement critic of those who lose their moorings with classical pastoral action traditions and fail to penetrate the supposed 'illusions' of modernity to which psychoanalysis might make them blind (see above, p. 140).<sup>113</sup> Others are tentative about psychoanalytical viewpoints because

they suspect them to be a diversion away from socio-political issues within pastoral care, by withdrawal into inter-personal and intra-psychoic concerns (see above, pp. 132-133). Hence,

Pastors become post hoc alleviators of small and individual evils, while legitimating by their silence the greater social and institutional evils which ensure the long-term suffering of oppressed and unwanted minority groups.<sup>114</sup>

Indeed, such a perspective, it has been claimed, can confirm the suffering in their distress while pretending to offer healing.<sup>115</sup> Of course, some therapists and some theologians have levelled the same charge against attempts to express a doctrine of forgiveness.<sup>116</sup>

The ways in which transference has been understood is best approached in terms of its history, and so I shall outline how Freud and Jung developed the concept.

Transference has a central place in the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. It is the tool which makes evident the patient's neuroses which the therapist can then analyse. Transference in Freud's system has two defining characteristics. The first is repetition. In transference situations early patterns of interaction are repeated in the present, and substitutes are sought for significant others from one's past in persons in the present. Freud explains the concept for the first time in 1893, in a co-authored work Studies in Hysteria. He writes that the patient transfers 'onto the figure of the physician the distressing ideas which arise from the content of the analysis'.<sup>117</sup> His own work An Outline of Psychoanalysis offers a more sharply defined understanding which was to shape the whole

tradition:

The patient sees in his analyst the return - the reincarnation - of some important figure out of his childhood or past, and consequently applies onto him feelings and reactions that undoubtedly applied to this model.<sup>118</sup>

Transference is not restricted to the analytical context for 'again and again what [human beings] take to be new real life is a reflection of the past', but it is specially focused in the therapeutic context.

The second characteristic of Freud's system is the primacy of instinct. Freud understood the basic motivation of all human behaviour to be biological drive. Neurosis, in his view, arises from a person repressing instincts and relegating them from consciousness, which results in unconscious denial of feelings, and projection onto others, both of which disable their recognition. Hence, transference itself is regarded as an expression of neurosis, and the aim of transference in analytic contexts is to recognise and expose these defensive manoeuvres.

Freud regarded the notion of a God as one expression of neurosis. Belief in a God was in Freud's view treating the natural order as if it held semblances of childhood experiences.

A little boy is bound to love and admire his father, who seems to him the most powerful, the kindest and the wisest creature in the world. God himself is after all only an exaltation of this picture of the father as he is represented in the mind of early childhood.<sup>119</sup>

In this respect religion helps meet childhood needs that are not outgrown for comfort, protection, coping with guilt and handling problems (a process labelled sublimation) that would otherwise lead to neurosis. In his view, it provides human beings with a

fantasy world to inhabit, where the natural order is related to the illusion of a personal God, so as to calm our fear of nature; the illusion of post-mortem life to calm our fear of death; and the illusion of supposed rewards in this post-mortem life to make us more willing to meet the needs of other by self-denial. Echoing Freud's own comments, R. J. Bock writes of various religious practices and experiences:

Communion is a sublimated form of cannibalism for the believer in transubstantiation. Homosexual impulses may be satisfied for some men in their brotherly love for Jesus and other Christians. Women can enjoy a sublimated form of love for a young man in the form of Jesus, and his representative, the priest. Oedipal wishes are handled not just in terms of a killing of a god, a representative of the father, but also in prayer for the protection and love from God the father, and devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For men, this is a powerful form of sublimated desire for their mother. Such are some of the socially provided substitute gratifications in religion.<sup>120</sup>

According to Freud, all transference needs to be outgrown. Exposing transference in therapy is part of his task to educate persons to reality. The analyst is seen as a blank screen onto whom the client transfers his or her childhood drives, and who may consequently make their unconscious transference conscious to them and available for an appropriate, educated interpretation. People are able to recognise their tendency to repeat the past to their detriment and break free of misguided commitment to religious traditions.

Carl Jung provides some alternative explanations for some of the phenomena to which Freud points us. His views are generally regarded as more sympathetic to religious positions, and therefore, perhaps not surprisingly, it is easier to connect some

of his thinking to claims about forgiveness. Neurosis, in his view, is the result of splitting the self: parts of the self that are repressed do not fit with our own self-image or the persona which our communication-context enforces or encourages us to uphold. They are then relegated to what he called one's shadow.

He writes,

The inferior and even the worthless in me belongs to me as my shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial without casting a shadow? I must have a dark side too if I am to be whole; and by becoming conscious of my shadow I remember once more that I am a human being like any other.<sup>121</sup>

Jung promotes the idea of a need for confrontation with the shadow, so that its contents can be accepted, and after acceptance be changed. Disorder follows when this does not occur. Also, contrary to Freud, Jung places integration as the central drive in human life, so the human goal becomes to be conscious of that which has been split off yet continues to exert influence over one. The integrating process is labelled as individuation and the role of the analyst is to aid this process of individuation. Reaching the hidden in the self is seen by Jung as only one element of this integrating task - a related but larger element is also relation to what he called at various times in his career archetypes, objective psyche, and collective unconscious. He writes,

I have chosen the term "collective" [for this deeper, inborn layer] because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra-personal nature which is present in every one of us.<sup>122</sup>

Jung identified two important contexts where transference occurred. The first is medical, in which 'illness is transferred to the doctor'<sup>123</sup> so that the doctor 'quite literally "takes over" the sufferings of his patient and shares them with him'.<sup>124</sup>

He expands,

Medical treatment of the transference gives the patient a priceless opportunity to withdraw his projections, to make good his losses, and to integrate his personality'.<sup>125</sup>

Secondly, Jung recognised confession and especially the Catholic sacrament of penance<sup>126</sup> as the ritual precursor of transference situations. He believed the confessional to be the prototype of all analytical treatment and cast the analyst in the role previously fulfilled by the priest. Confession, he believed, allows for the release of secrets and the withheld emotion associated with them, and encourages individuation as the shadow is confronted, accepted and opened to the possibility of change. The ritual of confession for Jung provides guides to concentrate these experiences and make the unconscious open to identification and transformation.

His view of religion was appreciative to the extent he believed that religious traditions had successfully fostered the process of individuation, because aspects of the ritual and symbolic character of religion (like the sacrament of penance) resonate with the repressed and the universal contained within the self. He regarded his work in part as a response to the decline of religious attitudes to life, thinking his own theories might provide needed opportunity to relate to what individuals had



split off and repressed - and to those common concerns (archetypes, etc) which aided individual integration. He believed that 'side by side with the decline of religious life,... neuroses grew noticeably more frequent'<sup>127</sup> and praised the positive contribution of religion in the individuation process:

Among all my patients in the second half of life - that is to say, over thirty-five - there has not been one whose problem was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.<sup>128</sup>

Jung acknowledged the psychological worth of confession in this way:

The tremendous feeling of relief which usually follows confession can be ascribed to the re-admission of the lost sheep into the human community. His moral isolation and seclusion, which were so difficult to bear, cease.<sup>129</sup>

The confessional provides a place for split off secrets - which isolate one from others - to be healthily dealt with. Jung identifies a transference relationship in the confessor/penitent set-up in the moral bond between the two which enables the cathartic release in an accepting environment of a secret which might otherwise depress or even destroy one. The experience is able to evoke the feeling that, as he puts it, 'everything has come out, everything is known, the last terror lived through and the last tear shed; now everything will be alright'.<sup>130</sup> Confession is a great stabiliser which meets the human need to confess to another:

There would appear to be a conscience in mankind which severely punishes everyone who does not somehow and at sometime, at whatever cost to his virtuous pride, cease to

defend and assert himself, and instead confess himself fallible and human. Until he can do this, an impenetrable wall shuts him off from the vital feeling that he is man among other men. This explains the extraordinary significance of genuine, straightforward confession...<sup>131</sup>

Confession, then, might provide opportunity for integrating efforts where one seeks to relate to what has been relegated to the shadow. (Interestingly, Jung held that all secrets have the effect of sin and guilt, whether or not they are morally wrongful secrets).<sup>132</sup>

Jung's emphasis falls on the potential role of the priest as the conveyer of psychological benefits to the penitent. He makes no attempt to hook up the ritual directly to language of forgiveness. Transformation is possible with priest or analyst because archetypes come to independent life and 'serve as spiritual guides for the personality' of the client or penitent.<sup>133</sup> This frees a person from enslavement to the 'futile striving of the ego', and as Jung notes, 'as the religious-minded person would say: guidance comes from God'.<sup>134</sup> Jung's own explanation is somewhat different, and he writes of seeking to avoid God-talk with his clients ('for it reminds them too much of what they have to reject'). 'The existence of the archetype neither postulates a God, neither does it deny that he exists'.<sup>135</sup> The content Jung wishes to give to the word "God" is as follows: 'God is the name for a complex of ideas grouped around a powerful feeling'.<sup>136</sup>

Where Freud located the repetition of instinctual urges as the concern of transference, Jung understood the transferred reality

as unconscious and repressed elements of the psyche. These divergent views mark the beginning of a tradition. Transference is not a static concept; meanings given to it have evolved. Hence, transference is not a concept about which all its professional practitioners are agreed. Although there is little doubt about the process of transference, the precise way it is understood is diverse.<sup>137</sup> And most practitioners approach the theories eclectically.

Five major shifts are especially important. First, it is now widely recognised that the transferred reality is internalised relationships. The Scottish analyst W. R. D. Fairburn placed weight on this characteristic of transference phenomena, and his views have been generally accepted. Contradicting earlier understandings of persons as atomistic and self-enclosed systems, the inter-personal nature of human life is now acknowledged, with the recognition that it is internalised patterns of interaction which are transferred in ordinary behaviour and analysis. This correction applies equally to Jung as to Freud, for although Jung recognised archetypes as facilitating integration, his system remained disturbingly individualistic, in so far as each remains, in his view, able to contain the gathered wisdom of the whole of humankind.

Second, the recognition of human beings' relational orientation from the start of life makes for an enormously complicated reality where bad-object relationships might be perpetuated across several generations if left unchecked, as Stuart Liebermann's transgenerational family therapy intends to

illustrate and address.<sup>138</sup>

Third, Heinz Kohut's contribution to the discipline can barely be underestimated. He established the theory that transference is not eliminated in psychoanalysis (contra. Freud) but that rather the aim of the analyst ought to be to help the client move from childish to mature forms of a phenomenon that undergirds all human relationships. He writes that 'the developments that characterize normal psychological life must... be seen in the changing nature of the relationship between the self and its self-objects, but not in the self's relinquishment of self-objects'.<sup>139</sup>

Fourth, Kohut is also largely responsible for the emphasis now placed upon empathy as a major resource for the analyst. In empathising with the client the analyst may enable a bad-object relationship to be identified as well as providing encouragement to confront and withdraw from the bad-object relation. Hence, the analyst's concern is with the 'empathetic decoding' of the client's transference.

Fifth, the Freudian notion of the analyst as a blank screen has also been ditched to give way to a recognition of the real possibility of counter-transference, in which patterns may be reciprocally transferred.

Taking into account these significant shifts in the tradition, a simple definition of transference likely to be accepted by contemporary psychoanalysts might be: that process in which the

patient transfers onto the figure of the analyst a repetition of a relationship with an important figure from his or her past. The task of transference in psychoanalysis is now seen to be to dissolve attachment to bad-objects by identifying where transference happens in the client/analyst relationship and to make the transference conscious to the client in order to allow for a fresh interpretation. The transference situation then attempts to recreate conditions which might have been absent or lacking in the client's past experience. I want to say that part of this might be an 'environment' of forgiveness.

To summarise, 'transference' labels the human tendency to seek out object relationships which repeat or reflect early self-object relationships in ordinary contexts. It also has a more technical second meaning, with which I am largely concerned in this essay. It labels a particular psychoanalytic technique characterised: first, by the client transferring other object-relationships onto his or her analyst; second, by the analyst's identifying and making conscious this transference to the client; and third, by the analyst accepting the transference without directing to the client the damaging characteristics associated with the transference identification, except in order to identify and open this to change.

What are the connections between this and forgiveness? Clarity about some differences will help define the connections. First, transference may be involuntary or unconscious. Forgiveness, it is usually argued, is both voluntary and conscious. Second, transference in therapeutic contexts concerns rehabilitating

'disordered' persons. This is an image which might resonate with Christian understandings of forgiveness, but equally it might not be helpful in some circumstances. With these disjunctions in view I want to pursue some issues which deserve further exploration.

It seems to me that Jung at least gives content to the idea that human beings experience a felt-need which theologians might suggest is addressed by forgiveness. Jung can give some technical weight to the testimonies of various Christians to the experience of catharsis and freedom which they feel, believing themselves to have been forgiven. Discharging psychic weight in transference explains something of their experience, although Jung's view is limited to the affective side of the experience. It fails to relate to any notion of effective changes being registered either for the other or inter-personally. He addresses some questions about forgiveness as attitude, but has little directly to contribute to understanding forgiveness as transaction, mending disintegration between people.

Jung's ideas do explain how one might experience integration with God, at least if one is prepared to understand the meaning of God in what we would call non-realist categories. And if we want to hold to a realist view we might begin by asking a question based on a comment made by James Jones:

If selves necessarily stand in relation, it is not necessarily irrational to ask if this complex of selves in relation does not itself stand in relation.<sup>140</sup>

Next, we see a way of affirming affective forgiveness by concentrating on the quality of the analyst as emphasised by

Kohut: he or she needs empathy (see above, p. 176) of the kind we found in Butler (see above, p. 31). Jones takes one case of a woman for whom talking about love and acceptance allegedly meant nothing, whilst only the experience of another 'struggling to see things through her eyes' opened up for her the possibility that her isolation could be penetrated and she could be seen and not judged. In cases like this, more gracious interpersonal experience is internalised through contact with the analyst and provides a new psychological structure for him or her.<sup>141</sup> The therapist repeats parental failures and shortcomings for the client, so that although she or he cannot make up to the client for what they have suffered, she or 'he can... repeat the failure to love them enough... and then share with them and help them work through their feelings about this failure'.<sup>142</sup> This transference situation may well initiate a shift in the client's image of God from judgmental to forgiving.<sup>143</sup> Although this point of the transference encounter is undeveloped in the psychoanalytic literature, we may suggest that if the therapist models a forgiving attitude, when the client experiences the therapist's empathy and the decoding stage of therapy begins; as Jared Pringleton suggests, 'the experience of being forgiven implicitly by the therapist and set free from... bondage or entrapment of indebtedness empowers clients to begin to forgive themselves and others',<sup>144</sup> or ascribe this power to God. In essence, the therapist is able to teach the client a way towards forgiveness,<sup>145</sup> by providing new self-object resources for him or her. To make the process more plain we could make use of Jones'

case study, 'Sylvia'. He observes,

An aloof and angry God made it possible for Sylvia to keep her needs for mirroring and empathy split off, and with ... the pain and anger associated with their betrayal. And keeping those needs and feelings repressed enabled her to remain the dutiful self-sacrificing child her family and faith demanded. Her unmerciful demanding God continued to represent the lack of those self-object resources necessary to develop a strong and integrated self and grow beyond her archaic needs.<sup>146</sup>

Transference, in her case, involved kindling her ability to internalise the analyst's concerns so that 'a more gracious relationship to herself' became possible, so that she was able to feel forgiven, alongside gaining the ability to jettison her ties to punishing self-objects. Sylvia's case study provides a powerful witness to how successful transference might work, and she herself connects her experience to divine forgiveness:

I see God as more forgiving. I see parts of scripture about God's love that I never saw before. One of my favourite Bible stories used to be God's punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. I remember having that read to me over and over again as a child. But the other day I noticed that God repented of destroying the world and that he says in Isaiah that he has written my name on the palm of his hand. I cried when I read those words. If God can face and repent of his destructiveness, why can't my pastor and my family? Why didn't anyone ever tell me that God has engraved my name on his hands where he'll never forget me?<sup>147</sup>

It is worth underscoring at this point the importance of trying to ensure that such measures are not needed in the majority of cases. We might connect the psychological insight that our early learning experience establishes patterns of relationship which have an enduring impression on all subsequent relationships, including those between a human being and God, to some comments Karl Rahner makes in relation to the concept of transference; not least that 'the human circumstances and the human concept of



child and childhood, is of the utmost importance for the way in which we understand and apply in religious terms those realities which are expressed by the transferred concepts of child of God, God the Father, etc'.<sup>148</sup> Klein's work, as outlined in ch. 1 (see above, pp. 15-22), helps locate where forgiveness may fit into this kind of thinking, especially seen in the light of Atkinson's comments on it: 'if the child's urge to make reparation (for his perceived wrong towards the loved person) is to become creative for him and for the relationship, it must be met by a responsive gift from the mother (the wronged), i.e., by forgiveness' (see above, p. 22).

As one corollary of this insight we might agree with Ann Loades and Helen Oppenheimer about the importance of honouring parenthood and care given to children. Both provide two ways forward for doing just this: The former suggests that 'for Christians at any rate, having children is now a vocation, a witness to our faith in God as well as a kind of living prayer for the future of the world in which they live. Having children can be seen as a kind of ministry...'<sup>149</sup> The latter wonders whether we might shift the concept of 'blessing' into our talk about parenting, in order to treat it in a manner appropriate to its importance: 'parenthood is one of the clearest illustrations of what it means for one human being to bless another: it is not just an analogy but an example. Not all blessing is a matter of words. To carry, protect, nourish and cherish is to bless... the role of a spouse or parent is to bless... ideally the conception of a child is a mini-annunciation...'<sup>150</sup> In our present context

it seems to me that the significance of both of these insights can barely be underestimated.

When our ideal is not reached, do we need an analyst to enable the kind of transformation to which Sylvia stands as testimony? Sylvia's psychological experience at least resonates with comments like Moltmann's, that

The godforsaken and rejected man can accept himself where he comes to know the crucified God who is with him and has already accepted him... There is nothing that can exclude him from the situation of God.<sup>151</sup>

This kind of rhetoric is well-known, and Richard Bauckham faces one important question about it in these terms: 'Solidarity in suffering ... does not abolish suffering, but it does overcome what Moltmann calls 'the suffering in suffering': the lack of love, the abandonment in suffering',<sup>152</sup> and I want to say of this that at the least we should not underestimate the potential of such thinking to create and sustain the hope that it may do for some people.

Wesley Carr has attempted to address this possibility of relating forgiveness and transference in a more adventurous way by developing a substitutionary theory of atonement.<sup>153</sup> The path Carr takes is interesting in that if we choose to follow Freud at all we are bound to a notion of the analyst as substitute, and other words used by other authors suggest the same concept.<sup>154</sup> We might well have some reservations about following Carr in that the scriptural backing for a theory of penal substitution is apparently scant: in respect to the New Testament hyper ('on behalf of') is used a good deal, but few uses of anti ('instead

of')<sup>155</sup> while John Macquarrie's objections to the theory as an affront to reason and conscience are well rehearsed.<sup>156</sup> It is worth, though, working through Carr's argument to its application to therapeutic processes. Carr understands substitution as a representative function within relationships, and not in terms of replacement. He argues that human beings do act on behalf of, and so represent, or appropriately substitute for, one another; and when we do that we give signals that we are sufficiently confident to be able to trust aspects of ourselves to them.<sup>157</sup> Transferred to God, the idea makes sense for Carr in terms of God doing this in the second person of the Trinity. As human beings may allow others to take aspects of themselves without permission, so God, acting in the event of Jesus' death, is content with being so used. The cross, for Carr, is about God accepting the cost of being used. It 'stands consistently for divine willingness to be used and to accept corollaries of misuse and abuse'.<sup>158</sup> God accepts a role generated by the projections of human beings and the cross allows opportunity for those projections to be identified, responded to and so interpreted. If we want to take on Carr's theory we might say that the cross is a sign of God's willingness to let human beings come to God at least at first through the way they need God to be. Later, they may recognise their projections and transference identifications for what they are and 'really hear another voice than [their] own'<sup>159</sup> or of one for whom they are seeking a substitute.

I am not convinced that we ought to push this kind of thought too far. I want to say that the connection is somewhat suspect in so

far as a penal theory places Jesus in the stead of the offending believer, while the analyst substitutes the offender, who in most cases referred to therapy is not the client. Most cases of therapy approach the client as victim, though it remains an interesting question, I think, to inquire as to the extent to which rites of confession might encourage people to conceive of themselves appropriately as oppressors as well as victims and violated.

My third main point is more broad and relates to psychoanalytic contributions to the understanding of forgiveness being restricted to affective senses. Can genuine forgiveness involve third parties? Ivan Karamazov's questions about third party forgiveness remain controversial. Ivan, one of the key characters in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel The Brothers Karamazov, on telling the story of a boy horrifically killed by a soldier, argues with his Christian brother as follows:

I do not want a mother to embrace the torturer who had her child torn to pieces by his dogs! She has no right to forgive him! If she likes, she can forgive him for herself, she can forgive the torturer the immeasurable suffering he has inflicted upon her as a mother; but she has no right to forgive him for the sufferings of her tortured child. She has no right to forgive him that.<sup>160</sup>

The argument is a commonplace, and was employed a few years ago by Michael Seward, the father of a young woman raped in his home.<sup>161</sup> Can we say that an analyst or God is in any sense able to forgive when it is another I have harmed? Paton suggests divine omniscience as a ground for God's being cognizant of all wrongdoing,<sup>162</sup> so that it is always possible to claim that my wrongdoing also offends against God. Vincent Brümmer argues in a

similar way, that aside from the need for forgiveness from other humans, asking for divine forgiveness is appropriate in so far as only God, being omniscient, is capable of forgiving an outrage against goodness as such.<sup>163</sup> These ideas might help us, but at least in terms of confessional or therapeutic experience, a question more likely to arise is whether a/Another's forgiveness is capable of speaking for the actual human being my offence has harmed. If it is not, then we might ask, what is the meaning of the priestly ego te absolvo and wonder whether even Christians can rest content with divine forgiveness alone?

Paton argues that divine involvement in third person forgiveness can be explained as pardon, which is a legal and institutional term, as opposed to the interpersonal focus of forgiveness.<sup>164</sup> This perspective, however, has been challenged by those seeking a so-called 'hopeful theology' to aid reevaluation of penal policy and practice especially,<sup>165</sup> and whatever will come of this particular debate, the question remains of whether divine forgiveness or pardon 'swamps' the response of the other to my offence, so that I no longer need to expect forgiveness from the actual one I have harmed? How we level these questions at the analyst I'm less sure.

At the very least, we need to affirm that persons need to learn forgiveness, so that if they are either to forgive or know how to repent appropriately, they need first to have experienced forgiveness (see above, p. 21). To some extent, it might then be possible to hold that confession, penance and so on, or therapy,

provide the schooling in forgiveness required to exercise forgiveness in interpersonal contexts: an argument which relates to what I said about forgiveness as attitude and transaction in chapter 1 (see above, p. 4). Whilst understanding oneself to have forgiven or to have been forgiven cannot change the past of two parties whose relationship is broken and requires repair, it can facilitate change in a present on this basis open up a different future for the relationship.

It seems to me that there is a good deal of common ground between the Christian theme of forgiveness and the psychoanalytical resource of transference. If we want to clarify the connection between the two I think we might employ the image of absorption. Notwithstanding the distinctiveness of each concept, it can be argued that there is a sense in which this image of absorption could be used to explain a single process at work, now described in psychoanalytical terms as transference, and now in theological terms as forgiveness. In transference, the analyst absorbs the bad-object identification, until it is appropriate to redirect the damaging characteristics associated with that object to the client to facilitate change. She or he identifies for the client where transference is taking place, and as a consequence of that identification is able to open the situation to the possibility of a fresh interpretation. In forgiveness, God or an offended one similarly absorbs hurt, without redirecting it to the other. This creates the possibility of fresh relationship and new identity for those involved.

An understanding of transference or forgiveness may do much to

animate an understanding of the other. Many questions remain, however, perhaps most pressingly, if we shift forgiveness into a psychoanalytic understanding, what other aspects of psychoanalytic theory will also need reworking in order to cope with that shift? While I would underline the exploratory and speculative nature of this whole section, I would stress one point; that it is mistaken to correlate transference with forgiveness as transaction (see above, p. 4), though transference may lead to forgiveness in that sense.

\* \* \* \*

To conclude this chapter I shall summarise some of my main contentions -

The first concerns the nature of pastoral theology, which is 'present-centred'. Though concerned to draw on the resources of the tradition, it is especially concerned to highlight the particularity of persons and their circumstances.

A second concerns pastoral action. I have identified different degrees to which carers wish to 'direct' others into Christian commitment or ethical stances. Bonhoeffer is one 'pole' of this spectrum; the 'non-directive' counselling of Carl Rogers would be the other. Though I have only noted my doubts about the possibility of non-direction, there are also considerable difficulties with Bonhoeffer's position. I find myself unable to define an ideal level of direction, as I wish to emphasise a need for particularity in the pastoral sphere. Perhaps it is enough to be aware of the weaknesses of each model and employ the

oscillation between models commended earlier in another context (see above, p. 148).

A third area of attention concerns the rationale pastoral carers may find helpful for their work. I have concentrated on alternative resources to those provided in the confessional and liturgical documents of the Anglican tradition.

A series of findings were concerned with the relation of the sacrament of penance and pastoral counselling. Of these I would underline my assertion in this chapter that pastoral counselling is more 'broad' than the sacrament, which confirms arguments in my second chapter about alternative forms of confession being sought and celebrated by good numbers of Christians in place of official rites.

I have also examined some aspects of 'formal' counselling and insights from psychoanalysis. Although I would reiterate the tentative and fragmentary character of my investigation in this area, I believe I have shown how forgiveness may be approached via the formal technique of transference. In that section especially, I hope I may have provided an approach to forgiveness, which is, at least at present, much neglected in pastoral action literature.



### Conclusion

I entitled this thesis 'some sacramental and pastoral approaches to forgiveness' and I would underline at this point the significance of 'some' in that title. I have attempted to assemble personal and pastoral resources for engagement in forgiveness, rather than to provide final answers or 'the last word'. This has meant that I have been hesitant about claiming that the work can be especially 'systematic'. Indeed, it has been a definite concern of mine to resist the over-systematisation of approaches to forgiveness which I wish to assert are diverse. In this respect, I am well aware that even at this final stage the work remains somewhat inconclusive and fragmentary.

I want to argue that this is not only to be expected given the subject matter but also appropriate. I have several reasons for doing so. First, because forgiveness is in any case 'inclusive' and may take different 'shapes'. Second, part of my argument in this thesis has been to emphasise the genuineness and relevance of certain approaches to forgiveness in terms of their capacity to lead people towards renewed relationship, rather than understanding forgiveness in terms of adherence to specific criteria. Indeed, I want to claim that there are no set answers or sure methods to guarantee the 'success' of attempts to engage in forgiveness. I believe that they may be not only theologically 'narrow' (ignorant of the 'inclusive' character of forgiveness) but also pastorally disastrous.

I have identified two sub-themes as vital to theological discussion at the present time. The first has been evident in my

concern to step outside the obvious boundaries of Christian tradition to seek the contribution of social science perspectives to the exploration of our theme. I believe that these contributions are increasingly needed to mediate Christian perspectives to our contemporaries, and the emphasis I have placed on them also indicates something of how I perceive the task that falls to theologians (and other Christian communicators), of making connections with the life and thought of others to illuminate how they may stand within the 'reach' of divine reality.

The second sub-theme involves my concern to place weight on the personal character of forgiveness, yet equally to express unease at individualistic trends which I have suggested may (contrary to the hopes that inspire them) distance people from resources to cope with their circumstances already on offer within existing traditions of forgiveness. In order to explore this area further, I would, had space allowed, have been interested to consider the current debate about criminal justice, to which Christians are making important contributions, not least with respect to the notion of 'structural' or 'societal' forgiveness and which are much to the point in relation to this sub-theme.

Another feature of my thesis has, I hope, been the concern to gain a vision which is wider than the contemporary. In the belief that wealth of insight from Christian forebears may widen contemporary horizons, I have given special attention to two theological texts, one of which is over fifty years old and the

other a hundred years older, as well as charting the broad development of penance from the New Testament period to the present time. As with the various contemporary perspectives on forgiveness considered here, these different historical viewpoints re-affirm the point that no 'approach' is an end in itself.

The central point with which I want to conclude is that persons who engage in forgiveness need to understand that it involves a blend of creativity and resistance if it is to safeguard themselves and others from damage and abuse, preserve the sense of self-worth for each and make for the gracious re-shaping of relationships. In all cases, I believe that such creativity will entail risks and that different levels of resistance need to be evaluated in the context of personal and particular circumstances. With these qualifying comments established, I hold that the caring traditions of the church which I have considered may provide responsible contexts to guide persons into some of their finest moments, where forgiveness may be realised to the benefit of many.

I would add that I write as an Anglican nurtured in evangelicalism and interested in appreciating elements within traditions other than my own, as well as an ordinand about to begin training for ministry. It has been my own concern to learn about forms of care, rather than to assume that by writing a thesis I am qualified to pronounce upon the details of their practice, or confidently to parade any expertise. With this recognition, my last word is one of thanks to those from whom I

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## Notes

### CHAPTER ONE: CONTOURS OF FORGIVENESS.

1. J. P. Pringleton, 'The Role and Function of Forgiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Process'. Journal of Psychology and Theology 17 (1989) p. 28.
2. C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity p. 101.
3. H. R. Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness p. xii.
4. E.g. D. L. Sayers, 'Forgiveness'. Unpopular Opinions p. 13.
5. R. Preston, 'The Justice Model and Forgiveness'. Justice, Guilt and Forgiveness in the Penal System, ed. D. Garland pp. 51 - 52.
6. J. Foskett, Meaning in Madness: The Pastor and the Mentally Ill p. 91 where one nun, 'Mary', writes of her experience of mental disorder. Cf. Stephen Pattison, Alive and Kicking: Towards a Practical Theology of Illness and Healing pp. 103 - 119.
7. F. Wright, The Pastoral Nature of the Ministry p. 3.
8. R. Williams, Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel p. 52.
9. D. Atkinson, Peace in Our Time? Some Biblical Groundwork p. 167.
10. Cf. J. W. McClendon, Jr, 'How is Christian Morality Universalisable?'. The Weight of Glory: The Future of Liberal Theology, ed. D. W. Hardy and P. H. Sedgwick p. 102.
11. M. Paton, 'Can God Forgive?'. Modern Theology 4.3 (1988) p. 230.
12. T. Raitt, 'Why Does God Forgive?'. Horizons in Biblical Studies 13 (1991) p. 45.
13. Cf. P. Tribble, 'Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies'. Feminist Theology: A Reader, ed. A. Loades p. 26.
14. Raitt, "Why..." p. 38.
15. Raitt, "Why..." p. 46.
16. Cf. G. Soares-Prabhu, 'Interhuman Forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus'. Concilium 184 (1986) pp. 59 - 60. I think that this confirms my designation of forgiveness as 'inclusive'.
17. E. P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism p. 273.
18. D. Donnelly, 'Forgiveness and Recidivism'. Pastoral

Psychology 33 (1984) p. 15.

19. G. Shaw, The Cost of Authority p. 232.

20. Soares-Prabhu, "Interhuman Forgiveness..." p. 57 - 60.

21. C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition pp. 103 - 107.

22. G. Bornkamm, 'The Authority to "Bind" and "Loose" in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel'. The Interpretation of Matthew, ed. G. Stanton pp. 85 - 98. Also J. John, '"Authority Given to Men": The Doctrinal Basis of Ministerial Absolution in the New Testament'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell pp. 15 - 39.

23. E. H. Enright et al, 'Must a Christian Require Repentance Before Forgiveness?'. Journal of Psychology and Christianity 9.3 (1990) p. 18.

24. Sanders, Jesus... p. 206. Also Raitt, "Why..." p. 41.

25. Shaw, Cost... p. 230 makes the important point that for Mark at least sinners were not defined by the acuteness of their feeling, but rather by the repudiation of others, so sin is socially visible. In this context Jesus' association with sinners is interpreted as involving pain, cost and risk in so far as Jesus endangered his own status and prestige by keeping such company.

26. Sanders, Jesus... p. 207. Also p. 204.

27. It has indeed been said that the questers might be compared to persons looking into a well to see their own face, as they unearthed a Jesus rather like themselves.

28. M. H. Taylor, Learning to Care: Christian Reflection on Pastoral Practice p. 93. Also S. Barton, The Spirituality of the Gospels p. 146.

29. Taylor, Learning... p. 97.

30. J. Peters, 'The Function of Forgiveness in Social Relationships'. Concilium 184 (1986) p. 4.

31. Cf. D. Atkinson, 'Forgiveness and Personality Development'. Third Way (1979) p. 18.

32. One example of this is 'all too easy for Christians to mistake the super-ego for conscience. It can... be liberating to realise that many of our guilt feelings have little or nothing to do with conscience...' G. Daly, 'Conscience, Guilt and Sin'. Ethics and the Christian, ed. S. Frèyne p. 62. Daly defines the super-ego as the internalisation of initially external powers 'whereby the ego observes, censors and judges itself' (p. 61).

33. M. Klein, 'The Origins of Transference'. The Selected Melanie Klein, ed. J. Mitchell p. 203.
34. M. Klein, 'Some Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms'. ...Melanie Klein, ed. J. Mitchell p. 180.
35. Klein, "Origins..." p. 202.
36. Klein, "Origins..." p. 202.
37. Cf. Klein "Some Notes..." p. 189. Also, Klein "Origins..." p. 203. Also J. Mitchell's own introduction to ch. 6 on p. 155 - 'at about six months'.
38. Klein, "Some Notes..." p. 189.
39. Klein, "Origins..." p. 203.
40. Klein, 'The Psycho-Analytic Play Technique'. ...Melanie Klein, ed. J. Mitchell p. 48.
41. Klein, "...Play Technique" p. 48.
42. Klein, 'A Study of Envy and Gratitude'. ...Melanie Klein, ed. J. Mitchell pp. 244 - 255.
43. Klein, "Some Notes..." p. 190.
44. Klein, 'Love, Hate and Reparation' p. 65. Quoted by Atkinson, "Personality..." p. 18.
45. Klein, 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' p. 293. Quoted by Atkinson, "Personality..." p. 20.
46. Klein, 'Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art...'. ...Melanie Klein, ed. J. Mitchell p. 93.
47. Klein, "...Envy" p. 225.
48. Klein, "...Envy" p. 227.
49. Cf. D. Yancey, 'An Unnatural Act'. Christianity Today 35 (1991) pp. 36 - 39. Also B. Libby, The Forgiveness Book pp. 95 - 100.
50. R. Studzinski, 'Remember and Forgive: Psychological Dimensions of Forgiveness'. Concilium 184 (1986) p. 13.
51. E. Brunner, The Mediator p. 448. Quoted by J. R. W. Stott, The Cross of Christ p. 88.
52. Atkinson, "Personality..." p. 20.
53. C. S. Calian, 'Christian Faith as Forgiveness'. Theology

Today 37 (1981) p. 439.

54. H. Willmer, 'The Politics of Forgiveness: A New Dynamic'. The Furrow 3 (1979) p. 211.

55. Goffman, Relations... pp. 95 - 187.

56. Goffman, Relations... p. 104.

57. Goffman, Relations... p. 99.

58. Goffman, Relations... p. 100.

59. Goffman, Relations... p. 107.

60. Goffman, Relations... p. 108.

61. Goffman, Relations... p. 110.

62. Goffman, Relations... p. 115.

63. Goffman, Relations... p. 118.

64. This concept is introduced on p. 143 of Relations...

65. Cf. Butler's argument, as I understand it, below.

66. Goffman, Relations... p. 98.

67. B. Wildung Harrison, 'The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers'. Feminist Theology..., ed. A. Loades p. 204.

68. Note especially Persons: Divine and Human, ed. C. Schwöebel and C. E. Gunton; C. E. Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology; J. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God; A. I. McFadyen The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships. Cf. J. Moltmann, God in Creation for a novel insight in relation to the divine image based on Genesis 1. 26 - 28.

69. McFadyen, Call... p. 83.

70. M. Thatcher, apparently at the 1989 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Quoted by C. Gunton, Promise... p.12.

71. Harrison, "Anger..." on J. Wilkse's philosophy pp. 208 - 209.

72. R. Jenson, 'Karl Barth'. The Modern Theologians, vol. 1, ed. David F. Ford p. 27.

73. See Dependency - Dependence, Independence and Interdependence in Culture and Society, ed. C. Clark.

74. S. W. Sykes, 'On Power, Sex and Love'. Vision and Prophecy -



The Tasks of Social Theology Today, ed. M. Northcott p. 43.

75. A. West, 'Sex and Salvation...' Feminist Theology..., ed. A. Loades p. 77.

76. Donnelly, "...Recidivism" p. 20.

77. Soares-Prabhu, "Inter-Human..." p. 58.

78. This pericope has a complex tradition-history. Cf. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John p. 589 - 592. For a contemporary interpretation, P. K. Joplin, 'Intolerable language: Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery'. Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion, ed. P. Berry and A. Wernick pp. 226 - 237.

79. J. Butler, 'Upon Forgiveness of Injuries'. Butler's Fifteen Sermons, ed. T. A Roberts p. 86.

80. Note that Jesus himself does not forgive his executioners in this passage. Rather he prays for God to forgive them.

81. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 88.

82. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 88.

83. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 89.

84. C. S. Lewis, 'On Forgiveness'. Fern Seeds and Elephants p. 40. Lewis' view cannot be said to be entirely adequate. Some questions I would beg of it are: a) Must forgiveness follow an apology or must it be first to reach out to the offender (connecting with Sander's insights)? b) If forgiveness is to wait for apology, does it not collapse into reform, which I later suggest is Levi's view? c) Can forgiveness really restore relationships? d) Or, is it the case that we must ascribe more weight to the creative element of forgiveness? Cf. Lord Longford, Forgiveness of Man by Man p. 26: 'No lay man has done as much as Lewis in this century to expound Christian doctrine with ingenuity, piety, and literary skill. But he is at his weakest on forgiveness. And the reason for that is not far to seek. Christian doctrine on forgiveness of man by man as distinct from forgiveness of man by God remains undeveloped. It is impossible for Lewis to expound the official doctrine because there wasn't any to expound'.

85. Lewis, "Forgiveness" p. 42.

86. Lewis, "Forgiveness" p. 42.

87. Lewis, "Forgiveness" p. 43.

88. Lewis, "Forgiveness" p. 40.

89. Cf. Donnelly, "...Recidivism" p. 17.

90. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 82.
91. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 83.
92. Butler, "...Injuries" p. 84.
93. P. Levi, If This is a Man / The Truce p. 382.
94. C. Wood, The End of Punishment p. 11.
95. R. Swinburne, Atonement and Responsibility p. 73.
96. Swinburne, Atonement... p. 74.
97. Swinburne, Atonement... p. 74.
98. Swinburne, Atonement... p. 80. Cf. p. 78. To develop the distinctions between guilt and shame cf. E. Stein, Guilt - Theory and Therapy; D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford, Jubilate - Theology in Praise pp. 89 - 94 and G. Jantzen, 'A.I.D.S., Shame and Suffering'. Embracing the Chaos: Theological Responses to A.I.D.S., ed. J. Woodward 22 - 31.
99. A. Duff, 'Punishment, Repentance and Forgiveness'. Justice, Guilt..., ed. D. Garland p. 44. Cf. J. Moltmann, Theology and Joy pp. 63 - 64.
100. R. Williams, 'Penance in the Penitentiary'. Theology 95 (1992) p. 93.
101. McFadyen, Call... p. 95.
102. Swinburne, Atonement... p. 84.
103. Daly, "Conscience..." p. 71.
104. Usually it is argued that he or she can forgive only for what has been done to him or her, as to forgive beyond the sphere of personal injury is a privilege which belongs to God alone. Of course, in the thinking of the various traditions of the church, the divine prerogative is focused in particular ecclesiastical ministries, cf. ch. 2.1, 2.2. On forgiveness in contexts wider than the personal, cf. K. Koyoma, 'Forgiveness and Politics: The Japanese Experience'. Asia Journal of Theology 6.1 (1992) pp. 10 - 30; Lord Morton of Shuma, 'Sentencing - Options for Change'. Penal Policy - The Way Forward p.18; C. Wood, The End... p. 82 and 'Forgiveness - A Hard Measure', Penal Policy - The Way Forward pp. 75 - 76.
105. Studzinski, "Remember..." p. 19.
106. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 118.
107. S. Fowl and L. G. Jones, Reading in Communion: Scripture and

Ethics in Christian Life pp. 79 - 80.

108. Fowl and Jones, Reading... Cf. N. Lash, 'Performing the Scriptures'. Theology on the Way to Emmaus pp. 37 - 46.

109. D. Nicholls, 'Trinity and Conflict'. Theology 96 (1993) p. 27.

110. Nicholls, "...Conflict" p. 23.

111. A. Loades, Searching for Lost Coins: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism pp. 39 - 60. Also, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Problem of How to Use a Liturgical Metaphor, with Special Reference to Simone Weil'. Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology, ed. S. W. Sykes pp. 247 - 261.

112. Loades, Searching... p. 57. Cf. "Eucharistic Sacrifice..." p. 260.

113. M. Jacobs, Still Small Voice: An Introduction to Pastoral Counselling p. 100.

114. Cf. Atkinson, "Personality..." p. 20. Also R. Rice-Oxley, Forgiveness - The Way of Peace p. 8.

115. 'First, there is an "obstructive and onerous quality" to the forgiving so that one feels the need for protection against such "righteousness". Secondly the forgetting aspect is missing; rather the patient seems to nurture the memory of the past. Thirdly, there can be about the forgiver "a quality of smug virtue which rapidly cloy and, in the compromise, the hostility is readily sensed": R. C. A. Hunter, 'Forgiveness, Repentance and Paranoid Reactions'. Quoted by Atkinson, "Personality..." p. 20.

116. Harrison, "Anger..." p. 206. Cf. R. D. Enright and R. Zell, 'Problems Encountered When We Forgive One Another'. Journal of Psychology and Christianity 8 (1989) pp. 52 - 60.

117. Harrison, "Anger..." p. 207.

118. Sayers, "Forgiveness" p. 15.

119. V. Brümmer, 'Atonement and Reconciliation'. Religious Studies 28 (1992) p. 442.

120. Peters, "Function..." p. 8.

121. Peters, "Function..." p. 9.

122. Brümmer, "Atonement..." p. 438.

123. Brümmer, "Atonement..." p. 438.

124. J. Pohier, God - In Fragments p. 144.

125. Fowl and Jones, Reading... esp. pp. 32 - 33, though see their ch. 2, 3. and 6 on this.

126. S. Hauerwas, 'Forgiveness and Political Community'. Worldview 23 (1980) p. 16.

127. C. Gunton, The Actuality of Atonement p. 190.

128. Pohier, ...Fragments p. 243.

#### CHAPTER TWO: 'SACRAMENTAL' APPROACHES TO FORGIVENESS.

1. Cf. P. F. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, vol. 2: Sacraments and Forgiveness pp. 1 - 271 for essential source documents. Also, J. Martos, Doors to the Sacred: An Introduction to the Sacraments of the Christian Church pp. 307 - 364 for a commentary on the developing history of the rite. (I have restricted my references in this section largely to these two works).

2. Cf. Martos, Doors... p. 68.

3. For resonances on the 'key' theme cf. Is. 22.15; Rev. 3.7.

4. Palmer, Sources... p. 270.

5. Pope John Paul II, Reconciliatio and Penitentia p. 109.

6. J. Dallen, The Reconciling Community p. 13.

7. M. Hellwig, Sign of Reconciliation and Conversion pp. 100, 101.

8. T. W. Jennings, Jr., Liturgy of Liberation p. 175.

9. K. Rahner, 'Penance as an Additional Act of Reconciliation with the Church'. Theological Investigations, vol. 10 p. 141.

10. John, "Authority Given..." p. 19.

11. Barton, Spirituality... pp. 15, 27.

12. Bornkamm, "Authority..." p. 87.

13. Bornkamm, "Authority..." p. 95.

14. Palmer, Sources... p. 22. Palmer summarises: 'St. John, after his release from Patmos, visited a city near Ephesus where he had earlier entrusted a promising young man to the care of the bishop... [he] later fell in with a band of brigands and eventually became their chief... on hearing the news, John set out after his lost sheep. Taken prisoner by robbers, John was led

to their chief who happened to be the very man whom John was seeking. On recognising John, the robber chief fled, with John, "the old man", in pursuit. Overtaking him, John declared that he had been sent by Christ and that there was still hope of eternal life...'.

15. Donnelly, "...Recidivism" p. 17 (quoting R. H. DeGrundy).
16. Donnelly, "...Recidivism" p. 17.
17. Donnelly, "...Recidivism" p. 19.
18. Palmer, Sources... p. 12.
19. Palmer, Sources... p. 11.
20. Palmer, Sources... pp. 13, 14.
21. Palmer, Sources... p. 21.
22. Palmer, Sources... pp. 21, 22.
23. Palmer, Sources... p. 26.
24. Palmer, Sources... pp. 23 - 24.
25. Palmer, Sources... p. 23.
26. Palmer, Sources... p. 25.
27. Palmer, Sources... p. 26.
28. Palmer, Sources... p. 35.
29. Palmer, Sources... p. 38.
30. Palmer, Sources... p. 40.
31. Martos, Doors... pp. 335 - 336.
32. Palmer, Sources... p. 63. Also K. Leech, Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality p. 196.
33. Martos, Doors... p. 326.
34. M. Dudley, 'The Sacrament of Penance in Catholic Teaching and Practice'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell p. 45. Cf. Palmer, Sources... p. 49 where there is no 'confessio' but rather 'exomologesis of conscience'.
35. Palmer, Sources... p. 49.
36. Palmer, Sources... p. 74; Dudley, "...Catholic" p. 75.
37. Canon 32: Palmer, Sources... p. 75.

38. Martos, Doors... p. 327.
39. D. O'Laoghaire, 'Soul Friendship'. Traditions of Spiritual Guidance, ed. L. Byrne p. 30.
40. O'Laoghaire, "...Friendship" pp. 39 - 40.
41. O'Laoghaire, "...Friendship" p. 32.
42. O'Laoghaire, "...Friendship" p. 39. Also Dudley, "...Catholic" p. 58.
43. P. Starkey, 'Women and Sin and Sinful Women: Women in Early Medieval Penitentials'. Collegium 1.1 (1992) pp. 17, 18. However, see Hellwig, Sign... p. 54.
44. O'Laoghaire, "...Friendship" p. 34.
45. Palmer, Sources... pp. 145 - 147.
46. Martos, Doors... p. 333.
47. R. Kieckhefer, 'Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion'. Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation, ed. J. Raitt p. 102.
48. Palmer, Sources... pp. 197 - 198.
49. Palmer, Sources... p. 138.
50. Palmer, Sources... p. 174. The depreciative prayer asks 'may the almighty God absolve thee'. The indicative absolution states 'I... absolve thee'. See ch. 2 n. 115 for contemporary debate.
51. Palmer, Sources... pp. 186 - 187.
52. Palmer, Sources... p. 189.
53. Palmer, Sources... p. 194.
54. Palmer, Sources... p. 195.
55. Dudley, "...Catholic" p. 69.
56. G. Rowell, 'The Anglican Tradition from the Reformation from the Reformation to the Oxford Movement'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell p. 92.
57. Dudley, "...Catholic" p. 70. Also B. Nitschke, 'The Sacrament of Penance: A Lutheran Perspective'. Worship 63 (1989) p. 328. Also H. McSorley, 'Luther and Trent on the Faith needed for the Sacrament of Penance'. Concilium 7 (1971) pp. 89 - 98.
58. Palmer, Sources... p. 229.

59. Rowell, "Anglican..." p. 92.
60. Leech, Soul Friend p. 87.
61. Palmer, Sources... pp. 239 - 254.
62. They were J. Leuyer, F. Heggen, F. Nikolasch, Z. Alszeghy, P. Anciaux, C. Floristan, A. Kierchgassner, L. Liegier, K. Rahner, C. Vögel (Cf. Dallen, ...Community p. 211).
63. A. Flannery, ed. Documents of Vatican II p. 22.
64. Flannery, Documents... p. 362.
65. Dallen, ...Community p. 211.
66. J. D. Crichton, The Ministry of Reconciliation: A Commentary on the Order of Penance 1974 p. 17.
67. Flannery, Documents... p. 30.
68. K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance'. Theological Investigations, vol. 2 pp. 136 - 137.
69. M. Hebblethwaite, 'Devotion'. Modern Catholicism, ed. A. Hastings p. 241.
70. M. F. Mannion, 'Penance and Reconciliation: A Systematic Analysis'. Worship 60 (1986) p. 115.
71. P. Butler, 'Introduction'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell p. 3. Also Z. Alszeghy, 'Reform in the Rite of Penance'. The Sacraments: A Reader in Contemporary Sacramental Theology, ed. M. J. Taylor p. 211.
72. L. Orsy, The Evolving Church and the Sacrament of Penance p. 160.
73. J. Mahoney, The Making of Moral Theology: A Study in the Roman Catholic Tradition p. 31.
74. T. Hansen, Seven for a Secret: Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse in Childhood p. 99.
75. J. Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American View p. 120.
76. D. Brown, Choices: Ethics and the Christian pp. 12 - 13.
77. J. MacQuarrie, Paths in Spirituality p. 137.
78. B. Horne, 'What Has Been Lost? Penance and Reconciliation Reconsidered'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell p. 140.

79. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 121.
80. J. R. Gilbert, 'The Reconciliation Service: A Reflection on Pastoral Experience as a Theological Source'. Worship 59 (1985) p. 63.
81. C. Duquoc, 'Real Reconciliation and Sacramental Reconciliation'. Concilium 7 (1971) p. 29.
82. Dallen, ...Community p. 226. Cf. Pope, Reconciliatio... pp. 124, 128, 132, 133.
83. Pope, Reconciliatio... pp. 50 - 56, esp. 54.
84. Dallen, ...Community p. 226.
85. Pope, Reconciliatio... pp. 110, 113, 125, etc.
86. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 122.
87. J. G. Schaller, 'The Order of Penitents: Theological and Pastoral Directions. Worship 64.3 (1990) p. 221.
88. Crichton, Ministry... p. 27. I am using penance here in the 'narrow' sense to refer to 'part' of the sacrament of penance.
89. B. Häring, The Sacrament of Reconciliation p. 43.
90. J. Dallen, 'Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance'. Worship 64.5 (1990) p. 396.
91. Rahner, 'Problems Concerning Confession'. Theological Investigations, vol. 3 p. 198.
92. T. C. Oden, Care of Souls in the Classical Tradition p. 152.
93. D. Borobio, 'Sacramental Forgiveness of Sins'. Concilium 184 (1986) p. 105.
94. T. Guzie, 'Comments on the New Form of Confession'. The Sacraments: A Reader in Contemporary Sacramental Theology, ed. M. J. Taylor p. 212.
95. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 123.
96. M. Schmaus, Dogma, vol. 5: The Church as Sacrament. Quoted by Horne, "...Lost" pp. 141 - 142.
97. Horne, "...Lost" p. 142. Cf. Hellwig, Sign... p. 109.
98. Horne, "...Lost" p. 143.
99. Borobio, "Sacramental..." p. 103.



100. Mannion, "...Analysis" p. 113.
101. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 130.
102. Hellwig, Sign... p. 112.
103. Hellwig, Sign... p. 112.
104. C. O'Neill, Sacramental Realism p. 170. Also Alszeghy, "Reform..." p. 219.
105. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn and J. Mackay, New Testament Theology in Dialogue pp. 104 - 119 and 129 for a critique of this.
106. Cf. the decree of Trent, ch. 5, in which it is said that 'priests... represent Him...'. The notion derives from II Cor. 2.10, though the relevant clause is more appropriately rendered 'in the presence of Christ' Cf. C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians p. 93.
107. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 117.
108. Alszeghy, "Reform..." p. 222. Cf. J. MacQuarrie, Principles of Christian Theology pp. 483 - 485 and M. Maddocks, The Christian Healing Ministry pp. 123 - 128 for two Anglican perspectives on the sacrament which both emphasise healing.
109. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 106.
110. J. Hater, 'Sin and Reconciliation: Changing Attitudes in the Catholic Church.' Worship 59 (1985) p. 26.
111. Pope, Reconciliatio... p. 121.
112. R. J. Kennedy, 'The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents'. Reconciliation: The Continuing Agenda, ed. R. J. Kennedy p. 132.
113. Kennedy, "...Individual" pp. 138, 141.
114. J. Macquarrie, Paths... p. 138. He identifies three forms of absolution. 1) Precatory: a prayer that God will forgive the penitent, like that used in the B.C.P. holy communion. 2) Declaratory: a straightforward declaration that God pardons and absolves them, as in the B.C.P. Morning and Evening Prayer. 3) Indicative: using the expression 'I absolve you...', as in the B.C.P. Visitation of the Sick. Hater ("Changing..." pp. 27 - 28) distinguishes 1) Exhortatory, 2) Declaratory, and 3) Performative expressions of absolution which correspond to Macquarrie's first, second and third forms. However, Hater argues against the view that all three are of equal weight. As does R. Jenson, quoted by Nitschke ("...Lutheran" p. 334). Jenson argues that without 'indicative' absolution 'believers hear about forgiveness without ever receiving any'.

115. G. R. Evans and J. R. Wright, The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Anglican Sources. Article 341: Lambeth Conference 1878.
116. Quoted by K. Denison, 'Dr. Pusey as Confessor and Spiritual Director'. Pusey Rediscovered, ed. P. Butler p. 221.
117. Rahner, "Problems..." p.205.
118. Quoted by A. V. Campbell, Rediscovering Pastoral Care p. 8.
119. Quoted by F. J. Laishley, 'Birth Control'. Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After, ed. A. Hastings p. 241.
120. J. Barr, Escaping from Fundamentalism p. 122.
121. Barr, Escaping... p. 123.
122. Mahoney, Making... 119 - 120.
123. Mahoney, Making... pp 147 - 148.
124. Mahoney, Making... p. 161. Note, however, that it is reported that the impending encyclical Veritatis Splendour will endorse the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium.
125. Mahoney, Making... p. 174.
126. Mahoney, Making..., p. 289.
127. Daly, Conscience... p. 65.
128. Häring, Sacrament... p. 17.
129. C. Curran, Critical Concerns in Moral Theology pp. 233 - 234.
130. The Guardian Weekend, 12/12/1992 p. 27.
131. Curran, Critical... p. 234.
132. Curran, Critical... p. 244.
133. Curran, Critical... p. 246.
134. D. A. Hart, 'Kierkegaard'. The Study of Spirituality, ed. C. Jones, G. Wainwright and E. Yarnold p. 470.
135. A. C. Thistleton, 'Kierkegaard, Søren'. New Dictionary of Theology, ed. S. B. Ferguson, D. F. Wright and J.I. Packer p. 366.
136. S. Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing pp. 158 - 159.

137. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 159.
138. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 159.
139. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 160.
140. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 189.
141. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 156.
142. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 157.
143. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 188.
144. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 161. Cf. p. 182.
145. N.I.V. Cf. N.R.S.V.
146. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 36.
147. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 36.
148. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 38.
149. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 39.
150. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 39.
151. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 40.
152. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 40.
153. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 41.
154. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 41.
155. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 41.
156. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 41.
157. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 42.
158. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 95.
159. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 173.
160. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 135.
161. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 136.
162. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 142.
163. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 191.
164. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 44.

165. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 44.
166. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 45. Cf. p. 153.
167. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 121.
168. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 121.
169. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 123.
170. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 153.
171. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 162.
172. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 162.
173. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 163.
174. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 163
175. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 168.
176. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 164.
177. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 165.
178. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 166.
179. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 186.
180. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 181. Cf. p. 186 which cites some 'dangers' as he perceives them.
181. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 181.
182. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 188.
183. Kierkegaard, Purity... p. 188.
184. R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 18.
185. D. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual Care p. 63.
186. S. Kierkegaard, Journals and Papers, p. 45.
187. Kierkegaard, Journals... p. 46.
188. Kierkegaard, Journals... p. 45.
189. S. Kierkegaard, 'The Woman That Was a Sinner'. Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays p. 384. n.
190. Kierkegaard, Journals... p. 44.

191. Kierkegaard, Journals... p. 52.
192. S. Kierkegaard, 'Love Coverth a Multitude of Sins'. Works of Love p. 238.
193. Cf. A. Loades, Searching... p. 28.
194. Kierkegaard, "Woman That Was..." p. 383.
195. Kierkegaard, "Woman That Was..." p. 384.
196. S. Kierkegaard, Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses p. 76.
197. Cf. Kierkegaard, "Woman That Was..." p. 385.
198. Kierkegaard, "Woman That Was..." p. 386.
199. Kierkegaard, "Woman That Was..." p. 386. n.
200. E. Berggren, The Psychology of Confession p. 3.
201. S. DeGideo, Sacraments Alive: Their Celebration and Significance p. 79.

CHAPTER THREE: PASTORAL APPROACHES TO FORGIVENESS.

1. R. C. Bultmann, The Gospel of John p. 713.
2. A. O. Dyson, 'The Body of Christ has A.I.D.S.' p. 1.
3. T. C. Oden, Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry p. 175.
4. The B.C.P. Order for the Visitation of the Sick remains the only indicative formula in use in the Church of England, though Lent, Holy Week and Easter, published in 1986, provides 'a form of absolution which may be used for the quieting of individual conscience' modelled on the Roman prayer from the O.P. yet in a declaratory form: 'I declare to you that you are absolved...'
5. Dyson, "Body..." p. 2.
6. C. G. Jung, 'Psychoanalysis and the Cure of Souls'. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 11: Psychology and Religion para. 544.
7. Quoted in O. C. Edwards, 'Anglican Pastoral Tradition'. The Study of Anglicanism, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. Booty p. 349.
8. Cf. esp. P. Selby, Liberating God - Public Struggle and Private Care and S. Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care.
9. J. Woodward, 'Introduction'. Embracing the Chaos: Theological Responses to A.I.D.S., ed. J. Woodward p. 2.

10. F. Wright, ...Ministry p. 3.
11. Woodward, "Introduction" p. 2.
12. A. V. Campbell, Paid to Care: The Limits of Professionalism in Pastoral Care pp. 83, 86.
13. Campbell, Paid... p. 82.
14. Dyson, "Body..." p. 16.
15. Dyson, "Body..." p. 17.
16. Quoted by Dyson, "Body..." p. 8. Cf. K. Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil pp. 24 -25.
17. Dyson, "Body..." p. 16 - 17.
18. Cf. D. W. Hardy, 'Systematic Theology'. Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, ed. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden p. 666.
19. Pattison, Critique... p. 13.
20. Cf. Wright, Ministry... p. 39. Cf. Campbell, Paid... p. 13 where he throws in the caveat that the goal of 'conformation to Christ' is always achieved in community.
21. Cf. McFadyen, Call... p. 157. Note also p. 120 where 'conformation to Christ' is defined as 'a radical openness to God and to others'.
22. Pattison, Critique... p. 16.
23. Pattison, Critique... p. 16.
24. Pattison, Critique... p. 50.
25. Campbell, Paid... p. 46.
26. Campbell, Paid... p. 69.
27. Foskett, Meaning... p. 52.
28. Foskett, Meaning... p. 53.
29. Foskett, Meaning... p. 57.
30. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 5.
31. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 6.
32. Oden, ...Essentials p. 4.
33. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 17.

34. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 18.
35. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 18.
36. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 19.
37. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 21.
38. Jacobs, ...Voice p. 21.
39. Oden, ...Essentials p. 4.
40. Cf. J. Leclercq, 'Spiritual Direction in the Benedictine Tradition'. Traditions of Spiritual Guidance, ed. L. Byrne p. 27. Cf. the rule itself in The Fire and The Cloud: An Anthology of Catholic Spirituality, ed. D. A. Fleming p. 73.
41. Alternative Service Book pp. 370 - 371.
42. Campbell, Paid... p. 43.
43. Haring, Sacrament... p. 43.
44. K. Osborne, Sacramental Theology: A General Introduction p. 131.
45. K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance'. Theological Investigations, vol. 2 p. 136.
46. Cf. W. G. Jeanrond, 'Community and Authority: The Nature and Implications of the Authority of Christian Community'. On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community, ed. C. E. Gunton and D. W. Hardy p. 97.
47. J. Mathers, 'A Christian Counsellor's Perspective'. Faith or Fear? A Reader in Pastoral Care and Counselling, ed. M. Jacobs p. 137.
48. R. A. Lambourne, 'Counselling for Narcissus or Counselling for Christ?'. Faith or Fear? A Reader in Pastoral Care and Counselling, ed. M. Jacobs p. 134.
49. Cf. R. Williams et al, Ordination and the Church's Ministry (A.B.M. Occasional Paper no. 22) p. 17.
50. A. V. Campbell, Rediscovering Pastoral Care...
51. Cf. D. Hampson, 'Luther on the Self: A Feminist Critique'. Feminist Theology: A Reader, ed. A. Loades p. 220.
52. M. L. Smith, Reconciliation - Preparing for Confession p. 77 - 78.
53. Pattison, Critique... p. 52.

54. M. Dudley and J. Pinnock, 'Rites of Penance and Reconciliation'. Confession and Absolution, ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell p. 195.
55. Dudley and Pinnock, "Rites..." p. 197.
56. Dudley and Pinnock, "Rites..." p. 191.
57. Dudley and Pinnock, "Rites..." pp. 198 - 199
58. Dudley and Pinnock, "Rites...." p. 189.
59. Dudley and Pinnock, "Rites..." p. 192.
60. Guzie, "Comments..." p. 211.
61. J. A. T. Robinson, Honest to God. Cf. K. W. Clements, Lovers of Discord, p. 178 - 217.
62. Cf. J. D. Godsey, 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer'. The Modern Theologians, vol. 1, ed. D. F. Ford p. 64 - 65.
63. J. Jones, Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion: Transference and Transcendence p. 106.
64. R. J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth p. 188.
65. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 37.
66. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 68.
67. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 36.
68. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 30. Cf. Pattison, Critique... p. 10. Also M. Jacobs, Faith or Fear... p. 83. Cf. Pattison, 'To the Churches with Love from the Lighthouse'. Embracing the Chaos: Theological Responses to A.I.D.S. p. 19 n. 21; J. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit p. 223.
69. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 30.
70. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 43.
71. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 32.
72. Cf. D. Bonhoeffer, Life Together. Quoted in E. Bethge et al, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Life in Pictures p. 140: 'The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to his Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them... It is [God's] work we do when we listen to [others]. Christians, especially preachers, so often think that they must 'contribute' something when they are in the company of



others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because Christians are talking when they should be listening...'

73. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 43.
74. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 43.
75. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 44.
76. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 33.
77. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 54.
78. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 34.
79. Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship p. 37.
80. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 43.
81. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 44.
82. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 37.
83. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 43.
84. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 39.
85. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 61.
86. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 64.
87. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 61.
88. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 62.
89. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 63.
90. Bonhoeffer, Spiritual... p. 64.
91. Bethge et al, Dietrich... pp. 179 - 200.
92. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 17.
93. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 19.
94. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 20.
95. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 25.
96. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p, 242.
98. R. Gill, A Textbook of Christian Ethics p. 106.

98. Bonhoeffer, No Rusty Swords p. 41.
99. Bonhoeffer, ...Rusty Swords p. 42 - 43.
100. Bonhoeffer, ...Rusty Swords p. 41.
101. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 68.
102. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 68.
103. Bonhoeffer, Ethics p. 70.
104. Bonhoeffer, Cost... pp. 48 - 68. Cf. McFadyen, Call... pp. 49 - 52.
105. Bonhoeffer, ...Rusty Swords p. 300 - 307. Cf. Fowl and Jones, Reading... pp. 42, 140, etc.
106. Pattison, Critique... p. 49.
107. Jones, Contemporary... p. 106.
108. Quoted by A. E. Bergin, 'Psychotherapy and Religious Values'. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 48 (1980) p. 99.
109. R. C. Shontz and C. Rosenak, 'Psychological Theories and the Need for Forgiveness: Assessment and Critique'. Journal of Psychology and Christianity 7 (1988) p. 23.
110. J. P. Pringleton, 'The Role and Function of Forgiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Process'. Journal of Psychology and Theology 17 (1989) p. 110.
111. Bergin, "...Values" p. 97.
112. T. C. Oden, 'Recovering Lost Identity'. Faith or Fear?..., ed. M. Jacobs p. 16.
113. Oden, "Recovering..." p. 16.
114. Pattison, Critique... p. 99.
115. Selby, Liberating... p. 76.
116. Duquoc, "Real..." p. 29. Also D. Cupitt, The New Christian Ethics p. 165.
117. Quoted by Jones, Contemporary... p. 9.
118. Quoted by Jones, Contemporary... p. 9.
119. Quoted by Jones, Contemporary... p. 35.

120. R. J. Bocoock, 'Religion and the Primal Father'. Faith or Fear?..., ed. M. Jacobs p. 30.
121. Quoted by E. Todd, 'The Value of Confession and Forgiveness According to Jung'. Journal of Religion and Health 24.1 (1985) p. 44.
122. C. G. Jung, Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster pp. 3 - 4.
123. C. G. Jung, 'Introduction to the Psychology of the Transference'. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: vol. 16: The Practice of Psychotherapy p. 176.
124. Jung, "...Transference" p. 172.
125. Jung, "...Transference" p. 218.
126. C. G. Jung, 'Psychotherapists and the Clergy'. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: vol. 11: Psychology and Religion para. 510. Cf. "...Cure of Souls" para. 542, 543, 547 for his understanding of Protestant and Catholic resources.
127. Jung, "...Clergy" para. 514.
128. Jung, "...Clergy" para. 509.
129. C. G. Jung, 'The Theory of Psychoanalysis'. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 11 p. 192.
130. Todd, "Value..." p. 42.
131. Jung, "Problems..." p. 58.
132. Todd, "Value..." p. 43.
133. Jung, "...Clergy" para. 534.
134. Jung, "...Clergy" para. 534.
135. Quoted in M. Fuller, 'C. G. Jung: Scientist - Theologian'. Theology 95 (1992) p. 275.
136. Quoted by Fuller, "...Scientist" p. 274.
137. W. Carr, The Pastor as Theologian: The Integration of Pastoral Ministry, Theology and Discipleship p. 30.
138. S. Liebermann, Transgenerational Family Therapy esp. pp. 13 - 20.
139. H. Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure? p. 47.
140. Jones, Contemporary..., p. 135.

141. Jones, Contempororary..., p. 106.
142. M. Jacobs, Psychodynamic Counselling in Action p. 14.
143. Jones, Contemporary..., pp. 68 - 85.
144. Pringleton, "Role..." p. 32.
145. D. Hope, 'The Healing Paradox of Forgiveness'. Psychotherapy 24 (1987) p. 241.
146. Jones, Contemporary..., p. 106.
147. Jones, Contemporary..., p. 107.
148. K. Rahner, 'Ideas for a Theology of Childhood'. Theological Investigations, vol. 8 p. 227.
149. A. Loades, 'Death or Disvalue - Some Reflections on "Sick" Children'. Hospital Chaplian 93 (1985) p. 5.
150. H. Oppenheimer, 'Blessing'. The Weight of Glory: The Future of Liberal Theology, ed. D. W. Hardy and P. H. Sedgwick p. 228.
151. J. Moltmann, The Crucified God p. 277.
152. R. Bauckham, 'Jurgen Moltmann'. The Modern Theologians, vol. 1, ed. D. F. Ford p. 301.
153. Carr, Pastor... pp. 133 - 139.
154. On Freud, cf. Jones, Contemporary..., p. 10. Note also the language of the analyst being 'put in the place of another' (p. 10), of 'displacement' (p. 10), of him or her 'being asked to carry bad projections' (p. 15), of 'unloading' in projective identification (p. 29) for other examples.
155. Cf. H. A. Hodges, The Pattern of Atonement p. 46.
156. J. Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology p. 284. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, 'Paul's Understanding of the Death of Jesus as Sacrifice'. Sacrifice and Redemption..., ed. S. Sykes p. 51 for a more symapthetic academic appreciation of substitution.
157. Carr, Pastor... p. 134.
158. Carr, Pastor... p. 135.
159. Cf. A. and B. Ulanov, Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer p. 29.
160. F. Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov p. 287.
161. B. Libby, The Forgiveness Book p. 75.

162. Paton, "Can God...?" p. 229.

163. V. Brümmer, "Atonement..." p. 450.

164. Paton, "Can God...?" p. 229.

165. Cf. D. Forrester, 'Priorities for Social Theology Today'.  
Vision and Prophecy..., ed. M. Northcott p. 30. Also Wood, End...  
and "Hard Measure..."

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