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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

by

FRANCIS ERIC CHARD

on

RURAL ECUMENISM

PART 1 traces the growth of ecclesiastical concurrence as it arose from the various difficulties faced during the century or so prior to the ecumenical watershed which was the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. Between the two world wars the new movement received an impetus from the 1920 Lambeth Conference, had its first contacts with Roman Catholicism and produced the bases from which Councils of Churches - world, national and local - were to spring. The growth of these Councils is traced, together with examples of national ecumenical activity and denominational progress towards unity. The section concludes with a sketch of the ecumenical position in 1980.

PART 11 Provides the horizontal partner to Part 1's vertical axis. Here is spread a broad view of the social conditions of today's rural inhabitants, depicting some of the major changes that have occurred and are still occurring in the lives of the people among whom the Church is set. It then looks more closely at a specific rural area by way of illustrating and confirming its generalised assertions and giving them the more personalised texture that is of the essence of the Church's work.

PART 111 begins with a consideration of some current thinking about the Church and relates this to the latter's rural commitment. Three critical components of this commitment are examined in more detail and then four instances of rural ecumenism are described. The study ends with a resume of current conditions and indicates the ingredients it believes necessary for rural ecumenical progress.

Thesis on

R U R A L E C U M E N I S M

submitted by

FRANCIS ERIC CHARD B.A., Dip. Theol.,

for the degree of

MASTER OF LETTERS

of the

UNIVERSITY of DURHAM

through the

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

1981

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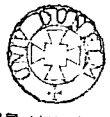

17 MAY 1984

RURAL ECUMENISM

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PREFACE

1977 began for me with an unexpected request from the diocese of Chester to share a residential conference with the latter's country clergymen and to speak to them about rural ecumenism. It was unexpected because, as I replied, I knew nothing about the subject. Chester, however, was insistent. I was a country clergyman and also the ecumenical officer for my diocese. If no-one else knew about it, it inferred, I should. At least I could go and think out loud with them. Despite Chester's false syllogism, I admitted that I ought, as an ecumenical officer living in a country parish, to know something about rural ecumenism. I soon understood that if there was such material available it was exceedingly difficult to find and as I started searching for it the thrill of the hunt soon transformed a non-academic into an enthusiast. By the time I had attended Chester's conference in January, 1978, I had still not discovered anything similar to what I had begun to formulate, both from my own experience and from other disconnected sources. The arrival of Dr. Sheridan Gilley on the staff of the department of theology of the University of Durham enabled that establishment to offer me scope for a continuance of my study while Stuart Blanch, Archbishop of York and Dennis Page, Anglican Bishop of Lancaster, were generous in their encouragement, not least in the practical matter of providing the necessary finance. To these three gentlemen I am obviously heavily indebted. I am grateful, too, for much help received from correspondents all over the country but particularly from the Revd. Canon Dr. A.J. Russell, of the National Agricultural Centre, Kenilworth, whose knowledge of rural conditions seems utterly comprehensive, and from the Revd. Canon David Pink, ecumenical officer for Lincolnshire and South Humberside, who was kind enough to provide hospitality for me while he devoted some days to introducing me to the various projects for which he had responsibility. Three of these projects figure in this study. Not least do I thank my niece, Jill Gregory, who cheerfully undertook the daunting task of typing the finished work.

FOREWORD

To understand the present and to plan cogently for the future it is necessary to know something of the past. Even in the relatively novel topic of ecumenism its past, however scanty, must be the starting place to discern accurately its current state or to try to discover its future and the effect of that future upon the life of the Church today. There are, of course, dangers in any study of a section of life done in isolation from the rest. Even if one avoids the trap of treating the part as if it were the whole it is still possible to forget that life is a unity and that the part must relate proportionally to its living partners. No one part can be in isolation from the remainder; none is unaffected by the rest.

Despite this warning, the ecumenist will want to treat his topic as if it were the whole, rather than a part, of Church life. His conviction, in general terms, is that any project undertaken by Christians ought, wherever feasible, to be undertaken on behalf of all Christians together and that, increasingly, where this is not possible, it ought not to be ventured at all. For him, ecumenism is simply living Christianity and one of his greatest frustrations, inevitable though it may be, is having to treat it as a falsely isolated part of the Christian life. What, to others, seems an esoteric interest or an unwelcome addition to an already overcrowded diary is, to him, the essence of the matter.

It is difficult to see how an ecumenist can proceed at present without accepting this tension. He will assert that ecumenism isn't so much a fraction of the whole as one way of viewing the whole, yet he must needs treat his subject as if it were but a detachable part and that part related sometimes extremely awkwardly to the rest. In its most pointed form, his subject must be seen to be, not the doubling or trebling of denominational forces at any area of concern, but the action of one, on behalf of all, bringing to bear the singlemindedness and power of the totality of concentrated effort, knowing the while that other commitments, which might have occupied and divided these resources, are now adequately contained by other members of the family. Representing the orderliness and efficiency of the Creator, ecumenism he sees to be good family economy. When Christianity is acting as a united family within its total earthly existence, then we are

face to face with ecumenism.

INTRODUCTION

Ecclesiastical division is not new. After only a few months' existence one of the very earliest of Europe's Christian communities, that in Corinth, knew what it meant to suffer a controversy which split it into contending sections. Not that one's lifestyle had to warrant the epithet 'korinthiazesthai' in order to share this experience. St. Paul had a new vision of life which enabled him to discern the inevitable and intimate relationship among all who allowed their lives to be redirected into The Way and, when he wrote about it, he gave it the highest significance by likening it to the interdependence of the various parts of the human body. But even he was once a prime figure in such a process of disintegration though, at the time, the relevant component parts numbered only four.

We are concerned, however, with the divisions that emerged some fifteen hundred years later. A legacy of four hundred years of division remains today - and remains largely unresolved. Indeed, it is only within living memory that these divisions have been widely deplored. Not even now is this universally true. One firmly held solution to the divisions is for all to return to Roman Catholicism, which still speaks of Christianity as subsisting in itself. This outlook implicitly denies both the fact and the theoretical possibility of division. Roman Catholics, until recently, assumed that heretics had cut themselves off from and become something other than and extraneous to the continuing body. While ecumenical talk may be in the form of dialogue, ecumenical activity goes only one way according to this view; there is only one way for it to go.

In contradistinction is the view which sees each local community not only as autonomous and representing the whole Church, but as being the whole Church as far as that locality is concerned and as far as Christian decisions and living are involved. If there is a family at all it is of the type today called 'extended', a word which seems to mean having only an indirect relationship. From this viewpoint no solution is necessary for there is no problem; at least, there is no problem of division within the body. Somewhere between these two extreme positions are found most of the customary theories from which comes the impetus for, and will come the manner of, a reformed Christian Church.

Thankfully, a study of rural ecumenism can pick its way Agag-like round these traditional positions, once having noted that they are there. Its purpose is much more limited in scope and ambition than trying to reconcile such as these. The pressures of the concrete situation effect a realistic view of it as it actually is and, in response to it, serve to concentrate the mind upon projected remedies which are at once reasonable and practicable. From this type of activity comes the realisation that, like the old parish boundaries which once rationally followed the hedges and ditches but which now, running still along the same lines, trail irrationally through the kitchens and lounges of new houses built where the hedges used to be, so some of the denominational theological boundaries are now either just a nonsense or, worse, constitute more of a barrier than an aid to Christian living. This is widely acknowledged within the rural community, which has a deep-rooted suspicion that nobody who lives in a town, never mind dictates from Whitehall or Westminster, has any conception of real, i.e. country, life where, whatever internal squabbling may occur, there is a fundamental unity based on the knowledge that all have to live together and evidenced whenever one rejoices or weeps. Here lies the key. Introspection and comparison between denominations seeking reunion can result in proposals designed to meet minimal requirements only. Even these proposals produce minority dissenting groups. They may well, also, result in more divisions than they heal. In many walks of life experience shows that ontological unity is realised as the result of empiric unity. This holds good for the Church, too. It is as its members remember whose they are and give themselves to his work, as they become careless of their own state in the face of so much need in the lives of others and as they take care that they do not make the mistake of those with whom the first covenant was made, that they will discover the unity they now say they seek. Within the limits set by metropolitan denominational disciplines the living Church of the countryside can demonstrate this thesis. It is not simply for administrative tidiness or out of a laudable sense of foresight that a study of rural ecumenism is important. It is important because it is in a rural setting that there could be found the best clues to fulfilling the continuing demand of the Master who wills "that they may all be one."

P A R T 1

T H E E C U M E N I C A L S C E N E

"Mr. Harold St. John loved to remind his hearers that the early Church was very simple. He said, 'All the medicine was in the bottle, but there were no labels. For instance, there were Christians in Rome, but no Romanists. Men believed in bishops, but there were no Episcopalians. There was lay-preaching but no Methodists. Many held the truth as to baptism, but there were no Baptists. Men trembled at the Word of God, but there were no Quakers. The Church was an army of salvation, but there was no Salvation Army. Christian hearts were enlarged towards one another, but there were no Open Brethren; and there were those who were very careful to maintain the holiness of God's house, but there were no Exclusive Brethren. In short, the Saints gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus and no one dared to use a name of a sectarian nature. They had the goods without the labels." (1)

PRE-EDINBURGH 1910

"It was at Edinburgh in 1910 that the 'Oecumenical Movement' was born." (2)

1910 is the generally acknowledged date at which the modern ecumenical movement was born although, as might be expected, it was conceived before then. We can watch it forming in the century which preceded it. This was a century of change the like of which had never before been experienced and its impact was immediate, far-reaching and usually unexpected. The Church, certainly, had to make rapid provision to come to terms with the new situation which affected it socially, intellectually and ecclesiastically.

1. Social Change.

The Industrial Revolution was aptly named. Before it arrived life was predominantly rural, described by G.M. Trevelyan as "the last era in our island history when the village was the normal unit of society." (3) Power and transport were largely provided by wind, water, humans and animals. This meant that life was slow and, because it was slow, it was usually predictable. J.R.H. Moorman puts it very colourfully: "A journey from London to York took as long as it had taken in the days of Paulinus, and the sailor crossing the Atlantic was as much dependent upon the direction of the wind as had been the early Vikings." (4). The harnessing of new resources of power saw the way forward to the introduction of mechanisation. This, in its turn, led to the birth and growth of industrialisation, including the mass production of much of what had hitherto been effected by cottage industry, and the rapid transference of population from the country to the new or expanding towns. This migration was more pronounced in what was becoming the industrial northern part of the kingdom than in the still relatively pastoral south. So much was this so that weekly advertisements were carried in East Anglian newspapers offering employment on the denuded farms of the north to any local hard-pressed farm workers who were brave enough, or desperate enough, to make the journey. (5) In the north, it was not just the attraction of regular employment - or, more correctly, a regular

wage - that drew the population from the countryside. Among those who took part in the migration were those who had been effectively detached from the land by the continuing and increasing enclosures which agriculture had needed to become efficient enough to feed the growing national population. Pressure to leave the land thus coincided with encouragement to go to the towns.

The employment of large numbers of people, often strangers to each other, within the noisy buildings of the new mechanical age must have been but one of the factors involved in the de-personalising effects that the new lifestyle produced. The Census of 1851 revealed that only one in three of the population had retained any realistic connection with the Church. Clearly the loss of the active participation of two thirds of the people had begun with other causes and in times much before the industrial revolution but now the heart of what the Church taught and stood for seemed to have vanished completely. Unable to understand clearly what was happening except to equate industrialisation with still greater loss of members and influence as its membership was economically compelled to migrate to the crowded towns, where it was overwhelmed by the new pressures and demands made upon it, the Church saw further inroads made into its life as the State started to take over what had previously been ecclesiastical activity, notably in the case of education. The country was becoming secular. It was unfortunate that it was at this time that the Churches began to detach their clergymen from the people to whom they would be sent to minister. This was the age of the theological college to which men were sent to be better trained. The results were not always as intended. One of these was that men were "often far removed geographically and always far removed mentally from the life of the new industrial centres of population ... The original purpose of the theological colleges was not directed towards an understanding of what was happening economically and socially in the life of the country, nor towards training men for a new kind of ministry in new conditions. It was directed towards sustaining a kind of life in the Church which was already out of touch with events." (6) This may be too simple a rationale of the arrival of the theological colleges and it would be both unfair and untrue to ascribe the subsequent ecumenical movement simply to

a desire for survival on the part of the Church. Nevertheless, the traditions of the centuries had been disturbed so vigorously that the need to find a way of undertaking an effective ministry in and to the novel situation in town and country was incumbent on all parts of the Church. There is no doubt that this helped to pave the way for the thinking which found expression at the Edinburgh Conference.

2. Intellectual crisis.

In keeping with the advance of secularism there was founded in 1828 the deliberately non-ecclesiastical University College in London, the first to have no faculty of theology and no religious tests. Not only was it a child of its time but it arrived just in time. While the Society for Promoting the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was ensuring that cheap literature was available to spread the new knowledge far and wide, there was published in 1830 a work by Charles Lyell entitled 'Principles of Geology'. Its thesis, if true, shattered the accepted chronology of the bible by suggesting that a study of the rocks showed that the earth's history began some time before the 4004 years estimated by Archbishop Ussher; some millions of years, in fact. Although Lyell followed his first book with others, the main impact was made in 1859 when Charles Darwin's 'Origin of Species' appeared to lay the axe to the root of traditional Christian anthropology. Its principles of natural selection, adaptation to environment and gradual evolution challenged Christianity's acceptance of special acts of creation, not least the creation of Adam and Eve. Natural religion seemed set to topple a Christianity whose claims appeared to depend on revelation.

But worse was to follow. Attempts to repel these onslaughts by the traditional use of biblical texts were undermined by the work that had been going on through the rest of the Old Testament beyond Genesis and on into the New. This work delivered a challenge as great, if not greater, for it was critical, not just of what the Scriptures related, but of the very words of Scripture itself. Not only was the historical existence of such basic figures as Moses and Joshua called into question

(e.g. J.W. Colenso: 'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined') but Judaism itself was held to have been achieved by a process of gradual evolution rather than a once-for-all revelation. (e.g. H.H. Milman: 'History of the Jews.') Historical criticism carried into the New Testament had equally startling results. Strauss' 'Leben Jesu' was translated into English in 1846 by George Eliot. Herein were sacrificed the virgin birth, resurrection and ascension which, though acceptable as of eternal significance, were not regarded as historically true. Later books, including 'Essays and Reviews' from Oxford, advanced the same theme.

Reactions to all this varied. The Roman Catholic Church simply rejected the whole thing with a blanket condemnation, proceeding via the Syllabus Errorum (1846) to its own form of counter-attack, the 1870 Vatican Council's definition of papal infallibility. Rejection came also from those who persisted in clinging to an infallible bible. Others, no doubt, gave up the struggle and were prised from their faith, but gradually theologians of the central stream of the Church came to see that it was possible to reconcile the new disciplines and insights with the essentials of traditional belief. It was here, in the studies of the scholars, that new bonds were fruitfully being forged as those who were engaged in this pursuit of truth discovered a fellowship among themselves which transcended their individual traditional and denominational backgrounds. "In going through this intellectual crisis the various churches and their theologians found that they were now working on common ground; the old denominational differences were becoming less important than thought on new issues and in this field scholarship became increasingly international and inter-denominational. In the end, therefore, the intellectual ferment of the nineteenth century was one of the factors which led directly to the ecumenical movement of the twentieth." (7)

3. Ecclesiastical necessity.

If the Church appeared to have been caught unprepared for the social and intellectual phenomena of the nineteenth century, there was one important area of its life in which it was very wide awake. "There is no more glorious chapter in the modern history of Christianity than that which tells the story of its

work in the mission-field." (8) Until the Evangelical Revival this had not been true of the churches in England. Christianity had been exported as an integral part of the civilisation of the West in its great period of world-wide expansion and was, therefore, of the chaplaincy type, providing old-country religion for the emigrants in far-away places. Thus it was that the Honourable East India Company had large numbers of chaplains at work among its staff; while the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel busied itself among the other traders of India and the colonists of North America. It was but to be expected that the latter's only contact with the indigenous population was confined to the slaves working on its own plantations when the size of nineteenth century emigration is noted. "In the year 1888 it was reckoned that nearly twelve million people had left the United Kingdom during the past 70 years, and that 250,000 were going off each year." (9) Most of these headed for North America.

As the emigrants became established, government interest in the missionary as a necessary agent in colonisation diminished. Now on its own, the Church leaped ahead with its commission to witness to Christ in even the uttermost parts of the earth, helped by a new kind of organisation, the Missionary Society. Apart from the Church of Rome, which was the veteran in this work, it was the Baptists who made the first move into direct missionary activity overseas with the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1782, under whose auspices William Carey was despatched to India in the following year. In 1795 came the London Missionary Society, whose noble ambition it was 'not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order or Government ... but the glorious Gospel of the Blessed Son to the Heathen; and that it shall be left to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His Son from among them, to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God." (10) In 1799 came the Church Missionary Society, with its special interest in the West African negro aroused through the fight against the slave trade, and in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society. In India, in Africa and in the Far East and the islands of the Pacific, the work

proceeded apace so that, in retrospect, it could be said that "the nineteenth century was the era of the greatest expansion of the Church since its foundation." (11)

Integral to this period of expansion was the time when its growing pains became most acutely felt. If Christianity was to come to these converts as a unifying and integrating influence, the chronic divisions of Christendom must be faced and healed. Somehow the missionaries had to overcome their prejudices and animosities, which meant nothing to their converts or repelled them. "The very coming of Western ways and civilisation broke up the static tribal pattern and made society more fluid and mobile than it had ever been before. The result was that the natives who had been converted and lived at first in one Church found themselves moved suddenly into the area of another; at best they were completely baffled by customs and rituals which seemed to bear no resemblance to their former religious practices, at worst they were unchurched." (12) Faced with this evident practical denial of the message each was preaching that, in Christ, all men are made one, locally arranged meetings were convened to consider how the missionaries might eliminate this major obstacle. Such agreements lacked those virtues of authority and continuity which could stem only from arrangements concluded centrally. This was the main problem which lay behind the gathering at Edinburgh in 1910 of the 'World Interdenominational Missionary Conference.'

4. Other influences.

(i) The Evangelical Revival and the Oxford Movement.

One of the most remarkable issues of the Evangelical Revival was, as we have just seen, the impetus given to the overseas missionary work of the Church. The founding of the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society are two of its consequences. However, the evangelical activity in this country appeared, at first, to be productive rather of disunity. Intensely dissatisfied with the lack of spiritual life in the established Church, attempts to enliven it ended in separation from it. Not that this always weighed heavily upon

those who left for, laying much emphasis upon personal conversion and piety, they generally held the belief that the essential Church was invisible to man and its members known only to God. This teaching had the effect of ravaging the numbers in the Church of England. "It has been calculated that whereas ... (in 1700) ... not a twentieth of the nation refrained from attendance at its services, by this time (1800) a quarter of the people were acknowledged Dissenters." (13) Yet this very weakness, in ecclesiastical terms, was a positive gain ecumenically. Not only were Church divisions of no moment to the twice-born, but there was an implicit bond between them which crossed any of the ecclesiastical divides. They were already at one with God in Christ.

Once again use was made of the new availability of cheap literature. 1799 saw the launching of the Religious Tract Society which, because it was evangelical, was also unsectarian. It had immediate success. Its products were very widely bought. To this period and to this movement also belongs the British and Foreign Bible Society.

At the practical level, as well as the theological, there was the beginning of interdenominational unity, though its practitioners would not have recognised it as such. Arising from the profound emphasis upon the person, the evangelicals were led to consider many of the accepted social and economic practices of the day and to rebel against them if they militated against what they saw to be the true value of the individuals concerned. "The Evangelicals were essentially practical and philanthropic. They believed in Societies and Acts of Parliament, and did their best to bring relief to those suffering from poverty and injustice." (14) Insofar as the followers of John Wesley were similarly concerned with the lives of the poor and under-privileged and the Roman Catholic Church increasingly involved with immigrant Irish labourers, there emerged a common, if unrecognised, outlook and ambition. This was implicit in the thinking of F.D. Maurice, an erstwhile Unitarian become Church of England. Not only did he keep open communication between the new secular thinking and the received Church tradition by indicating "that revelation did not mean the direct intervention

of God but the unveiling of the nature of God by degrees as man was able to accept it" (15) but his theology emphasised that "Christ came to establish not a religious sect or a new society but a kingdom. It was His will that this kingdom should embrace all men, and that the whole world should be brought under the rule of Christ. In such a kingdom there could be no class distinctions, no rich and poor, no oppressor and oppressed." (16)

The Oxford Movement was equally concerned about reform but, in its case, its object was the Church, through which came and within which lay, salvation. This was authenticated for the Church of England by its possession of the apostolic succession as seen in its three-fold ministry. This had a double effect on the Protestant Churches. While the division between them and the Church of England was accentuated, they drew themselves together in 1846 to form a new interdenominational body to be called the Evangelical Alliance. This came into being to associate and concentrate the strength of an enlightened Protestantism against the encroachments of Popery and Puseyism and to promote the interests of a Scriptural Christianity. On the other hand, the conviction of the central place of the Church in God's plan of salvation meant that the members of the Oxford Movement were deeply involved with its unity and spent much time considering just what churchmanship involved. This led to a new sense of affinity with the Eastern Orthodox and Old Catholic as well as the Roman Catholic Churches, even though it led to no association with any of them.

The most notable of its other achievements was the production of a series of Tracts for the Times, which were designed to infuse new life into the Church. Ninety was the total number eventually published and while some of them, e.g. Tract 20, were uncompromising, others, specifically numbers 38 and 41, began a new line of thought and offered a convenient new phrase when describing the Church of England as the Via Media, the mid-way position between the Roman Catholic and Protestant positions, differing from each but having points of contact with both. The virtues of this thinking were not, however, by any means immediately obvious to the majority, yet both this and the new seriousness afforded to the Church itself were significant

features of that period which led up to 1910 and, indeed, up to the present day.

(ii) The need to meet.

The final major phenomenon which bears upon the Conference in 1910 is the direct result of the immense missionary expansion of the nineteenth century. The Church of England in 1800 had only two overseas dioceses, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. By 1835 it had added only another four, but by 1854 there had been a large increase to a total of thirty. Continuing to multiply fast, by 1882 there were no less than seventy-two. By 1900 the national Church of a century before had now become universal, with independent branches growing in response to particular local needs. Each of these dioceses discovered problems not amenable to resolution from England, where conditions were dissimilar. The necessity for mutual consultation, advice and support, led to the gathering of seventy-six bishops at Lambeth Palace, the London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1867, the first of what later became known as the Lambeth Conferences. After the second conference, attended by one hundred bishops in 1878, so valuable were the meetings judged to be that it was determined to continue to convene them at regular, ten-year, intervals. Each of the conferences had on its agenda the topic of unity. It addressed itself, of course, to the unity of the Anglican Communion, but it was yet another useful experience on the way to Edinburgh 1910 in that, though still unilateral in denominational terms, it was now ecumenical geographically. Such diversity of experience, both problematic and opportunist, widened the ecclesiastical horizon and engendered a sensitivity and sympathy towards circumstances and contexts other than those of the Church of England itself. Thus, there came to a Church, whose history was one of attempted unity in diversity from the Elizabethan Settlement and the Church/State theory of Richard Hooker to the Via Media of John Henry Newman, a development of considerable value for the later truly ecumenical scene. ".. the Anglican Communion, like the British Commonwealth of Nations, is held together rather by a general acceptance of and loyalty to a common tradition of belief, worship, and practice than by a

closely defined system of doctrine, liturgy, and discipline. The threefold cord which binds together the Church of England, namely the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal, and the Articles of Religion, likewise constitutes a band of cohesion within the Anglican Communion. But within this framework there is a wide variety of local custom and usage. The Church of England, in its relations with the other parts of the Anglican Communion, has followed the sapient advice of Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury concerning the adoption and adaptation of local custom and habit and the avoidance of a rigid uniformity." (17) Yet this was not as vague as it appears. While the authority of Lambeth was accepted as moral rather than legal, increasing contact with missionaries from other parts of the Church demanded a reference point of universal application whatever other and divergent local customs prevailed. In 1888 one hundred and forty-five bishops attended the third Lambeth Conference and this Conference defined the Lambeth Quadrilateral, which has formed the basis of all Anglican ecumenical thinking and policy since then. Taken over from a meeting of the American Episcopal Church held in Chicago in 1886, it read :

> "A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as 'containing all things necessary to salvation', as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
>
> "B. The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
>
> "C. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's Words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
>
> "D. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church."(18)

These four points represented what the Anglican Communion considered to be the essentials for a reunited Church.

It was not only Anglicans, of course, who experienced the

tensions arising from overseas expansion and if there came from the other Churches no parallel to the Lambeth Quadrilateral, there were some similar reactions from international gatherings. So there came into existence in 1875 the Presbyterian Alliance of Reformed Churches, in 1881 the Methodist Ecumenical Conference, in 1889 the Old Catholic Churches Union, in 1891 the International Congregational Council and in 1905 the Baptist World Congress. Edinburgh was getting very close.

(iii) The need to act.

A direct personal approach to secure commitment to Christ was the strategy of the evangelical. It was as the result of this that the latter part of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a new kind of conference. This crossed denominational boundaries. It did so by the simple expedient of ignoring them. The content of the conference, human and theological, was not interested in denominational vagaries. From whatever starting point they came to such a conference those attending saw themselves united in their purpose of evangelisation. This was all that mattered. Of such a type were the conferences held in Keswick during the 1870's and those arranged a decade or two later by Henry Lunn.

It was during this period, also, that there came into being other agencies where Christians, especially younger Christians, learned to work together. Among these was the Young Men's Christian Association and its sister, the Young Women's Christian Association. Both of these rapidly extended their activities to global dimensions. Of more direct relevance, however, was the formation of the Student Christian Movement and its missionary arm, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. Eventually, in 1895, there came the World Student Christian Federation. All of these organisations had their origins in the evangelical movement but the S.C.M. and the W.S.C.F. in particular took the ecumenical movement one significant stage further. "They evolved the principle by which it was possible for Christians of widely differing views to take part in ecumenical conferences without feeling that they were being disloyal to the

special truths cherished and upheld by their own particular churches. Previous conferences ... had been meetings of individuals who represented only themselves and not their churches or any specific Christian organisations. In fact they had been undenominational .... In other words the underlying principle of co-operation within the S.C.M. was not that of the lowest common denominator but that of the highest common factor." (19) Norman Sykes, in his "The English Religious Tradition", speaks of the Edinburgh Conference as one "to which indeed long and arduous preparatory work had been prefaced, and which owed much to the influence of such societies as the Student Christian Movement and the World Student Christian Federation." (p109) Here was the last step necessary to bring to the birth the first deliberate meeting of official representatives of the various, not to say contending, churches in England, convened to consider how to spread the Good News together.

5. Edinburgh Conference, 1910.

The foregoing historical survey shows that this great gathering at Edinburgh of some twelve hundred people from one hundred and fifty-nine missionary societies was the result of the mounting pressure for co-operation between the churches in the matter for which they primarily existed. The quest for unity has been seen in the same light ever since. William Temple was convinced that the ecumenism which came from it was a direct act of God, arising almost incidentally out of an evangelistic zeal, yet being the great new fact of our era. The first of the great contributions which this Conference made to twentieth century Christianity was that the Church's unity is necessary if it is to function properly.

Although the Roman Catholic Church was not to be involved officially in ecumenical discussion for another half a century, the Edinburgh Conference was designated "the greatest single breakthrough towards ultimate reunion since the Reformation, the crucial event in the history of the ecumenical movement. It was crucial not only for what it directly accomplished and set on foot, but also because of the precedents and patterns it established which

have moulded the subsequent history of the ecumenical movement." (20) This was no over statement.

Again, the Conference was inter-denominational. Those who attended were well aware that they had to face division. Indeed, this is precisely why they were there. The generalisations upon which all could agree were not on the agenda. What had to be decided were the every-day circumstances which revealed divisions rather than ignored or concealed them. Despite the fact that questions concerning differences relating to doctrine and order were specifically excluded, the divisions that had to be faced were not of the superficial kind. To acknowledge them and to try to resolve them together was one of the worthy precedents set at Edinburgh.

Yet these advances, immense though they were, were not enough by themselves. It was of great moment for Churchmen to meet to discuss positively their differences and to think more deeply about their effect upon missionary activity. But to conclude there would have run the risk of a gradual erosion of these undoubted gains. The last of the results of this Conference was the setting up of machinery to ensure that what had been achieved did not die there. It is with this machinery that we begin the next stage in the tracing of the Church's ecumenical history after its crossing of the water-shed of Edinburgh, 1910.

B.

BETWEEN THE WARS.

> "Active effort for the re-union of Christendom has been the most remarkable phenomenon of recent Christian history." (21)

1. The formation of the World Council of Churches.

The Edinburgh Conference set up the machinery by which its other gains could be maintained and extended. Although delayed by the first World War, this soon began to produce results. The first was the gathering together of the various missionary societies into a permanent International Missionary Conference, which immediately

won its spurs in the debate about the property belonging to German missionary societies in their former African colonies. Although the problem involved national politics, no small part of it was to do with Christian missionary ability, and so the widening of vision continued. "Having found a common meeting ground on missionary problems, and having discovered that conferences ... were both possible and valuable, it was natural that attempts should be made to discuss other problems in the same atmosphere of goodwill and hope." (22) Practical Christianity was the order of the day. Thus in 1924 the English Church leaders called the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, while similar items constituted the agenda for the first Life and Work Conference which was held in Stockholm in 1925. This was a considerable, if natural, advance from Edinburgh.

It was here, too, that there came to the fore the conviction that if doctrine tends to divide, service has the opposite effect. It was already being felt that direct attempts to reach unity were going to be prolonged and difficult, if not impossible; that unity, like happiness, is a by-product of something else. So, once again, questions of faith and order were excluded from the agenda. Nevertheless, the complementary discovery was rapidly made, that it is impossible for Christians to concern themselves with the practicalities of life without working from a theological setting.

It was with theology that the International Missionary Conference continued to be engaged at its next meetings, the first in 1928 in Jerusalem and the second in 1938 in Tambaram, near Madras, but already there had emerged from Edinburgh an agency parallel to Life and Work. This took up the whole complex of faith and order, which had been so assiduously avoided. The first World Conference on Faith and Order took place in Lausanne in 1927 and revealed something of the theological chasms to be avoided. By the time of the second World Conference, held in 1937 back again in Edinburgh, some progress towards bridging the divides had been effected, but the most far-reaching achievement was the agreement with the second World Conference on Life and Work, held in Oxford in the previous weeks, that the two Conferences should merge and that the result of the merger would be a World Council of Churches. In the following year in Utrecht this was done. The progress that this represents,

together with an indication of the ground still to be covered, is illustrated by a statement agreed by the Faith and Order's Conference in 1937 :

> "We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. We are one in allegiance to Him as Head of the Church, and as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are one in acknowledging that this allegiance takes precedence over any other allegiance that may make claims upon us.
>
> This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, who lived, died and rose again to bring us to the Father, and who through his Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and are called by Him to witness in all the world to His glorious Gospel. Our unity is of heart and spirit. We are divided in the outward forms of our life in Christ, because we understand differently His will for his Church. We believe, however, that a deeper understanding will lead us towards a united apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus.
>
> We humbly acknowledge that our divisions are contrary to the will of Christ, and we pray God in his mercy to shorten the days of our separation and to guide us by His Spirit into fulness of unity. We are thankful that during recent years we have been drawn together; prejudices have been overcome, misunderstandings removed, and real, if limited, progress has been made towards our goal of a common mind." (23)

This was an entirely adequate statement of the common ground by the time things were again halted by world war. Theologically and practically there had emerged a firm basis from which further growth could be expected and maintained.

2. Local Councils of Churches and the British Council of Churches.

Although international activity sparked off by the Edinburgh Conference was delayed by the 1914-18 war, events began to happen in England more quickly. The war was not over before local Councils of Churches (or Councils of Christian Congregations, as they were

then called) were being formed. Growing out of previous ecumenical co-operation, the first Councils were formed in 1917 in Bolton and Manchester. They immediately turned their attention to local social conditions. Thus, in Bolton, public meetings were held to discuss such subjects as work, wages, education and the bible, while the Council's Executive formulated more privately, with the Labour Party and Trades Council, the attitude of the Churches and the Labour Party towards the prevention and cure of venereal disease. In Manchester a not entirely dis-similar programme was attempted. It is said that Manchester's present women police stem from this programme. "One action of the Executive in September, 1919, arising from concern about pre-nuptial impurity among young people out of doors, was to approach the Watch Committee of the City and ask for the appointment of women police. The present women's police force of Manchester and Salford has grown out of the six women appointed in October, 1919, as a result of this initiative of the Council of Christian Congregations." (24)

This type of activity, identical with the parallel section of the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, which was held in Birmingham in 1924, was increasingly repeated during the 1930's as local churches got together to pursue an ameliorating interest in their surrounding social conditions in a manner which reflected the intentions of the Life and Work movement. As with the Life and Work and Faith and Order movements themselves, so now the local churches began to recognise the necessary conjunction between these complementary objectives and acquired the twin aims of social relief and Church unity. Eventually, in 1942, the British Council of Churches was formed. It was directly the child of the war-time Religion and Life Weeks, which were endeavours to demonstrate the relevance of the Gospel to the common life of mankind. An assessment of these Weeks has been made by the Revd. R.M.C. Jeffrey in his 'Local Councils of Churches Today', a work commissioned by the British Council of Churches. On p6:

" (a) They launched the British Council of Churches, introducing it in many areas as the bearer of the ecumenical idea and as a national focus point for ecumenism.

(b) They encouraged some of the established Councils of

Churches and other ecumenical organisations.

(c) They resulted in the growth of new Councils which had links with the British Council of Churches from the beginning.

(d) The collaboration with the Sword of the Spirit was of great importance for the future of ecumenical growth."

The importance of point (d) in this assessment lies in the fact that the Sword of the Spirit was a Roman Catholic movement. Co-operation was largely limited to holding parallel events at the same time, although there was issued a Joint Statement in 1942 which said, "Our purpose is to unite informed and convinced Christians all over the country in common action on broad lines of social and international policy." (25)

3. Denominational progress.

During the first decade of this century continuing growth in Church membership concealed the fact that, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, it was declining as a percentage of the population. By 1930, with the same exception, that decline had become absolute. Although it is unlikely that the ecumenical movement is the Church's response to this decline, if only because so few of its clerical members exhibit enthusiasm for it, it must certainly be seen against this background.

In England during the first half of the twentieth century there were only two acts of re-union. Each of these was internal. The United Methodist Church, which had come into being in 1907 when three individual parts of Methodism joined forces, was the first of these. In 1932 it then joined with the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists to form, simply, the Methodist Church. "It cannot be said that ecumenical zeal was the sole factor in bringing the plan to a successful conclusion, for the two smaller Churches were in a state of comparative decline and their financial and other resources were stretched to the limit. But there was also a wide-spread conviction that division between those who professed loyalty to John Wesley, who was himself a man who regarded schism as one of

the worst of sins, was no longer legitimate." (26) For the people concerned these were by no means minor adjustments of the ecclesiastical scenery although the expected expansion arising from them did not materialise. They were, however, necessary steps on the road which still extended far into the future. At the same time, this was a period which saw the Free Church National Council (1892) grow into the Free Church Federal Council in 1917. This body offers to all Nonconformist churches a meeting place where Free Church opinion can be formulated and from which this same opinion can be introduced into the wider world, ecclesiastical and social. As such, its importance for the ecumenical movement must not be under-rated.

The Church of England promised well. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 produced a strikingly hopeful initiative when it issued its appeal "To all Christian People." Positively ecumenical, it shouldered its share of blame for the past and acknowledged its responsibility for the present. In a thoroughly eirenic and prophetic passage it said; "The vision which rises before us is that of a Church genuinely Catholic, loyal to all Truth, and gathering into its fellowship all who profess and call themselves Christians, within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled ... We do not ask that any one Communion should consent to be absorbed in another. We do ask that all should unite in a new and great endeavour to recover and to manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which he prayed." (27)

It is well worth noting that, more than half a century later, its main points are still valid, viz:

(a) a genuine Catholicity as opposed to a cosmetic minimalism;

(b) a comprehensiveness based on Christ as opposed to an exclusiveness generated by denominationalism;

(c) a visible unity as opposed to one that is invisible; (a tendency in the late 1960's to speak of organic unity soon reverted in the mid-1970's to Lambeth's visible unity.)

(d) An Epiphany-type procession of distinctive gifts for the enrichment of the whole as opposed to a negative denial of diverse talents for the sake of conformity;

(e) an insistence on lively diversity within unity as opposed to a constricting and perhaps suffocating uniformity;

(f) a hope for a complete omni-lateral unity as opposed to uni- or bi- or even multi-lateral schemes. (Again, more than fifty years had to pass before anything approaching this vision was evidenced in the production of the Churches' Unity Commission's 'Ten Propositions' in 1976.)

Nor should the appeal be regarded simply as an academic statement. It offered a point at which negotiations could readily begin when it spoke of the ministry, which it knew from its own history and recent experience with the Church of Rome (see immediately below), would be the crucial issue. Without denying the reality of non-episcopal ministries, those who exercised them were, nevertheless, urged to receive episcopal ordination, just as the bishops expressed their willingness to accept from non-episcopal ministries whatever form of commission or recognition as was required. This latter point was followed up in a Memorandum on the Status of the Existing Free Church Ministry, which was published two years later. Those who issued it included both the archbishops. It contained the words: "It seems to us to be in accordance with the Lambeth Appeal to say, as we are prepared to say, that the ministries which we have in view in this memorandum, ministries which imply a sincere intention to preach Christ's Word and administer the Sacraments as Christ has ordained, and to which authority so to do has been solemnly given by the Church concerned, are real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church." (28) Although, as the result of these statements, talks were begun with representatives of the Free Church Federal Council, Orders remained the chief stumbling block and when the Lambeth Conference of 1930 failed to produce anything further on this, the final result left things as they had been at the beginning.

It was, perhaps, only to be expected that conversations involving the Roman Catholic Church would end in the same way, not least because the subject was the same. The Oxford Movement had been hopeful of some kind of rapprochment with the Church of Rome. Set back by the Vatican Council of 1870, its hopes were renewed through the conversations between Lord Halifax, a member of the Movement, and one of his friends, a French priest, the Abbe Portal. Their suggestion of a joint Church of England - Roman Catholic commission to re-examine the question of Anglican Orders got off to a bad start for Pope Leo X111 appointed an entirely Roman Catholic commission. It finished badly, also, for in 1896 the Bull "Apostolicae Curae" flatly pronounced Anglican Orders "utterly invalid and altogether void." (29) Following the Lambeth Appeal of 1920, Lord Halifax and his friend determined to try again with the result that in 1921 a mixed group began to meet under the direction of the Cardinal Archbishop Mercier of Malines. The new Pope, Pius X1, sent a message of encouragement in the following year, but with the deaths of Cardinal Mercier and the Abbe Portal within six months of each other in 1926, enthusiasm waned and the conversations ended abruptly in 1928 with the publication, by the same Pope, of an encylical dissociating his Church from any scheme which did not base itself on submission to Rome. Insofar as the touch-stone for this was valid Orders, not much progress had been made.

Although extra-territorial from the English view-point of this study, there was one other ecumenical action which warrants a place in the records because of the importance of its bases, which may yet become pertinent for the English Churches, as for example, in the Churches' Unity Commission's 'Ten Propositions'. In 1930 the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church signed the Bonn Agreement. Split from the Church of Rome, first in the eighteenth century and then through a refusal to accept the Vatican's Infallibility decree in 1870, the Old Catholics retained the apostolic succession. Insofar as this encompassed valid Orders, the Old Catholic recognition of Anglican Orders in 1925 was a major achievement for both parties. After some hesitation an agreement was drawn up establishing intercommunion between the two churches

on the following basis :

1. Each communion recognises the catholicity and independence of the other, and maintains its own.

2. Each communion agrees to admit members of the other communion to participate in the sacraments.

3. Intercommunion does not require from either communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith." (30)

This remains a helpful and hopeful formula.

C. POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

"We would, therefore, earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?" (31)

1. Councils of Churches.

(a) The World Council of Churches.

With its first Assembly held in Amsterdam in August, 1948, the World Council of Churches begins to pass beyond the scope of our enquiry although there remains a handful of points relevant to the ecumenical atmosphere, which provides and conditions ecumenical

thought and action today, in the countryside as much as elsewhere.

Growth.

One hundred and forty five churches from forty-four countries were represented at Amsterdam. (32) This was, at once, a frightening total, offering statistical evidence of the enormity of the fragmentation of Christendom and the work that had to be done to repair it, and yet one that was encouraging for the new venture in that so many parts of Christendom had responded. This, however, was but the start. By the time of the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi in 1975 the number of member Churches had almost doubled at 271. Moreover, when the Holy Orthodox Church of Russia and the other Slav Orthodox Churches became members at New Delhi in 1961, there remained of the major Churches outstanding only the Roman Catholic. But although this Church is still not in membership, progress has been recorded. If at Amsterdam, and still at Evanston at the Second Assembly in 1954, Roman Catholics were forbidden to attend, by 1961 the influence of the new Pope John XXIII and his programme of aggiornamento meant that Roman Catholics were present in an official observing capacity. If the situation remains still at that stage, nevertheless there is much drawing together, epitomised in the Joint Working Party which was established between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council in 1965. A seasoned observer at the Nairobi Assembly commented, "So, even if with some essential qualifications, from New Delhi the World Council of Churches could be said to have fulfilled the claim and promise of its name." (33)

Basis.

It was in New Delhi, also, that the final draft of the World Council's expanded doctrinal basis was accepted. As such it became - and remains - the basis for the British Council and local Councils.

> "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God the Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

One of its own publications makes this precis: "The basic elements of the W.C.C. basis are the confession of the Lordship of Christ, fellowship of member churches, belief in the humanity and divinity of Christ, acceptance of biblical authority, common witness and service, and the worship of the Trinity." (34) All Churches which accept the Basis are eligible for membership.

If this was the central feature of the Council, it required working out everywhere in the local Churches in accordance with the so-called 'unity formula of New Delhi'. This contained the memorable phrase 'all in each place' and stands as the fullest statement of the aims of the ecumenical movement in the World Council. It ran, "We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people. It is for such unity that we believe we must work and pray." (35) This aligns well with the call to the Churches concerning the First Assembly of the World Council which said, "Our first and deepest need is not new organisation, but the renewal, or rather the re-birth, of the actual churches." (36)

Mission

To underline the fact that the primary aims of the World Council had not suffered change or decay with the passing of the years the 1961 Assembly saw the integration within the Council of the International Missionary Council, which then became a division of the World Council, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Half a century after Edinburgh the association of mission and unity was finally consummated.

(b) The British Council of Churches.

As with the World Council, the history of the British Council of Churches has been one of remarkable growth. Its activities are separated into divisions, of which, until 1978, there were four - focusing specifically upon Christian Aid, Community Affairs, International Affairs and Ecumenical Affairs. If that is one standard by which to judge its size, another is to list its member bodies. These are given as :

Churches with Headquarters in England :

Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland
Church of England
Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Thyateira and Great Britain
Independent Methodist Church
Lutheran Council of Great Britain
Methodist Church
Moravian Union Inc.
Salvation Army
United Reformed Church

Churches with Headquarters in Scotland :

Baptist Union of Scotland
Church of Scotland
Congregational Union of Scotland
Episcopal Church in Scotland
United Free Church of Scotland

Churches with Headquarters in Ireland :

Church of Ireland
Methodist Church in Ireland
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Other denominations in Ireland

Churches with Headquarters in Wales :

Church in Wales
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Union of Welsh Independents

Associate Members :

(a) Denominational Bodies -

Religious Society of Friends

Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

(b) Ecumenical Bodies -

Student Christian Movement

Young Men's Christian Association

Young Women's Christian Association

Interdenominational Organisations :

Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland

Free Church Federal Council

Scottish Churches Council

Irish Council of Churches

Council of Churches for Wales

Consultant Observers:

Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales

Roman Catholic Church in Scotland

British Bible Societies

Seventh Day Adventists.

In addition, there are affiliated to the British Council some 700 local Councils of Churches.

Still in organisational terms, the British Council moved more slowly than its World counterpart in that it was 36 years before the conjunction of mission and unity was made explicit through the joining together of the British Council and the Conference of British Missionary Societies. With effect from January 3rd, 1978, the latter became another Division of the Council with the name of the Conference for World Mission.

Yet the British Council has not been simply a background organisation, a theoretical bureaucracy. If the most recent, and not least, of its contributions to the English ecumenical scene has been the seconding of its Ecumenical Officer for England to be the Field Officer for the Churches' Unity Commission, it has throughout been directly involved in a number of national ventures in both evangelism and unity and is continually active in support of local ecumenical adventures. In 1964, for example, its Faith and Order component

held a conference in Nottingham. Its theme was 'One Church Renewed for Mission' - a valid restatement of Edinburgh - typifying the current outlook in ecumenical circles that the movement for unity was part of a renewal movement, both parts being needed for the Church to fulfil its missionary role in the world. From this conference there came the call for denominational authorities to designate Areas of Ecumenical Experiment at the request of local congregations or in new towns and housing areas. Under controlled conditions certain extra-denominational experiments would be allowed to take place in these Areas in pursuance of the Lund dictum of 1952. The acceptance of this call and the gradual activating of it made, and continues to make, what is probably the most significant practical response to ecumenism that exists in this country.

It was from this conference, also, that an unexpected thing emerged at the last moment; the delegates present covenanted with each other and with God to work for the unity of the Churches in Britain by Easter 1980. "The Nottingham Faith and Order Conference of 1964 marks a watershed in British Ecumenical history." (37) Thus, one writer judged the new idea of covenanting. Though nothing was to emerge along this line for some time and though unity by 1980 soon began to be seen as unrealistic, nevertheless the idea did bear fruit with the Churches in Wales entering into a covenant for unity in 1975 and the Churches in England authorising a Churches' Council for Covenanting to succeed the Churches' Unity Commission in 1978.

Other movement is even slower. Unwilling to become a full member of the British Council, partly for fear of becoming a co-subscriber to moral statements with which it was not in agreement, the Roman Catholic Church is only now showing signs that this position may be revised. It was not until 1978 that a Report from the liaison Committee of the British Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales entitled, "Public Statements on Moral Issues" contained the conclusion that "the members of the working party became increasingly convinced of the desirability of Roman Catholic membership of the B.C.C. (Preface)". In its Summary Statement we read, "It is our conviction that full membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the B.C.C. of Churches would bring positive advantage." Considering this document, one

of the Resolutions of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in Low Week, 1978, said, "The Conference considered that the report substantially meets the difficulties it raised in 1974 concerning R.C. participation in B.C.C. statements on moral issues." (38) It is slow movement, but it is movement.

(c) Local Councils of Churches.

Even if a study of local Councils of Churches done for the British Council in 1971 ("Local Councils of Churches Today") accepted a tentative conclusion that "it may well be that the local Council of Churches is the most effective way to prevent ecumenical action" (39) it remains generally true that "the establishment of such local Councils of Churches ... is perhaps the most hopeful feature in the ecumenical life of these (sc. Britain and the United States of America) western countries." (40) Certainly their growth in Britain has been remarkable as the following table shows, although indicating only those councils affiliated to the British Council :

1945	1946	1956	1960	1965	1967	1969	1977	
75	126	195	300	400	500	650	700	plus.

As will be seen, the immediate post-war period, which contained Archbishop Fisher's initiative in 1946, saw swift development, as did the period following the first Christian Aid Week in 1957. There was a similar rapid increase in numbers following "The People Next Door" programme of 1967. "It is worth noting here that, while in the period 1918-1945 the number of local Councils of Churches grew from three to one hundred and twenty-six the next twenty-five years sees a growth to over six hundred and fifty. This is the period in which Councils of Churches ceased to be a novelty and became a normative part of Church life in many areas." (41) After 1970 the growth slowed considerably. One reason for this was disenchantment with lack of national ecumenical progress (it was the period of the failure of the Church of England/Methodist reunion talks), while another was that the keenest councils had done all that denominational disciplines allowed, and further progress being barred, gradually faded away. Yet another was the inability of some of the newer councils to discern for themselves any worthwhile programme that went beyond the holding of Christian Aid Weeks and Weeks of Prayer for Christian Unity. Not least was the

experience of some that ecumenical co-operation declined in proportion to the demands made upon denominational resources of time, personnel and finance. That this happens is at least partly due to the basic weakness that while councils depend for their existence on the goodwill of local congregations they are more likely to be subservient to them than disturbing them. Nevertheless, a total of seven hundred councils, some of which are sub-divided and about 75% of which have active Roman Catholic membership, is a force with which to be both hopeful and happy, providing ways can be found by which a satisfactory transition can be made from initial enthusiasm to permanent achievement.

2. National Ecumenical Programmes.

(a) "The People Next Door".

Arising from a coincidence of impetus originating in the Conference of British Missionary Societies' urge to evangelise and Nottingham's vision of a covenant for unity by 1980, there was launched in the Spring of 1967 a campaign designated "The People Next Door" (PND). Described as "a major ecumenical study programme for groups" (42) it had a twin objective. The first was to introduce to the average church member the current ecumenical situation in both thought and action. The second was to put contemporary ecumenical theory to the test in local circumstances. It is estimated that 85,000 people took part, though this may be a low estimate in that Oswestry alone produced twenty ecumenical groups. (43) Barry Till ascribes the low number - two million had been expected - to bad ecumenical communications and lack of clerical support for an ecumenical programme. Nevertheless, he concludes, "All things considered, therefore, the tally of 85,000 participants was not too bad for a first attempt - especially as the church coverage was in fact widely ecumenical." (44) A number of points of continuing relevance was thus uncovered so early in national ecumenical days.

1. Given that denominational lines of communication usually leave more than something to be desired, ecumenical lines are almost impossible.
2. Given that clerical support for anything falling outside customary routine is likely to be minimal, when that something is ecumenical it is rather surprising that it happens at all.

3. In the final figures of participants, while there were said to have been 35,126 Anglicans involved and 13,844 Methodists, there were also 5558 Roman Catholics, who became marginally the fourth largest group. For a new entrant to the ecumenical world this was impressive.

4. In matters ecumenical there was revealed a widespread unhappiness about the relationship between the clergy and the laity and about the place of ecumenism in its local setting.

Two of the several comments recorded about this latter double point make it clearly and forcefully. "We feel the barrier between ministers and laity is greater than that between denominations." "It must be recognised by clergy that the activity resultant from our proposals might be at the expense of normal church activities." (45) More positively, perhaps, came this careful assessment: "In many churches a structure has developed which depends entirely on the minister. His central position has determined the activities of the congregation. This limits the activities, and many laymen feel that there is no scope there to contribute their interests and abilities to the life of the church. In the local community, it is the layman, not the minister, who has the wider experience and the greater authority. In the life of the local church the layman has a positive, radical, and indeed revolutionary part to play. He must find what is his own particular task and the church must nourish and train him for his work and uphold him in it." (46) Perceptive though this is and crucial though it remains, there is an equally true, if apparently opposite, appreciation of ecumenism at this level reached by no less a figure than the World Council's first General Secretary, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, when in the compendium published in 1970 with the title "The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. 2, 1948 - 1968", he concluded his summary of the general ecumenical development since 1948 with the words, "The ecumenical movement is not sufficiently rooted in the life of the local congregations. In spite of all attempts to educate church members for participation in the ecumenical enterprise the movement is still too much an army with many generals and officers, but with too few soldiers. It would seem that not enough has been done to show that the ecumenical concern is not to be conceived as one of the many concerns in which a local

congregation may take interest, but as a concern which arises out of the very nature of the Church. It is clear that real advance towards full unity will be made only if in the coming years local congregations and their members discover that to follow Christ means to follow him in his work of the building on the one Body, his Body." (p26)

This first national programme thus produced some prophetic insights, not least in the rediscovery that the Church is almost entirely lay in composition. Thus quickly emerged what was to become one of the increasingly dominant themes in the following years.

(b) (i) "Call to the North".

The idea of a Call to the North stemmed from an initiative taken by two friends, John Pollock, an evangelical priest of the Church of England, and John Todhunter, a Roman Catholic layman, who suggested that the Church of England should lead a national mission with support from all the Churches. Although not receiving sufficient support from the Lambeth Conference, to which the appeal had been made in 1968, sufficient ecumenical backing was gathered by Stuart Blanch, Bishop of Liverpool, the city from which the suggestion had come, for Donald Coggan, Archbishop of York, to set up a working party. This included the Bishop of Liverpool, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool and the previous year's Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. In 1971, at the third annual meeting of the leaders at Bishopthorpe, those present numbered about fifty and included Anglicans, Baptists, Christian Brethren, Congregationalists, Methodists, Pentecostalists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Salvation Army members. A decision was reached to try to mount a Call to the North which, grounded in ecumenical study groups, first of clergy and then of laity, and initiated by an Easter message in 1972 signed by the Archbishop of York, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool and the Free Church Moderator, would try to turn the whole stance of the Church from being inward looking to a renewed concern for evangelism, which would begin to express itself in a wide range of activities undertaken throughout the region in Holy Week, 1973. Despite the daunting difficulties of co-ordinating such a programme over an area as large

as the north of England, with its fifteen million inhabitants, this was achieved. "Call to the North" thus became an astonishing variety of happenings taking place right across the North during Holy Week. York Minster was filled as never before; Doncaster Racecourse was the scene of a great rally to welcome the Cardinal Archbishop; Lancaster was the venue for a very successful evangelistic preaching campaign in which all denominations took part; Chester Cathedral was crammed with teenage pop fans; Liverpool Philharmonic Hall with an audience listening to a Bach Mass with special readings. These, together with pilgrimages across the sands to Hilbre and Holy Islands, festivals, pageants, processions, rallies, visitation campaigns, right down to village happenings and right up into the Dales, allowed each community - however tiny - to act together in its own way in speaking the Word of God to its own locality." (47) For the first time ever there was a concerted attempt to spread the good news over the whole area by the whole Church. As the published Aim had it, "We want to bring the word of God for this generation to the people of the North and we want to do it together." Six years later some facts obtrude.

1. Such a concerted achievement proved possible.
2. With the number of study groups running well into four figures, CTN was more widely undertaken - not least in country areas - than its forerunner, PND. Despite effects being limited, much of what was begun then still exists, though sometimes in a different form or under a different name. The effect of this type of activity was becoming cumulative.
3. While many cried for a lead from the centre - and just as many would have cried out in protest had such a directive been forthcoming - one of the most successful parts of the operation lay in the necessity for local Christian groups to discover their own opportunities and strengths and then fit themselves to match the two. Local initiative had arrived. Local groups began to look for themselves and to see that responsibility for local action was theirs, as was also the power to tackle it.
4. Parallel with this, it was soon discovered that the day of the mass meeting was over unless the circumstances were quite exceptional. Participants wanted to participate. The layman's self-discovery was progressing healthily from its start with

PND.

5. Most importantly, it rapidly became clear that, whatever the strengths of denominational allegiance, there was a greater loyalty that claimed those involved. Time and again study groups found themselves astonished to recollect that their members were of differing parts of the Christian family.

6. Enthusiasm was markedly greater among the ordinary Church members than their leaders, some of whom gave the impression of being marginally attached to something basically extraneous to them. From another context there comes substantiation of this impression. "The lukewarm feeling towards ecumenism seems to me to be shared right up to the top levels of authority in the Church. The majority of Church leaders are obliged to make the right sort of ecumenical noises these days ... but of course the expression of ecumenical sentiments and attending a United Service here and there really demands very little of a person. Ask a few of them actually to plan and spend some money together and the colour of their ecumenism is startlingly revealed." (48)

In addition, it is to be noted as gain that :

a. The Church leaders of the north continue to meet for a residential conference each year, a phenomenon which appears to be unique in Christendom;

b. A communications system without ecclesiastical parallel grew up.

These two things together were indirectly responsible for the fact, and directly responsible for the first servicing, of the next large ecumenical activity, the Call to the Nation.

(b) (ii) <u>The "Call to the Nation".</u>

It was at the annual CTN Church leaders' meeting in 1974 that the Revd. H.O. Morton, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, addressed the final session of the gathering on the topic "What kind of Britain do we want?" A small group immediately put its hand to the production of some study material under the same title. Meanwhile, in 1974, Dr.Coggan had moved to Canterbury and taken his evangelistic zeal with him. On October 19th, 1975, he broadcast the Archbishops' Call to the Nation along the same lines,

using Harry Morton's title and the same initial letters to which he had become accustomed. Thus it was possible for the study material prepared for Call to the North's continuing consumption to be readily available as an immediate follow-up to the national broadcast. 25,000 sets of study notes were quickly sold through-out the country. Thus began a new and expanded phase of the initiative begun in the North and, although having none of the background of prayer and preparation of its northern ancestor, served much the same purpose and produced largely similar results, but now on a national scale. The nation was being geared to ecumenical thinking and that thinking was by no means inward looking.

(b) (iii) "Britain Today and Tomorrow" & "Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism".

The first several thousand replies made to Dr. Coggan as the result of his broadcast Call to the Nation were gathered and analysed by John Poulton, of the Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism, and subsequently published under the title "Dear Archbishop". At the same time, at the suggestion of the Archbishop, the British Council of Churches had undertaken a more massive and detailed investigation into the various topics which had been identified as of immediate relevance to the overall theme than had been done by either the original CTN team or John Poulton. This research was later written up by Trevor Beeson, a Canon on the staff of Westminster Abbey, and published as "Britain Today and Tomorrow" - the latest title that the continuing programme had acquired.

Alongside this more professional stimulus to national action there emerged the beginnings of a parallel programme which was quietly launched in Lambeth Palace on January 22nd, 1979. Arising from an apparent convergence of thought about evangelism expressed in three international documents, the evangelical Lausanne Covenant of 1974, the Roman Catholic "Evangelii Nuntiandi" of 1975 and the World Council of Churches' "Confessing Christ Today" of 1976, this programme, called the Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism, "was brought into being by the major denominations, the British Council of Churches and the Evangelical Alliance because of a renewed emphasis on evangelism, and ... an increasing conviction that the churches should be doing this together." Thus ran the Press Release of that date. It

continued, "It is an historic event that all of these bodies should act together to take positive action in evangelism." Once more, the Roman Catholic Church is not officially involved but is said to be encouraging its people at the parish level. The chairman of the Initiative, the Revd. Donald English, wrote in an introductory letter in August, 1978, "The aim of the Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism is to stimulate and encourage intelligent and effective proclamation of the Gospel in England. It is not a centrally organised or directed movement. It believes that evangelism takes place through Churches and groups of Christians in local settings. The primary concern in evangelism is not the special crusade or campaign. Rather, it is the witness of the Church and of every member in and through the ordinary commerce and contacts of daily life." Those who had been involved in Call to the North recognised the strategy and format and remembered that Dr. Coggan now lived in Lambeth Palace.

If the Nationwide Initiative has still to make its mark, Britain Today and Tomorrow seems already to have run away into the sand, unless one claims the Initiative as its progeny. Together with its forerunners it appears to demonstrate some principles that subsequent attempts at widespread evangelism or unity should note.

1. Care must be taken to identify the people who are addressed and to work accordingly. Both Call to the North and Call to the Nation (with Britain Today and Tomorrow) were basically attempts at prophecy. Each used identical methods yet the former was addressed to Church people and the latter to the nation as a whole. If there are claims that the former was more effective, one of the reasons could be that here was like talking to like. Call to the Nation, however, hardly made contact with the non-Churchgoer because it was unaware that the language and thoughts and, indeed, preconceptions of the one were unknown to the other. Nowhere was this more evident than in the attempt to proceed by the study group method.
2. Without over-planning, there must be full supporting services. This means that there must be a variety of aids available immediately for those who answer the invitation and that

adequate commitment must be evinced by all the leadership.

3. The latter point leads on to this one. Unless there is real local enthusiasm no amount of central planning will be effective. Insofar as the larger the area concerned the further away are the central planners, by so much is the weakening of the personal involvement by the local folk, which is so necessary if there is to be generated the required enthusiasm.

It seems likely that real advance will come only when there ceases to be an area invitation into which local co-operation is invited and, in its place, the patient enthusing of local communities whose various activities are then accommodated by central authority. Interestingly, this is what the Roman Catholic Church is said to be doing as its contribution to the Nationwide Initiative, though the lack of evidence to date makes it impossible to be sure whether the process has yet to begin, the enthusing is actually being attempted or the response to it failing.

(c) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Weeks of prayer for unity were not new fifty years ago. Various groups were engaged in them but at different times of the year, and, as far as the Roman Catholics were concerned, with different objectives. By 1942 sufficient progress had been made for the Faith and Order movement to agree to change its date so that all could pray at the same time, January 18-25, but agreement about the intention of the prayer was not reached as quickly. It was in the 1930's that the Abbe Paul Couturier, of Lyons, began to advocate that Christians should set themselves "to pray for the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ as He wills and when He wills." This put the content and timetable at God's disposal and was the essential change. Nevertheless, it was only by the year of his death in 1956 that the Week of Prayer really took hold, being ever more widely accepted within his own communion. The problem of conflicting intentions in the prayer was finally eliminated by the Second Vatican Council. The history of this Week could be, in miniature, that of the ecumenical movement itself; intended and practised by all, yet at different times, in different ways and with different intentions.

The satisfactory settlement of these differences, as well as the way in which they were settled, is a standing illustration of what can be done, and hopefully, a precursor of what will be done. Barry Till makes a high assessment of the importance of the agreement on the Week. "Many congregations", he writes, "found themselves praying for unity for the first time. Up to then it had simply not been on their agenda, but now, with the churches giving their official backing to the Week of Prayer, the issue could not be avoided. Moreover the week became the occasion for joint services and for the exchange of pulpits between ministers of differing denominations ... Thus ecumenism was beginning at last to work through to 'the grassroots', as so many ecumenical leaders had urged for so long. It may seem pathetic that this happened really widely only after the end of the last war - and happened at first in such a limited way - but it is a fact nonetheless. And it is a fact without which all the working and planning of Church leaders are doomed to failure." (49) By 1979 the Week had become one of the major ecumenical events in the year. It was being sponsored by 97% of all Councils of Churches (50), 75% of which had Roman Catholic membership, although, after the manner of the pragmatic, not to say Pelagian, English, it came a very poor seventh after Christian Aid (top) in a list of worthwhile Council activities! Nevertheless, even where there were no Councils, it was being virtually universally observed and currently providing the genesis from which new local planning was emerging. Well may Lukas Vischer have observed, "Abbe Paul Couturier ... deserves a special place in the history of the ecumenical movement." (51)

(d) Christian Aid.

One of the best known and best supported activities of 99% of all local Councils of Churches (52) is that called Christian Aid. An original concern for the host of refugees and displaced persons of the second world war soon became a Department of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service of the British Council of Churches and, in 1957, Miss Janet Lacey, Director of that Department, decided to hold what she called "a Christian Aid Week". In 200 towns and villages £26,000 was collected. This immediate success ensured that it became an annual event, offering the people of Britain a direct way in which they could express their concern for the world's underprivileged. For simplicity the name was changed to coincide with the title of the

week, and while remaining a Division of the B.C.C., was known from 1964 onwards simply as Christian Aid. In the year ending 31.3.80 the total income of Christian Aid amounted to no less than £7,001,251, of which £3,210,612 came from its 'Week' in May. In what is certainly as important a direction as the money given and applied is the effect of uniting all those who are willing to struggle against poverty and for development. Such ambition readily crosses bureaucratic denominational boundaries in favour of service to a common humanity. Some 3000 local Christian Aid committees and 400,000 voluntary collectors bear testimony to this. In a survey conducted for the British Council of Churches, no less than 25% of all Councils of Churches chose Christian Aid as their most worthwhile activity. This figure is the more impressive when compared with the 6% which held the Week of Prayer as its most worthwhile activity. It was by 1979 an established feature of the ecclesiastical calendar and a pleasant opportunity for Christians of all persuasions to act effectively together for the good of others.

3. Denominational progress.

(a) General Introduction.

The post-war period made its first major impact on the denominations on November 3rd, 1946, when Dr. Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, preached a sermon in Cambridge during which he invited the non-episcopal churches in Britain to take episcopacy into their system. One year later there was a notable achievement in the orient, when a million Indian Christians of the Methodist, Congregationalist and Anglican obediences joined together to form the Church of South India. It was the first occasion when episcopal and non-episcopal churches had found it possible to unite. "For the first time since the sixteenth century the great divide between episcopal and non-episcopal churches springing from the Reformation had been bridged. The importance of the C.S.I. union was not so much the method by which this was done - for the method has not in fact been followed by subsequent union schemes - as the psychological effect of the fact that it had been done at all." (53) J.W.C. Wand in his "The Church Today" called it a miracle. (p73) It was certainly an encouraging background against which to conduct any ecumenical

discussions in England. The general atmosphere was also conducive. As far as the ecclesiastical authorities were concerned, practical progress had already been made. The Archbishop's 1946 sermon had been made possible by, and perhaps had its immediate origins in, the agreement about certain aspects of religious education in schools, which was reached by the two Anglican Archbishops, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and the Moderator of the Free Church Council just prior to the Education Act of 1944. The subsequent production of Agreed Syllabuses "Revealed to startled Anglicans and Free Churchmen how much of Christian doctrine they had in common with each other." (54) For many ordinary Church people their war experiences had engendered an atmosphere in which ecumenism could thrive. Common dangers and deprivations, not least of spiritual things, in prisons and concentration camps and beleaguered nations as a whole, had stripped away inessentials and left many Christians convinced that they were one in the things that really mattered. Add to this an unprecedented mobility of civil populations which took families out of long established patterns of living and put, for example, a staunch Methodist village chapel family into a suburban area where there was only a parish church, and there amounted a situation in which bold, yet charitable, ecumenical thinking would thrive.

Nor was such thinking lacking, with the boldest and most charitable coming unexpectedly from the Church of Rome. No doubt partly as the cumulative result of continuing international and inter-denominational interest and research in the important themes of biblical theology, patristics and liturgy, as well as the social phenomena already mentioned, there grew the conviction within Roman Catholicism that the time had come to look again at itself and think in terms of renewal. On St. Paul's day, 1959, the new Pope John XXIII, announced the calling of an ecumenical council. This, however, was an ambiguous title. "Because the meaning attached to the term 'ecumenical' in official Roman Catholic usage was not widely known, many thought that what was proposed was an inter-confessional assembly or that the real aim of the proposed council was the reunion of Christendom ... It was, however, quickly made clear that what was intended was an assembly of all the Roman Catholic bishops and that the main purpose was the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church. Only indirectly would the work of the Council promote the unity of all Christians." (55)

Yet it soon became unambiguous as there swelled a "chorus of voices urging that the way to unity should be seen not as a return but rather as the common renewal of all the Churches." (56) Even so, unity follows renewal rather than the other way round. "In ecumenical work, Catholics must assuredly be concerned for their separated brethren, praying for them, keeping them informed about the Church, making the first approaches towards them. But their primary duty is to make an honest and careful appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and achieved in the Catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more loyally and luminously to the teachings and ordinances which have been handed down from Christ through the apostles." (57) In practical terms this means "Let all Christ's faithful remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the gospel, the more they are fostering and even practising Christian unity." (58) Or, in a word, "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart." (59)

Criticised as being more apparent than real, the Roman changes were, as with those of all other Churches, restricted by past dicta. Unwilling, and indeed, unable to reverse its historical heritage, it saw the way forward to lie in a readjustment of emphasis. The words must remain but the action could change. This change of emphasis was of the profoundest significance. Doors were beginning to open. Another of these was the establishment in 1960 of a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. "This," says Lukas Vischer, the Director of the Secretariat on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, "was a significant step forward. Although the Secretariat had originally been created simply in order to prepare for the Council, the function it fulfilled went far beyond this, and it later became clear that it not only had an important role to play in the Council itself but it would also become a permanent organ even when the Council was over. If the Roman Catholic Church wished to communicate with other Churches officially, a special organ for this purpose was required and the other Churches needed to be clear to whom they should direct their communications." (60) (Communications on the deepest level were about to be re-established with the Orthodox Church when, in December, 1965, by mutual agreement, the excommunications of 1054 were repealed. This was another impressive indication that the Church of Rome was really trying to enter the ecumenical world.) Other doors

opened in quick succession. The more important for the ecumenical scene included the following :-

(a) There was a clarification of the vexed problem of the relationship between scripture and tradition as the controlling authority. The Reformation churches trusted the former and mistrusted the latter, suggesting that in some instances development of the latter had brought it into conflict with the former. Roman Catholics asserted a living faith by insisting that contemporary application of the original material, as better scholarship and experience understood it, was essential. The tension between what had been, at best, parallel sources was being beneficially reduced. "Sacred tradition and sacred scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church ... The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." (61) In any case, neither could now be seen as the supreme authority; that rests in the One from whom both derive with "both of them flowing from the same divine well-spring". (62) One most important result of this explanation was a new interest in bible reading by the Roman Catholic laity. That this was novel is indicated by words from the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n22, "Easy access to sacred scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful." It was a short step from here for Roman Catholics to join the ecumenical study groups produced by the campaigns 'People Next Door' and 'Call to the North' and to continue thereafter. In support of this new interest and assisting it there came in 1966 a completely new translation of the bible in English for Roman Catholics entitled 'The Jerusalem Bible'. This was followed by the production in 1976 of the 'Good News Bible', an ecumenical work with which Roman

Catholic scholars had been intimately associated.

(b) The practice of re-baptising converts to the Church of Rome had long been a source of ecclesiastical irritation and theological contention. Now, at the Council, it was conceded that because baptism united a person with Christ it was true of those who had been baptised outside the Roman Catholic Church that "in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit." (63) The point is reiterated in the Decree on Ecumenism, n3, "For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptised are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church ... Nevertheless, all those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be honoured by the title of Christian, and are properly regarded as brothers in the Lord by the sons of the Catholic Church." In the first part of the Ecumenical Directory, which was produced by the Secretariat in May, 1967, to help national hierarchies apply locally the insights of the Council, baptism was recognised as having "ecumenical importance" (64), being "the sacramental bond of unity, indeed the foundation of communion among all Christians." (65) This meant that, from henceforth, "indiscriminate conditional baptism of all who desire full communion with the Catholic Church cannot be approved. The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated and therefore to baptise again conditionally is now allowed unless there is prudent doubt of the fact, or of the validity, of a baptism already administered." (66) In fact, Roman Catholicism has never practised re-baptism. As far as it was concerned it simply baptised. Here was not a change of heart towards baptism so much as a change of mind towards those who, until the Council, had not been accorded sufficient Christian status to practice 'proper' baptism. In practice, the result was the same. From being a bone of contention baptism was now acknowledged as a practical aid towards the reunion of Christendom. In fact, in 1972, the Roman Catholic Church was one of nineteen parts of the Church in Britain to accept a Common Certificate of Baptism, the only essentials being that water and the Trinitarian formula be used. Again nationally, another notable feature has been the development of the Up-Holland Northern Institute for ecumenical purposes. In November, 1979, this reached its peak to date in that an in-service training course was composed of eleven Anglicans, ten Roman Catholics and three Free Church clergymen and was led by an Anglican bishop, a tutor of the Northern Baptist College, a former president of the Methodist

Conference and a member of the U.N.I. Staff. Even more impressively, for it represented a much wider and more popular attitude, was the enthusiasm expressed at each mention of ecumenism by the members of the National Pastoral Congress held by the Roman Catholic Church in Liverpool in May, 1980. Specific requests were made for greater ecumenical commitment to the B.C.C., in joint schools and the training of clergymen, in admission to Roman Catholic altars and the multiplication of local ecumenical covenants. In addition, the Congress turned its back on the Vatican expression 'separated brethren' in favour of its own 'fellow Christians'. Perhaps more important than any of this was the constant discovering of an ecumenical content in other, apparently domestic, issues, so that a plea was also made for ecumenical consultation to become a regular feature of all diocesan, deanery and parish councils. The hierarchy's response was not so enthusiastic. "The Easter People" was on sale a bare three months after the Congress. The speed of its appearance precluded any great change: nor was there any. Some of the ecumenical pleas from the Congress were not mentioned in an apparently comprehensive review; others were refused and the remainder promised a re-examination. Relationships with others were stated as cautiously as could be: "At home there is already some measure of co-operation and sharing in mission at national, diocesan and local level. Our common baptism demands this and must inevitably lead to the consideration of a certain sharing of resources." (67) Nor was there much dynamic leadership in the statement that, despite much remaining to be done to achieve visible and organic unity, "we are becoming almost imperceptibly one community of reconciliation," (68) especially when it is put alongside the previous statement that "we rejoice to recognise them (sc. fellow Christians) as pilgrim-brothers in Christ, above all united with us in the great bond of baptism into Christ." (69) Current experience of local practice of permitted change that does not carry hierarchical conviction offers little hope of other than spasmodic response to the thought that "the follow-up to the Congress lies definitely within the responsibility of the dioceses." (70) This Message will disappoint much ecumenical hope, within as well as outside the Roman Communion.

So tension remains. While it seems to be generally accepted that "the ecumenical dimension is a prime aspect of the life of the Catholic Church" (71), the traditional position remains basic :

"True ecumenical activity means openness, drawing closer, availability for dialogue, and a shared investigation of the truth in the full evangelical and Christian sense; but in no way does it or can it mean giving up or in any way diminishing the treasures of divine truth that the (Catholic) Church has constantly confessed and taught." (72) This latter was made quite plain in December, 1979, with the suspension from his teaching office of Professor Hans Kung, and the warning of Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx. Pope John Paul 11 was the author of both these actions, which exemplify the tension within the Roman Catholic Church as it is personified in its new leader. If these instances represent anomalies inevitable in a period of radical change, they can be accepted as transitory features, but the non-Roman Catholic Christian world will remain anxious until it discovers whether John Paul 11 sees Vatican 11 as a kind of frontier to which that world must come or as a point of opening out of the Roman Catholic Church for the reception by it of a wider experience. If he took a conservative traditionalism to the opening of that Council in 1962, he soon caught the spirit of its initiator, John XX111, and became "one of the main architects of Lumen Gentium, the document which re-orientated the whole Church. " (73) His biographer sees him as "committed to going forward and therefore deeply committed to the search for unity" and offers a thumb-nail character sketch which, if accurate, is hopeful. "It is some comfort to know that the man in the driver's seat is neither a kerb-crawler nor a speed-maniac, but one who will study the route with care, take advice, drive with skill and intelligence tempered with prudence, be solicitous for the welfare of his passengers, and who, unlike most of the latter, has a good idea of where he is heading." (74) Meanwhile, "separated" Christians may still be; as "brethren" (75) they are now acknowledged. From the basis of this acceptance of others as constituting at least "ecclesial communities" (76) there have come, through the Directory, sanctions for prayer and worship in common - though with some restrictions - and the setting up of national and local, i.e. diocesan, ecumenical commissions with which to engage and liaise with such other manifestations of Christianity as were extant. How the denominations reacted to this remarkably changed climate can now be seen.

(b) Relations between Methodists and the Church of England.

The first general conversations following Dr.Fisher's Cambridge sermon took place between representatives of the Archbishop

and representatives of the Evangelical Free Churches in England. This led to the setting up in 1955 of official talks between the Methodist Church and the Church of England. Not even the staid committee language of its Interim Report in 1958 could completely conceal its sense of the historic as it began, "For the first time in history representatives of the Church of England, appointed at the request of the two Convocations, have met representatives of the Methodist Church, appointed at the request of the Methodist Conference, in official conversations on Church unity." (77) Nor was there any doubt about precisely what was intended by these conversations. "And we declare that in seeking for closer relations betwween our two Churches, nothing less than the visible unity of the whole Church of Christ is the goal." (78) It soon became clear that the ministry would be the decisive issue; and so it proved. In an endeavour to avoid a confrontation the architects of the proposed two-stage scheme of union presented the Churches with an initial act of ministerial reconciliation, which was so deliberately ambiguous that those who wished to assert that it constituted an episcopal ordination of the Methodist ministers could do so while those, Church of England as well as Methodist, who wished to believe that it did not would be equally at liberty so to think. In the event this approach satisfied too few, scandalised too many, in the Church of England. The Methodist Conference of 1969 voted for acceptance; the Church Assembly of the Church of England of the same year rejected it. However, having taken synodical government into its system, the Church of England tried again in 1972 but, once more, insufficient majorities were forthcoming. The scheme was laid to rest and, with it, all realistic hopes of any other centrally propounded scheme. As had been hinted with the publication in 1970 of "Growing into Union" (79) the future seemed to lay in local action. Though attracting to itself heavy criticism - some of it justified - it may yet be of more value than the scheme itself. There was, however, gain to come from the scheme and from the expectations which it had aroused.

The Ordinal, by which all future ordinations were to have been regulated, was passed to the Roman Catholic Church for comment. Resulting from this some alterations were made and the final result received Roman Catholic approval, not to say approbation (see B.Till, "The Churches Search for Unity," p315), though this, of course, would

be neither official nor binding should English Roman Catholics be involved at this level at a later date. At the moment, no small gain has been achieved by the re-opening of the Queen's College, Birmingham, in 1970, as a united Church of England-Methodist theological college for the training of both Methodist and Church of England ordinands and the partial, and increasing, integration of the personnel and syllabus of that college with a similar Roman Catholic establishment in Oscott. Perhaps it was in anticipation of a final Church of England acceptance of the scheme, or perhaps in fear of a non-acceptance, that its General Synod in 1971 gave approval for the admission of full members in good standing of Trinitarian churches to communion at Church of England altars. Though causing some internal problems, the new Canon B15A was promulgated on July 9th., 1972, and forms yet another plank in the slow reconstruction in England of an undivided Church.

(c) Relations between Methodists and the Church of Rome.

While there has been nothing comparable in the relationships in this country between Methodists and Roman Catholics as there has recently been between Methodists and the Church of England, advances have been made. Conversations have been held internationally and nationally and reflect this progress. Two of three international discussions, those held in Denver in 1971 and in Dublin in 1976, produced reports. "Catholics and Methodists" (80) appeared in 1974 and is a popular summary of the Denver Report. According to contemporary practice it is both eirenic and positive, concentrating more upon what is held in common and what it is possible to do now than on what still remains to be resolved. The Dublin Report was published as "Growth in Understanding" and, building on Denver, set itself firmly within the contemporary world context before addressing itself to its own points of embarrassment. "We propose to take seriously the insistence of the Denver Report that the contemporary situation be regarded and assessed and we would like to lift the discussion out of the old entrenchments and try to discover the essential characteristics of ecumenical spirituality for our time. The questions are not so much 'what have we in common - where do we differ and what may we learn from each other?' as 'what kind of Christian does God want us to be?'" (81) An unexpected consensus began to appear. "In recent years ... there has been a notable recovery of eucharistic faith and practice among Methodists, with a growing sense that the

fullness of Christian worship includes both word and sacrament. Similarly among Roman Catholics there has been a renewal in the theology and practice of the ministry of the word. These developments have resulted in a remarkable convergence, so that at no other time has the worshipping life of Methodists and Roman Catholics had so much in common." (82) Sometimes the consensus was seen to be more than simply bipartite, for there was discovered "the large amount of assent that we, both Methodists and Catholics, can give to the Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine presented by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 1971." (83) Thus proceeded discussion on the central ecclesiastical issues, eucharist and ministry, with convergence of opinion on each; for example, "We both see the central act of the ordained ministry as presiding at the eucharist in which the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care is perfected." (84) The third prime issue, that of authority, is next on their agenda and has already been preceded by "Towards an Agreed Statement on the Holy Spirit" (1979) by way of preparation for it. Meanwhile, a most hopeful note was struck as the Report drew to its conclusion. " ... it is appropriate to record that at the British Methodist Conference of 1975 a motion was proposed and passed with acclamation 'that those appointed by the Methodist Conference to the British Methodist-Roman Catholic conversations be asked - provided the competent Roman Catholic authorities agree - to explore the conditions on which communion might be established between the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church.' " (85)

(d) Relations between the Church of Rome and the Church of England.

Official contact with the Church of Rome became possible on the accession of Pope John XX111 in 1958. It says something for the courage and the vision of Dr.Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, that he made the journey to Rome to visit the new Pope in 1960, the first meeting of the leaders of these churches for some four hundred years, but it was not until both these men had been succeeded, John XX111 by Paul V1 and Dr.Fisher by Dr. Ramsey, that an official announcement of discussions between the two Communions was made. The occasion was the meeting between the new leaders in Rome in March, 1966. A Joint Preparatory Commission began work in 1967, the result of which was the formation of a Permanent Joint Commission, which became the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and which met for the first time in

Windsor in January, 1970. Once again, a surprising progress was made as large areas of agreement were rapidly covered through the new policy of positive co-operation rather than negative confrontation. Differences of nomenclature and emphasis, historical conditioning and dated theology all surrendered their difficulties in the face of this determination to discover common ground. Three Agreed Statements were issued on crucial subjects. The first came from Windsor in 1971, "Agreement on the Eucharist"; then from Canterbury in 1973 there came "Ministry and Ordination"; finally from Venice in 1976 there issued "Authority in the Church". The "substantial agreement" claimed in and for the first document (86) may fairly be posited of all three, though there remain deep divisions, not least those shown up in the light of these Statements within the Churches themselves. This, too, is gain for there can be no surmounting of obstacles until they are realised, admitted and confronted. Resulting from the reception of many suggestions and criticisms concerning its Agreed Statements, the Commission issued from Salisbury in 1979 a clarification of the first two under the title, "Elucidations", and promised a further comment on the third in its final Report in 1981. Before this, however, the Lambeth Conference of 1978 had agreed, as part of its Resolution 33, that it "recognises in the three Agreed Statements ... a solid achievement, one in which we can recognise the faith of our Church, and hopes that they will provide a basis for sacramental sharing between our two Communions ..." (87) This was reiterated by the Church of England's General Synod in February, 1979.

In fact, there is now very considerable joint activity in prayer and worship (non-sacramental, however) and in matters social and communal. This was cemented by yet a third archiepiscopal visit to Rome, this time when Dr. Coggan visited Pope Paul in April, 1977. A Common Declaration issued at that time serves as a convenient summary of the position to date. There is a thanksgiving for things recognised as held in common, "a common faith in God our Father, in Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, our common baptism into Christ, our sharing of the Holy Scriptures, of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian Definition, and the teaching of the Fathers, our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality and mission." (88) There was a recommendation that the Agreed Statements be examined by each Communion "so that both of them (sc. the Communions) may be led along

the path towards unity." (89) Then came an admission that discipline relating to mixed marriages continues to mean that they represent that place "where the tragedy of our separation at the sacrament of union is seen most starkly." (90) There follows a reminder that unity and evangelism go together, "Our divisions hinder ... the work of Christ but they do not close all roads we may travel together. In a spirit of prayer and of submission to God's will we must collaborate more earnestly in a greater common witness to Christ before the world in the very work of evangelisation." (91) It concludes with a determination that remaining obstacles will be overcome. "We pledge ourselves and exhort the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Anglican Communion to live and work courageously in this hope of reconciliation and unity in our common Lord." (92) With Archbishop Coggan preaching in Westminster Cathedral (Jan.1978) and the Cardinal Archbishop Basil Hume addressing the Church of England's General Synod (Feb.1978) there has been no lack of national leadership to this end. That this type of leadership will continue is to be assumed from the meeting in Ghana in May, 1980, of Pope John Paul 11 and Archbishop Runcie, who was translated to the archdiocese of Canterbury in January, 1980.

(e) The United Reformed Church.

If 1972 witnessed the final collapse of the proposed Anglican-Methodist re-union scheme, it also witnessed the successful conclusion of another, that between the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England. Co-operation between these two Churches had been continuous since 1933 and they enjoyed a state of intercommunion since before the second world war. A Joint Committee was commissioned immediately after the war to produce a plan for re-union. This was done by 1947 and, although attracting insufficient support, did lead to the acceptance in 1951 of 'The Covenant'. In 1958 a Statement of Church Principles was accepted, as was also a detailed plan for co-operation at every level of Church life. Finally, there was set up in 1963 the Committee which produced the ultimately accepted Scheme of Union. So here there was, for the first time in Britain, a union which crossed denominational boundaries; and not only so, it also encompassed two differing ecclesiastical structures so that "Congregational churches, being free to join the new Church or not, as they choose, will stay out unless they positively decide to accede, whereas Presbyterian congregations, though given the right

to secede and break away if they wish, will automatically join unless they do secede." (93) The immediately local result of the union would mean that "each member of a 'uniting' local church or congregation will have at the outset the same fellow-members, the same minister, and also the same church premises, as before, but in fact his church or congregation (now a local church) will be regionally and nationally part of a new Church with members drawn from both former Churches; its doctrinal standards will be differently stated, and it will be in a new constitutional framework." (94) In the new Church the local congregation is represented in a synodical structure containing three larger geographical stages and ending with a General Assembly, whose Moderator "shall normally be a minister." (95) In that he need not be ordained and in that his term of office lasts but one year, the United Reformed Church is identical with the Methodist Church, though at variance with the episcopal Churches. Another variance with the latter lies in the fact that the Moderator, even if ordained, need not be male for "All ministries will remain open to both men and women." (96) These undoubtedly represent problems for every episcopal Church but if even a Pope need not be ordained at the time of his election, surely none of them will eventually be seen as occupying an unduly high place in any hierarchy of truths, let alone being essential. In one particular, especially, this union offers substantial hope. For some years it has been said that a union involves the deaths of present denominations, whose spirits will arise, renewed, in the new body. (97) Until now no denomination has been prepared to risk this in practice. St.Thomas' lineage seemed unending. Now, however, it has happened; despite the length of their separated lives and their lively recollection of how things used to be, it is possible to put a hand on a member of a united Church and discover that it is an ex-Congregationalist or an ex-Presbyterian who is being touched. Praise the Lord.

At the time of the union in 1972 there were 2280 Congregational and 323 Presbyterian Churches with a total estimated membership of 249,475. These were served by 1090 Congregational and 283 Presbyterian ministers who had pastoral ministries. All the Presbyterian Churches transferred to the United Church, although leaving behind a handful of their ministers, and some 85% of the Congregationalists made the move. Between then and 1978 more Congregationalists joined so that, in 1978, there remained about 200 continuing Congregational Churches, while the

United Reformed Church had 1990 congregations. A further encouraging development has taken place since 1972 in that some 200 U.R.C. congregations have since made union with their local Methodist brethren. Thus some 10% of the new U.R.C., fired with the spirit of its own considerable achievement, has been actively involved in further unions.

(f) The Ten Propositions.

The most important issue from the formation of the United Reformed Church soon appeared. The Church leaders' Conference of 1972 met in September, immediately after the collapse of the Anglican-Methodist union scheme and on the eve of the inauguration of the U.R.C. It pleaded with the U.R.C. to take the initiative in getting conversations between the Churches going again. In May, 1973, therefore, there began informal "talks about talks" to see if there was any reasonable basis upon which more formal discussions might take place. Finding this, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, the Church of England, the Congregational Federation, the Methodist Church, the Moravian Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church agreed to their representatives forming a Churches' Unity Commission. This was set up in October, 1974, and had a brief for three years, during which to produce something upon which the Churches could work. After one interim report the Commission produced its magnum opus in January, 1976: "Visible Unity - Ten Propositions", containing, with brief explanatory comment, ten issues about which agreement had to be reached if there was to be any hope of attaining one united Church. The Propositions were very reminiscent of the proposals from the Lambeth Conference of 1920 and the Bonn Agreement of 1930. They were:

1. We reaffirm our belief that the visible unity in life and mission of all Christ's people is the will of God.
2. We therefore declare our willingness to join in a covenant actively to seek that visible unity.
3. We believe that this search requires action both locally and nationally.
4. We agree to recognise, as from an accepted date, the communicant members in good standing of the other covenanting Churches as true members of the Body of Christ and welcome them to Holy Communion without hesitation.

5. We agree that, as from an accepted date, initiation in the covenanting Churches shall be by mutually acceptable rites.

6. We agree to recognise, as from an accepted date, the ordained ministries of the other covenanting Churches as true ministries of word and sacraments in the Holy Catholic Church, and we agree that all subsequent ordinations to the ministries of the covenanting Churches shall be according to a Common Ordinal which will properly incorporate the episcopal, presbyteral and lay roles in ordination.

7. We agree within the fellowship of the covenanting Churches to respect the rights of conscience, and to continue to accord to all our members such freedom of thought and action as is consistent with the visible unity of the Church.

8. We agree to continue to give every possible encouragement to local ecumenical projects and to develop methods of decision making in common.

9. We agree to explore such further steps as will be necessary to make more clearly visible the unity of all Christ's people.

10. We agree to remain in close fellowship and consultation with all the Churches represented on the Churches' Unity Commission.

Here, then, was a proposal that the Churches should effect a covenant on the basis of mutual recognition of ministries and members and, from that, move towards complete unity. Though still without fruit, Nottingham's vision had developed from a seed to a young plant.

By mid-1978 each of the Churches concerned had published its official response. There were five Churches who, with varying degrees of qualification, were prepared to take the next step on the road to a covenant, while three were not. The five were the Churches of Christ, who stand for a united Church anyway; the Church of England, with some hesitation about ministries; the Methodist Church, who, with the experience of rejection by the Church of England in 1969 and 1972, agreed to go forward only if the Church of England agreed also;

the Moravian Church, who really wanted complete union on the spot but, not finding anyone with whom to unite, agreed to talk further; and the United Reformed Church, still harbouring doubts about personal episcopacy though aware that "the times have moved on and what is now required is to register actual progress towards unity." (98) Of those who were unable to progress the Baptist Church, while wishing for greater emphasis on mission, declared itself constitutionally unable to do more than commend reactions to the local Churches, who alone had the right to make their own responses. The Congregational Federation was never likely to agree, being itself the residue of Congregationalism not becoming part of the United Reformed Church. The Roman Catholic Church offered the opposite reaction to the constitutional difficulty of the Baptists, namely, that because Roman Catholicism was a world-wide body, that small part of it in England was not in a position to make such a fundamental judgment, which would have effects on the whole. Of such are the problems facing the ecumenist. Nonetheless, goodwill was expressed by all eight partners, who agreed Propositions 7, 8, 9 and 10, with Propositions 1 and 3 also being widely acceptable. Nos. 4, 5 and 6, relating to membership and ministry, were the difficult ones inhibiting agreement on No. 2, which, relating to the covenant, required prior agreement on the other nine. The Congregational Federation believes unity is already a fact which merely needs demonstration. (99)

The acceptance of the final three Propositions offers very considerable scope for further progress while stopping short of formal commitment to unity. Indeed, the Roman Catholic Response concludes its introductory section with the words. "We call on Catholics everywhere in this country ... to commit themselves wholeheartedly to every form of co-operation with other Christians that is open to them. For the reasons stated below we are unable to assent to all the Propositions; this should not be seen as a deterrent to ecumenical action, but rather as a stimulus to work and pray harder for that unity in truth and love which Christ wills for all His people." (100) Nor was this just polite talk. Before the end of 1978 there was published a Roman Catholic document with the title 'Local Covenants'. An entirely Roman Catholic production, it gathered together in neat compass dicta from various relevant sources, which together described the current ecumenical position.

In addition, it now indicated the next step by laying stress on "local initiatives as the present way forward." (101) Not shrinking from the consequences of such initiatives, it drew them out. "It would seem logical for Catholic congregations to be formally committed by covenant to effective membership of Councils of Churches." (102) Furthermore, their members were urged "not only to participate in such enterprises but to initiate them." (103) Already, indeed, "effective local covenants are in operation ... in the parishes of Upholland and Sherborne." (104) When this document was accepted by the Roman Catholic bishops' Low Week Conference, 1979, the clearest and most positive lead had been taken by one of the Churches unable to proceed to a nationally negotiated covenant. Oddly enough, it was the most rigidly structured Church which had accepted the evidence that "the chief growing point for ecumenical relationships in recent years has been at the neighbourhood level, through informal house groups, and the growing together of two or three local congregations in one neighbourhood." (105) It must be said, however, that there is little evidence, as yet, to suggest that this laudable verbal exhortation is receiving comparable priority in practice, although there is a proposal for an area covenant between the Roman Catholic diocese of Arundel and Brighton and the Anglican dioceses of Chichester and Guildford.

The Churches' Council for Covenanting succeeded the Churches' Unity Commission, whose original brief had been extended for one year to 1978. This new Council published its recommendations in mid-1980, aiming to clothe with actions the intentions of the Ten Propositions. It proposed to do this through a liturgical act in which, on the basis of an extant unity in Christ stemming from one baptism and one faith, the Churches "recognise one another as Christian Churches in membership and ministry and commit ourselves to grow together in counsel and action." (106) Exactly sixty years after the Lambeth Conference of 1920 had issued its Appeal to All Christian People it was precisely proposed that the non-episcopal Churches of this country would acquire bishops and although the effect of the Covenant would not be a reunited Church nor yet instantly interchangeable ministries, yet there would be opened a door through which the Churches could proceed to an ever increasing unity as the necessary processes of common decision-making were discovered and activated. It is intended

that definitive responses will have been made by each of the Churches within two years and that a further three may be required for the legal and other acts needed prior to the taking of the Covenant in 1985. There has arisen a slight complication during the term of office of the Council in that the discussions between the Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church, which are expected to lead to union in 1981, have divided the former body. Those proceeding with the U.R.C. are now known as the Association of the Churches of Christ and are signatories to the Proposals. The remainder, the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ, still wish for the wider union of the Proposals and, together with the Lutheran Council of Great Britain and some Baptist Churches, have enquired of the Council how they might be included in the Covenanting process.

Following the lead of the Churches' Unity Commission, the authors of the Proposals insist that the Churches are greater than their ministries and put the former first. Conscious that the proposed Anglican/Methodist reunion scheme may well have been defeated in 1972 by the ambiguity of its Service of Reconciliation, the claim is now made that "this Covenant provides an unambiguous way in which the ministries of all our Churches may be incorporated in a new relationship within the historic ministry of the catholic Church to their mutual enrichment." (107) Nevertheless, three of the nine Anglican members of the Council, in a Memorandum of Dissent published with the Proposals, vigorously dispute this claim (108), specifically where the Covenant allows for the continuance of non-episcopal U.R.C. Moderators to exist in partnership with bishops, although such a state would have a maximum life of seven years. In addition, there is the question of women presbyters (and bishops). If side-stepped at the time of the Covenant, there must come a time soon after when the Church of England, whose General Synod voted as recently as 1979, not simply not to ordain women but also not to accept the ministrations in England of Anglican women ordained elsewhere within that Communion, will be faced with conflicting commitments. Thus, the three Anglican dissenters feel compelled "formally to advise the churches, and in particular the Church of England, that the form of Covenant as now proposed - as a whole - is not acceptable." (109) Representing one third of the Anglican members on the Council, they may well represent one third of at least the House of Clergy of the General Synod and,

with a probable requirement of 75% overall approval for the progress towards Covenanting to continue, the achievement of that goal would appear to be correspondingly less likely as far as the Church of England is concerned. This will not surprise Bruce Reed, who is not optimistic in principle. "The division between churches of the communal type and those of the associational type is the critical one. Church unions or partnerships among churches of the same type are those which are likely to be achieved, so in Britain two associational churches, the English Presbyterian and the Congregational Union, could manage to come together as the United Reformed Church. But the marriage between one dominantly communal type, the Church of England, and one associational type, the Methodist Church, failed," (110) If this conclusion predominates in the mind of the sociologist it is unlikely to feature in the minds of those making the crucial decision. The critical division for them remains the theological/ecclesiastical one of authority as expressed in the various ministries. Yet the incentive offered by these Proposals to overcome all divisions is great. David Brown, Bishop of Guildford and Chairman of the Church of England's Board for Mission and Unity, introduced the Proposals to his General Synod with a speech which included this assessment of the riches a reunited Church would possess. He spoke of "the Church of England, with its high view of episcopacy and its established position, the Methodist Church, with its strong lay emphasis and its all-powerful Annual Conference, the United Reformed Church, with its strong emphasis on local congregations and its deep, historic suspicions of prelacy, as well as the Moravian Church, with its pietist tradition and great missionary commitment, and the Churches of Christ, a group of independent Churches with a long-standing concern for Christian unity." (111)

In 1953 Norman Sykes wrote, "Notwithstanding, the progress during the present half-century in the sphere of unity between the Churches has been considerable, and in view of their past history, phenomenal." (112) It is interesting to wonder which word he would have chosen to describe the progress towards Christian unity in the succeeding quarter of a century, by comparison with whose speed of advance, despite recent failures and current difficulties, the pace of the period to which Sykes refers must now be seen as a crawl.

PART 11

THE RURAL SCENE

"The Christian life can never be lived and the gospel is not and never has been preached in vacuo. It can only be preached at a particular time and in a particular place, and this means in a particular society. This in turn means that only when the realities of that society are understood and taken seriously can the gospel be effectively preached." (1)

TODAY'S RURAL COMMUNITY

"At times it appears to be forgotten that the continuing life of the church in rural areas depends as much on the capacity of the countryside to sustain some form of social life in future decades as it does on the Church's ability to put its own house in order." (2)

A. IN GENERAL

1. Its location.

On August 19th., 1978, the Countryside Commission expressed the need for a government subsidy on the increasingly expensive 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps. It gave as its reason the result of a national survey which showed that in 1977 there was made a total of eighty-two million visits to the countryside each summer month, with 54% of the population of England and Wales making the journey at least once every month. In fact, after the national hobby of gardening, such visits rank highest in the list of popular pastimes. Unlike other pastimes, however, this one, while easy enough to experience, is rather more difficult to describe. There seems to be no accepted formula by which an area is designated rural as opposed to urban. In 1972 there was set up, on an ecumenical basis, a Joint Working Party on Rural Ecumenism. At its first meeting on June 15, it began its work by defining rural as anything not urban. This defined nothing; it simply altered the term of reference. Over the years, therefore, something better was needed and eventually there came agreement that rural refers to those areas of the countryside outside the metropolitan districts which are characterised by (i) dispersed settlement (in units usually below 2500); (ii) low population density; (iii) a low rate of growth and (iv) a comparatively low scale of investment. Although still open to considerable refinement this offers too complex a definition for the purpose of this study, which requires an immediately applicable rule of thumb rather than a handful of criteria. One such is a population level of 10,000. The Revd.

Dr. A.J. Russell, of the National Agricultural Centre, Kenilworth, takes this formula. "In talking about the rural community, we are essentially talking of that sector of the English population which does not live in towns of over 10,000." (3) The implication here is that a population of 10,000 constitutes a town. As such, however suitable this formula may be for other purposes, it is not acceptable for the present study. Leslie Paul, the sociologist, in a book published in 1977, of which he and Dr. Russell were two of the co-editors (4), concentrates on comparatives. 18% of the U.K. population, he says, is rural. This is a statement of fact rather than a formula, but he goes on to provide the latter when he suggests that it is only when we find a population density of no more than 0.25 people per square mile that we can conclude that we are in rural surroundings.

The Central Statistical Office, however, would find this formula unsatisfactory. In one of its publications (5) it observes that England and Wales are composed of 21,765 square kilometres of urban area and 129,360 square kilometres of rural area, Wales having 20,763 of the total. Without defining its terminology, it then uses the 1971 Census figures to state that 10,598,000 people live in the rural parts. This represents 19.6% of the population and, as a gross figure, is comparable with Dr. Paul's conclusions. In another work, however, (6) the C.S.O. provides detailed definition of the rural and it does so with the supposed precision of numerical language.

Persons/hectare	(Persons/square mile)	Description
0.00 - 0.02	(0 - 5)	Virtually uninhabited.
0.02 - 0.10	(5 - 25)	Very sparse.
0.10 - 0.20	(25 - 50)	Sparse rural.
0.20 - 1.50	(50 - 375)	Dense rural.
1.50 - 25	(375 - 6250)	Suburban.
25 - 100	(6250 - 25,000)	Urban.
Over 100	(Over 25,000)	Dense urban.

This is so widely different from Dr. Paul's density figure that there can be little held in common between them. The formula itself is open to question, though, for the 1971 Census returns covering the first four of these categories indicate that they accommodate only 5.53 million people. This is barely more than half the Statistical Office's other rural total of 10,598 million. The smaller of these

figures allows only 10.25% of the population into the category 'rural', which at the same time occupies 85.6% of the total land area. An average rural population density on this basis would be about 110 people to each square mile. The larger figure of 10.598 million allows up to 212 people to the square mile.

It is probable that these extremely wide variations in figures from highly qualified sources can be attributed largely, if not entirely, to the lack of a standard formula. In such an apparently arbitrary matter, the present writer prefers to select a standard somewhere between the extremes we have noted, taking as rural those communities which can be numbered in three figures and as urban those which need four or more figures to describe them. Insofar as we are talking of communities, implicit support for this formula comes from the Revd. James Cummins, formerly a member of a team ministry in East Anglia, who writes of the rural Church that "a country priest cannot be expected to keep close contact with more than a thousand parishioners" (7), while the Scott Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (1941) suggested that any compact grouping of over fifteen hundred people was a town. (8) We must, however, notice that the proposed formula by which we intend to define the word 'rural' will still reflect varying sociological patterns, for a settlement of one thousand people is quite a substantial settlement in, for example, Norfolk and Suffolk, but a relatively small one in Hertfordshire or Surrey. At this point it begins to be evident that any numerical definition of the term 'rural' may be acceptable in some instances and quite unacceptable in others. It is now possible to have small rural communities which, because they are mainly composed of commuters, are simply segments of urban life at rest or enjoying their leisure. At the other extreme, some rural communities have been overtaken and surrounded by suburban extension yet still think of, and refer to, themselves in village terminology. It is basically a matter of community atmosphere. Yet this in itself is related to numbers and we do need the latter if we are to have a definition that is workable, whatever its defects. Wherever one's choice falls in this, there does usually seem to be a different feel, a different ethos, within communities with populations greater than, say, fifteen hundred, than within those of smaller numbers. So, without using the proposed formula pedantically, the writer considers it simple, workable and

convenient for the purposes of this study which, being concerned with these small, scattered communities, therefore locates what is rural or applicable to the country (side) in areas with populations of up to about one thousand people. There are some nine thousand settlements of this size; seven thousand have fewer than five hundred residents.

2. Its inhabitants.

Having tried to locate the rural scene, we now need to know something about its life. This obviously depends upon the people who live there. In these days of relatively free movement of people from job to job and from house to house, who its inhabitants are will be influenced by a number of external factors, some of which are mentioned in the following sections. Nevertheless, our prime concern is with people and, at the risk of minimal repetition, we shall consider them now.

First comes the farming community. Here we must again immediately draw attention to the variety of rural, including agricultural, life throughout the nation. Anything written about it must reflect one position of this rather than another. In farming terms, the pastoral north and west, with its many small, owner-occupied, family-run farms exists in a different culture, with different economies and politics to the arable south and east, where farms can be as big as parishes and where are employed the great majority of the country's hired agricultural workers. What is written here should, however, be recognisable by farmers from each of these major divisions.

The folk who comprise the farming section of the population are fewer in number each year. Agricultural financing has assumed astronomical proportions, encouraged by sums of institutional money from insurance companies, pensions funds and unit trusts which are beginning again to be invested in land. Such institutional ownership of land is not new. The monarchy, the Church and the older universities have all been land owners since at least medieval times. Nevertheless, as inflation erodes most forms of wealth, the acquisition of land proceeds apace, with large sums of money awaiting suitable investment. The demand for land now exceeds supply. One estate agent reckoned to have sold more than one million pounds worth of Lincolnshire land in the first three weeks of March, 1979. The

consequent rise in the value of land encourages estate owners to take in hand tenanted farms as they become vacant, though current tax legislation, specifically the 1974 Capital Transfer Tax, and the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1976, seem designed to ensure that it is only a matter of time before the owner-occupier farmer or, indeed, any private ownership of agricultural land ceases to exist. In order to meet the bills, the land will either be sold to the institutions which, because they do not die, do not pay the Capital Transfer Tax, or it will be offered directly to the Inland Revenue in lieu of tax, leading to a process of creeping land nationalisation. (9) Acknowledging the trend, the Northfield Report (July, 1979) puts it into perspective. Insurance companies, pension funds, property unit trusts and property bonds own about 530,000 acres (1.2%) of all British agricultural land. Annual purchases represent 10% of the land on offer. (10) Howard Newby suggests that total institutional ownership amounts to 8% of British farm land. Whichever figure one uses, either contrasts with the percentage owner-occupied, which has grown from 10% prior to 1914 to nearly 75% in 1973 when, incidentally, 58.8% was owned by 0.4% of the population. (11) Everybody, it appears, wants land. One result of this is that such investment effectively prevents the younger generation setting itself up in the farming business and requires current private owners to continue to invest heavily in order to remain economically sound. Charles Elliott, senior lecturer in the School of Development Studies in the University of East Anglia, sums it up. "We have to assume that inflationary pressure is going to be around for a very long time and that it is going to radically affect not only the structure of farming but rural society as a whole. The structure of farming will be affected in three ways. Firstly, it is going to force out the small man even faster than he has been forced out in the last twenty years. Secondly, it is going to accelerate the separation of ownership of the land from the operation of farming. Third, it is going to accelerate the concentration of ownership of farm land in corporate rather than private hands." (12)

If the farmer is under pressure to leave the land, so also is the farm worker. Increasing costs exercise irresistible pressures. In a list which includes renting farm land or paying off a mortgage on it, employing farm workers, buying farm machinery and acquiring

and keeping farm stock, apart from a growing use of contractors who utilise their own machinery, there is only one point where substantial economies can be made. With various rearrangements of farming technique based on advanced technological capability, the farm worker is liable to be found expendable, though the personal effect of this is minimised in that the necessary reductions can be made simply by not replacing workers who leave. As forward planning in farming is measured in years and new equipment is so expensive, such an arrangement is readily reached. Nevertheless, the numbers leaving agriculture are remarkable. The following figures indicate something of the process. (13)

Agricultural workers (male & female)	1967	1977*	Change
Wholetime, regular	345,300	203,600	- 41%
Part-time, seasonal	127,900	161,200	+ 26%
Total	473,200	364,800	- 23%

*This table is slightly complicated in that from 1970 it includes some estimated figures from Scotland.

It is immediately noticeable that whereas the overall number employed has dropped by nearly one in five, those working part-time and seasonally have increased by about the same proportion. The ratio for part-time workers from 1967 to 1977 is 52.9 : 68.6 and for seasonal workers 75 : 92.6. It is the ranks of the permanent, full-time workers, the backbone of agricultural life, which have suffered the severe reduction of two out of five. The figures of the last decade tell their own story for today and tomorrow. (14)

Decline in numbers of whole-time Agricultural workers, 1967-1977

1967	345,300	1971*	261,800	1975	221,600
1968	323,900	1972	252,600	1976	212,400
1969	308,000	1973	246,900	1977	203,600
1970	268,800	1974	233,200		

(*cf. 1871 when the Census Return showed 923,332 farm workers, or 16.8% of the population.)

While modern agriculture needed to shed much of its labour force, one writer at least thinks this process has reached critical

proportions. "The present position is getting dangerous. British Agriculture, rescued by the war and made to flower as it never did before, is being avoided like the plague by the more intelligent rural worker." (15)

Others also leave. Among them are the teenagers whose hunt for work takes them into the towns either via college or university for the professional posts which are unavailable in the countryside or for the commercial or industrial occupations which are likewise virtually nonexistent in the country. Additional emigrants are those youngsters who, in previous generations, would have followed the family tradition of farm working but who now want the better conditions and higher wages that manufacturing industry offers. "Only ten per cent of the boys leaving rural schools in 1967 wanted to do farm work." (16) The newly-weds, too, usually move out of the village which can rarely offer them either employment or housing. Yet some are to be found, especially if the village has retained its school. Older traditional rural families, though no longer with any member directly employed on the land, also tend to remain, ensuring that there is still a genuinely rural component in the community. This is the second group of rural residents, the traditional country stock, though again diminishing in numbers and tending to be elderly. All this adds up to fewer and older people in the traditional agricultural occupations and fewer families with long established membership of rural communities. In fact, contrary to legend, the turn-over of rural populations is high. "In many villages it is estimated today that there is a 50 per cent change in households every decade, and in few villages would the figure be lower than 30 per cent." (17) The following table shows the decline in the rural population in both relative and real terms. (18)

Decline in rural population: 1931-1971

	Millions	1931	1951	1961	1971	Change
(a)	Total population	39.952	43.758	46.105	48.750	+ 22.02%
(b)	Rural residents *(categories 1-4, table p 59)	5.82	5.82	5.63	5.53	- 4.98%
(c)	(b) as percentage of (a)	14.56%	13.30%	12.21%	11.34%	

Not all ex-farm workers emigrated to the towns. As the opportunity

for employment in agriculture diminished some workers continued to live in the country but used in their cars a version of the same mechanical power that had taken over so many agricultural tasks to take them to work - and play - elsewhere. On the other hand, the exodus of ex-farm workers and their neighbours during the years 1961-1971 will be higher than the 100,000 indicated here, for the period of their declining numbers coincided with the beginning of a time of noticeable movement of townspeople taking advantage of their mobility to get them to the countryside for either permanent or occasional residence.

Despite the continuing decline in the number of farm workers since 1971, so many have been the immigrants from that time that some rural areas adjacent to towns are now reporting an increased population for the first time since the industrial revolution. Increasingly rural areas are becoming dormitories for people whose work and social life takes place elsewhere. Some of these, as we have seen, are ex-land workers who display the "characteristic of lower income groups, that once they have settled in a house they tend to change jobs but remain in the house." (19) Others are often successful urban business or professional people looking for somewhere quiet and peaceful to which to retreat from the daily pressures of their working lives and to realise what Ronald Blythe indicates is almost an innate ambition; "The townsman envies the villager his certainties and, in Britain, has always regarded urban life as just a temporary necessity. One day he will find a cottage on the green and 'real values'. " (20) Those who led this immigration in the 1950's and '60's were said to be "professional rather than entrepreneurial, liberal, possessed of a social conscience, faintly intellectual and artistic in their pursuits, sensitive, knowledgeable about natural history but mostly ignorant about agriculture." (21) These are they who represent the "characteristic of middle income groups to pursue a single career line but change houses fairly frequently." (22) This characteristic is double-edged. By it, the initiative and financial resources of the immigrants can increase the community's housing stock by the purchase and conversion of semi-derelict barns and cottages into modern domestic residences. The traditional inhabitant is usually without either the vision or the means to do this. On the other hand, the housing of immigrants can represent

one of the main areas of conflict between them and traditional residents. The latter, not least their newly-married members, are unable to compete with the financial strength of the former, either in attempting to buy or to rent the available property. It is in those villages which are attractive in themselves and also close to places of work in nearby towns where this change of population is most evident.

So it is that today's rural community is liable to have more older members than younger, with fewer earning their living within the community. Many, often most, will be traditional country dwellers but usually there will also be a considerable element whose attachment to the community is novel and sometimes little other than coincidental.

3. Its life.

Writing of the average villager of the mid-nineteenth century, Dr. A.J. Russell observed, "For him the Middle Ages ended with the invention of the bicycle." (23) Change is rather slow in reaching the countryside but it does come eventually. Although it is as true of the urban as of the rural dweller that the magnitude of modern change has blossomed only in the last three or four decades, it is still a surprise to discover that "in the 1850's, the average villager was illiterate, disenfranchised (and) worked twelve hours a day with a life expectancy of thirty-two years." (24) As late as the second decade of our own century, "the records of the recruiting offices in the First World War, where so many countrymen flocked, record that on average he was significantly lighter and shorter than his urban cousin and frequently put on two stone when supplied with army rations." (25) Not that it needed a war to entice him into the army. Rural conditions were often so appalling - extremely hard work, long hours, low pay, bad housing, no social support - that there were always some seeking a way of escape. The army was one such. "Fourteen young men left the village in 1910-11 to join the army. There wasn't a recruiting drive, they just escaped." (26) "Even in the 1940's ... there had been little real change in the rural scene since the nineteenth century. It was only after the war, with the extension of electricity, gas, piped water, telephone, public transport, local authority housing (and in an earlier decade, health insurance, public assistance

and family allowances), that the living standards of villages were raised to roughly the same level as those of urban areas." (27) It is recent change at an unprecedented rate which has brought our contemporary villager up to the shoulder of his urban brother in relation to their respective styles of life. "Nevertheless, by the standards of post-war, full-employment, welfare-state Britain the agricultural workers are among the poorest sections of society." (28) To set against this overall amelioration of his condition, the villager now faces a contemporary phenomenon. "In most villages, at least until the First World War, it was possible to find the basic facilities and services, and the railways played an important role in maintaining this pattern. Today, however, it is impossible to provide the basic services in every village ... Shops, schools, pubs, churches, post offices, local government offices, health and welfare facilities have all closed in considerable numbers in the smaller villages and hamlets." (29)

The village dweller today thus has a life which is richer personally but poorer socially than hitherto. Relative affluence and the high degree of mobility which is one of its consequences, make for the new-found independence which is a recent feature of rural life. Whatever benefits this independence brings, in social terms it is a major disintegrating factor in rural life. Trevor Dorey made succinct reference to this when he wrote, "Then private life was non-existent. Now there is often far too little community life." (30) It is, in fact, no longer as easy to think of the village as a unity. Gone are the days when "its main feature was that one industry - agriculture - dominated the employment of its inhabitants... It consisted almost entirely of agricultural workers, together with those workers employed in servicing the agricultural population ... this composition gave the village ... a strong sense of shared occupational experience, a distinctive occupational culture ... a prevalence of closely knit cliques of friends, workmates, neighbours and relatives and generally a strong sense of group identity which marked off the village from the others that surrounded it." (31) That picture has probably gone for ever. "Indeed, the occupational community is in danger of becoming a historical anachronism... It has been destroyed by the twin assault of the decline of employment opportunities in agriculture and the creeping urbanisation of the

rural village." (32) Many of its traditional members now bring back to the village each day a deepening experience of the wider world in which they work. Through the use of their cars virtually all the villagers can experience some of this in social terms, while the ubiquitous television brings the widest range of events right into their homes.

All of this can be unsettling, but no more so than the arrival of denizens of this outside world, who now come to live in the village. Any newcomers can be unsettling but these seem unsettled in themselves, displaying apparently contradictory characteristics. Amazing results are achieved in their building programmes. Solid walls with no damp courses are forgotten in the plethora of urban amenities and luxuries which adorn their homes. Yet their idealised view of rural life is such that they are urgent in their desire that the rest of the village retain its possibly quaint and doubtless picturesque, but often inconvenient, heritage. Again, the newcomers presumably wish to be in the community but once they are in it many do not seem to want to belong to it. "The new immigrants possess a life-style in which the village is not the focus of their social activities, for not only do they not work locally, but their pattern of leisure activities ... often takes them outside the immediate locality as well." (33) Because of their different backgrounds and associations with wider society, the immigrants have different canons of judgment. Unable to differentiate between good and bad farming, they judge by "occupational prestige ranking, income and conspicuous consumption". (34) In these the villagers are not able to compete so their tendency is to close their ranks and apply length of residence as the new standard of acceptance. Although this guarantees a continuing status for the villagers in their own community, that community is thereby divided. Newby's conclusion need not necessarily follow. He deduced that "the evidence seems to suggest that the impact of urbanisation has been to turn the locals, including the farmers, in upon themselves rather than opening up the social environment of the agricultural worker to new ideas and expectations." (35) In practice, these are not mutually exclusive. Within the new two-tier village community the villagers, individually and corporately, manage to combine their traditional inner reserve with a normal receptivity to the modern embellishments to life to which they have been introduced by members of the wider world. But

suddenly everybody no longer knows everybody else. "Quite quickly, then, a new social division may arise - between, on the one hand, the close knit 'locals', who form the rump of the old occupational community, and, on the other, the newcomers." (36)

To this situation the immigrant reacts in one of two ways. Because he has initiative, is one of society's leaders and can have influence in outside decision-making bodies, he can quickly have a considerable effect, for good or ill, on the community in which he now lives, if he chooses to involve himself in it. In this, too, he represents considerable change in rural tradition. "In 1894, the squire, the parson and sometimes the schoolmaster were the leaders of the village. Their influence depended upon their traditional prestige, their superior education and their relative wealth and, in a hierarchical society, upon their social standing." (37) If "the leadership of rural society is now almost universally in the hands of farmers" (38) the leadership of the professional and, latterly, the entrepreneurial immigrants has not been negligible, possessing, as they do, today's equivalents of yesterday's bases of influence. Representatives from more than one hundred and forty branches of the Women's Institute heard Ronald Blythe report that "new people are going to church, getting on the P.C.C., getting hold of power in the village. Indigenous people feel threatened. Often the threat comes from retired people who come to the village not to die but to be restored. This is against the lethargic pattern of village life". (39) On the other hand, the rural immigrant can carry his plan of retreat to its conclusion and isolate himself from the life of the community which surrounds him. He then becomes one of the "people from the cities and towns who recently have bought cottages or unused farmhouses, improved them and settled in the countryside. Ten years ago the tendency was for these people to try to identify with the rural way of life and to become 'naturalised'. This is rarely the case today. They use their country homes as places to sleep and recuperate and for little else: they come to the country in order to be left alone in peace." (40) This is a very successful way to bring about the division, if not the disintegration, of the community and is best exemplified by those newcomers who see the countryside as a play area and who come into it on an occasional basis only. In that they are able to buy rural property for use as second or holiday homes they manage to

reduce the number of those whose interests are primarily interwoven with the local pattern of life, while they themselves begin to constitute a new, independent body, settled in alien surroundings and detracting rather than adding to the life of the community upon which they have imposed themselves. Some areas are getting swamped by this. Newby refers to a survey done by Lancaster University which showed 10% of houses in the Lake District National Park were second homes. This posed the danger of "'ghost villages' for months on end - for example, in the village of High Nibthwaite only two of the fourteen houses were occupied by people earning a local livelihood. The village contained only two resident children." (41) Although this ability to own two houses, one of which stands empty for long periods, can cause major resentment among the locals who cannot afford to buy one house to live in, it can sometimes be the case that second home owners prevent a village acquiring the epithet 'ghost' for even less satisfactory reasons. For one reason or another, then, "at times it has seemed difficult to see what the newcomers could do to alleviate the resentments they have occasionally caused. If they respectfully withdraw from involvement in village affairs they find themselves branded as 'stand-offish' or 'jumped-up'; if they participate fully in the life of the village they are accused of 'taking over!'" (42) In fact, whether the newcomers mix or not, cause friction or not, is an infinitely variable phenomenon but, whatever happens at any one time in any one locality, it is always true that their mere presence represents change; a change which demands acceptance from each party.

If country life was never as simple in fact as legend or the novelist had it in theory, it is now an even more complex subject, struggling to come to terms with its own evolutionary process as well as with the general unrest and disinclination to follow received customs and standards. Nevertheless, A.J. Russell believes that although its differing elements "have diverse expectations, goals, needs and aspirations, and achieving a balance between these can frequently lead to open conflict in church and parish council meetings as the meeting seeks to resolve the counter-claim of different interest groups. This does not stop villages being communities with very high levels of consensus."(43) This high level of village consensus needs to be interpreted loosely.

Although there is social pressure to conform in small communities where everyone's attitude is known by everyone else, in practice it is demonstrated only on those very rare occasions, such as the proposed building of a major new road, when the lives of all will be directly affected and when the immigrants play a leading part in discussions and decisions, or by default in lesser matters which the immigrants, with a commendable but mistaken desire not to interfere in domestic issues, leave to the usual few locals. These are matters which generally do not bear upon the immigrants anyway and their non-involvement also demonstrates that they often still are in, but not of, the local community.

Country life has, however, been fortunate in that the recent era of village hall building has ensured that even very small communities now have a place where it is possible to sit on adult-sized chairs (as distinct from those in the school), feel able to engage in such revelry as is seemly (as distinct from their activities in the church) and to be able to house, and yet restrict the occasion to, the members of the village family (as distinct from the strangers in the public house). Here is a useful location upon which to focus and through which to renew the slackened cohesion of the community. The village cricket club no longer needs to meet in the public house, though it may continue to do so. The Women's Institute and the Young Farmers' Club - both relatively modern phenomena - have an assured meeting place capable of accommodating the larger numbers which they therefore gather. The Youth Club and the Scouts have a safe place to store their equipment, widen the range of their activities and grow in membership. Always parallel, and sometimes in opposition, to the church and the public house, here is a practical symbol of community which draws upon the loyalties of most. But a cautious note must be sounded.

The rapidly escalating price of oil is a new and potentially fatal threat to much rural life, capable of bringing into the category of dying communities some which would otherwise have had healthy futures and crippling the life of some which manage to remain alive. Superimposed upon considerable insurance payments and heavy capital outlay to meet the increasingly demanding safety standards of the relevant authorities, the current price of heating oil will inevitably be seen by some village hall management committees as the final straw which makes the retention of the village hall

impractical. Already operating on a hand-to-mouth financial basis and with their own high rental charges making for decreasing income from the reduced letting of their halls, some management committees will find that their task has become impossible rather than just impractical. Many villages have no gas supply. Few villages can find folk to do the light cleaning of their hall, never mind discovering someone willing to stoke a solid fuel boiler. Even if they could, there would be no money with which to pay him. While many villagers rarely enter their village hall its loss would be a sad blow to an already partially dislocated section of society. It begins to look as if the current oil crisis, which affects travel as well as heating, is more than an unfortunate hiccup in a reasonably stable situation. If it is to be a new feature of life its importance is such that it must be seen as the herald of yet another revolution in rural life.

It should be said that while no two villages are identical, what is being described is broadly true of many. There is, however, another and smaller group of villages where these conditions do not apply. These are they which are usually sufficiently remote to make commuting for both ex-land workers and potential newcomers unpopular and uneconomic. They, therefore, face a continuing decrease in population. This results in a drop in the availability of local services and facilities which, in turn, makes the village even less attractive and encourages further reduction of residents as opportunity offers. Such villages are generally accepted as being in a moribund condition, the local authorities and the Church continuing to offer such services as are appropriate and possible until the end comes.

4. Its work.

Agricultural productivity per worker has increased fourfold since 1939. "Thus despite a twenty per cent increase in the population over this period the self-sufficiency of British agriculture has risen from thirty per cent to fifty-five per cent." (44) Agriculture is the largest of our national industries, with an output in 1977 of £6408 millions (45) compared with motor vehicle sales of £6280.7 millions, shipbuilding sales of £1368.5 millions and traffic receipts by British

Rail of £1066.9 millions, yet we have already seen that contemporary economics have reduced its work-force by almost half in not much more than a decade, only 2.5% of the nation's work-force being engaged in it. (46) The consequence of this is that "for village boys and girls leaving school there is very little opportunity in agriculture or related industries." (47) Indeed, there is very little opportunity for any kind of paid employment for them within their home community. As with their parents - for many of their mothers go out to work today - they find they need to travel to a town for employment in the absence of the old cottage industries, craft services and often all but one or two of the village shops.

Employers in the village are as few as the opportunities to work. Local farmers need fewer men. In August, 1977, 'The Guardian' newspaper ran a series of articles headed "Who owns the land?" One of its interviewers "spoke to one farm worker who, after nearly forty years of agricultural work, found himself unemployed when the Co-op, for whom he worked, sold its estates. 'When I started in 1929', he said, 'a 250 acre farm would have eight workers: now a 2000 acre farm has only the same number.'"(48) A survey carried out by various groups in Herefordshire and Shropshire in 1976 produced from one group of villages at Longville, Cardington and Hope Bowdler, the employment statistic that the "typical ratio on a mixed farm is one man per 100 acres",(49) Whatever the variables of topography, climate, land use or local custom that lie behind these differing figures, they show clearly the highly mechanised state of modern farming and the consequent lack of opportunity for full-time employment in that industry. Howard Newby makes a complementary point. "The drift from the land", he writes, "is due primarily to the low earnings of agricultural workers compared to those obtainable in other employment. Secondary factors have been longer hours, lack of prospects, the level of amenities in rural areas, rural isolation and living conditions." It is, he asserts, a deliberate choice on the part of the agricultural worker to leave the land although he agrees that there is a strong underlying trend towards a reduction in the total labour force "owing to continuing mechanisation and the adoption of other labour-saving techniques." (50)

There is a further factor. The result of another recent survey, this time an international one involving France, West Germany, Italy

and Britain, revealed that a merit table of job prestige as decided by public opinion put the farm worker at the bottom in each of the four countries. The Revd. Canon Trevor Beeson, from whose radio talk on B.B.C.'s Radio 4 programme 'Thought for the Day' this information comes, comments on this that "the point here is not that very few people want to become farm labourers, but that the farm labourer is apparently the least regarded member of the community - ranking even lower than the general labourer and the road sweeper." Dr. Russell suggests a reason for this. "So urban-dominated are our life-styles and patterns of thought that the countryside is often regarded as outside the mainstream of human progress and not infrequently the rural community is spoken of as an expensive anachronism." Indeed, "the official view of the countryside appears often to be something of a cross between a gigantic national park and a 'reservation for rustics'" (51) In fact, this view of the farm worker is not new. It may even be said to be traditional. Writing of a century ago, Howard Newby observes that "generations of grinding poverty in the English countryside have therefore established agricultural workers as traditionally the poorest section of the labour force." (52) "An agricultural labourer's wages in the 1850's were £5 from Lady-tide to Michaelmas and £4 from Michaelmas to Lady-tide - a total of £9 a year." (53) Though there are highly specialised skills required of the farm worker, his low pay has encouraged the thought that his was unskilled toil and, whatever his particular place in the farming world, he was covered by the general ascription 'labourer'. The end product of this type of reflection was that "society at large placed the agricultural worker at the very bottom of the status ladder." (54) Evidently this association of ideas is still commonplace.

The squire used to be a major employer of village work people. Quite often now he does not exist. Where he is still to be found, his farms employ fewer men, his household employees are rarely being replaced when they retire and the various tradesmen he used for estate repairs and maintenance are no more, their work being done by local (town-based) contractors. Where he has been bought out, it makes no difference to the local employment opportunities whether his successor is a pensions fund board of directors or a wealthy business man, who often turns out to be extremely adept at doing

his own building work.

The village post office/shop is a small family business. If it needs additional help it will only be on a part-time basis for one, or at the most two, local housewives. Relations, not unusually from the nearest town, often serve this purpose.

The Church has never been other than a minor employer. Even here, rising costs mean that a Church with a paid verger or sexton is a rarity. Apart from the organist, who may also give private music lessons in his home, the only salaries paid - the incumbent excepted- will be an annual honorarium to bell-ringers and clockwinders, an occasional fee for a grave digger (and that is paid by the bereaved family rather than by the Church) and a weekly pittance for an hour or two's cleaning of the Church by one of the village ladies. There might, exceptionally, be occasional payments for cutting churchyard grass but these really will be exceptional if paid to villagers.

If a school exists in the village, its teacher(s) will not always live there. It does, however, offer employment of a regular, if part-time, nature to a caretaker/cleaner. Should it have premises available for school meals there will also be need by the local authority for a cook or two and another part-time caretaker/cleaner.

The village inn offers a few part-time jobs as cleaners or bar staff and, if it has a dining room, waiters or waitresses and kitchen staff, but all these are on a casual basis and are not particularly attractive because of the unsocial hours.

One or two talented villagers will work with their fingers to draw, paint, carve or sew little curios with local significance. These sell in the shop but hardly constitute employment though they are, in fact, the residue of the traditional cottage industries.

Altogether, work possibilities in the rural community are very few. Apart from the remaining land workers, the tenants of the inn and the post office/shop, hope of payment of a size suitable to support a family depends largely on employment in a local quarry, sand or gravel extraction pit, or as a labourer or driver for the local authority. The process, of which this is the end, is told succinctly by G.M. Trevelyan. "The Industrial Revolution, by introducing machinery and so favouring concentration in factories

and urban districts, gradually made an end of two kinds of village industry. It destroyed first the spinning and other by-employments of the wives and children of agricultural families; and secondly the full-time employment of villagers in such various trades as clock-making, basket-weaving, carriage and waggon building, tanning, milling and brewing, saddlery, cobbling, tailoring and the great national industry of cloth-weaving ... Starting from the accession of George 111, British industries have been almost entirely removed to the towns. The migration of industry and craftsmanship left the village once more almost purely agricultural, as in the time of Domesday." (55)

Thus the work of the villager is very largely to be found, not in the village at all, but in the town. Nevertheless, it is found. If Newby is correct in his claim that "rural unemployment rates are higher on average than those in towns" (56), regional variations must play a large part, for this writer's experience is that unemployment among village people is rare.

5. Its amenities.

One of the problems revealed by today's mobility of population, including the reverse movement of people from town to country, is the latter's lack of amenities. Before the days of the internal combustion engine and the almost complete mechanisation of farms village populations were usually to be found within the limits of their villages. It was there that they were born, lived, worked, played and eventually died. So much was this so that there are still real residues of inter-village rivalry, springing from the time when neighbouring communities saw no reason whatever for mixing with each other. With inertia feeding upon this tradition, with working hours being long and tiring, with low wages and no transport other than their feet, with no incentive, that is to say, to move out of their home surroundings and much to keep them within them, the benefits of modern scientific discoveries were slow to arrive. The incoming business man, however, was accustomed to the most modern of amenities, both inside his house and outside in his immediate environment. At the same time, the villager began to see the material benefits

enjoyed by his brothers in the town as he himself found it easy to travel there, and indeed, increasingly found his employment and his social life there. But the more he became urban-orientated, the more he contributed to the decline of the amenities where he lived. This has nowhere been more so than in the case of the shop.

(a) Its shop.

Peter Ambrose made a sociological survey of Ringmer, Sussex, over the period 1871-1971. In 1871 it had a population of 1471. Of its shopping state he wrote, "Thus, making allowances for employees and dependents, probably well over 100 people, perhaps 10% of the parish population, depended upon retail and service activity for their livelihood ... The spread of services available was, even by present standards, extremely comprehensive. All the immediate necessities of life, food, drink, clothes, footwear and the means of house and vehicle construction and repair, were offered in the village ... It is difficult to imagine that anyone, save the very wealthy and sophisticated, should have travelled far afield to shop." (57) What this is saying is that when mobility was restricted to the village its shops were indispensable. For coppers more than they would have paid in the town but without spending the hour needed to walk the three or four miles to it - and another to walk back - seasonally in inclement weather and always with other things to do, unless they had something to take to the town to sell or had some other important reason for going there, the villagers depended heavily on their shops for as wide a range of goods as life required. As the years went by the number of shops steadily dropped. In smaller villages today it is quite common for there to be but one. If, latterly, it had part of its counter wired off for post office business, its contribution to country life was enhanced. Not, indeed, that what it sold comprehended the limit of its usefulness. It was the local equivalent of Paul's Mars Hill, where people gathered daily to hear or to tell whatever was new. This was a contribution to local life that was inestimable, not least because where the shop-keeper also made local deliveries (including the mail) the news and responses to it were rapidly gleaned and the community knew itself to be a unity, if not always with one mind.

Things began to change when the villagers were able, at first in trains, then on buses and later in their own cars, to go easily to town and to buy there and transport back sufficient to cover the cost of the double journey. As supermarkets came to the market towns and freezers to the villagers' homes, this process was strengthened. The commercial necessity for the village shop was rapidly waning. If the G.P.O. took from the owner its sub-post office franchise the business could become so uneconomic that the shop-keeper had to close it and convert it into a bookshop, an antique shop or even a house. One sub-post office, in Swalcliffe, Oxfordshire, (pop. 250) has been transferred from a closed shop and is now run from the public house. Unless there is some dramatic change, it is doubtful if any of the village shops which serve the small communities with which this study is concerned will be able to continue for long without some new and lucrative sideline such as the making of country teas. Even these will depend for their existence on a steady and considerable flow of visitors. A vital contributor to village life is being lost by these closures though they, as opposed to some others, are not always the result of decisions made elsewhere but are largely self-inflicted, due to the lack of support given by the people who are apt to be loudest in their protestations at them. 'Britain Today and Tomorrow', edited by Trevor Beeson, contains one popular view of the loss of amenities. It speaks of "the dying villages of Britain, where people are being driven from their homes because planning decisions, remote from the actual situation, have led to the withdrawal of most of the supporting amenities - public transport, schools and post offices - with the inevitable result that shops, pubs (and often churches) follow suit." (58) Since the present writer was unable to obtain from, or through, Trevor Beeson substantiation for this rather emotive and questionable statement it is reproduced here simply as an example of a common belief, to be set against the reality, which is that village life is undergoing a revolution that is as much internal as external.

The extent of these closures is not insignificant. In August, 1978, the Conference of Rural Community Councils published the results of a survey of most villages in seven counties in the south west of England in connection with the decline of rural services. The survey claims that in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire the village shop will soon be a thing of the past. In these counties alone 13%

of villages had lost their shops during the previous five years. 8% had lost their post offices. In Devon 10% of villages lost their mobile shops. But, as the Report says, "percentages are only part of the story - for the villages affected the loss is 100%". (59) The Cheshire Community Council was inspired by this Report to undertake its own parallel survey. Its findings reveal that similar things, and worse, are happening in the northern part of the country. 6% of Cheshire's villages lost their post offices over the five year period and no less than 25.2% lost their shops. (60) The Lancashire Association of Local Councils reports similar findings for its survey, confirming the general trend towards the contraction of services such as shops, post offices, banks and schools during the past decade. Of eighty-two parish councils supplying information, 25% reported the loss of a travelling shop, 17% had lost general stores and 7% had lost a post office.

It may be, as the Cheshire Community Council suggests, that some alleviation of this situation may be gained by adequate advance notice, allowing the arrangement and provision of mobile services, bulk-buy clubs or even running the shop as a village co-operative. It may also be that the dramatic change at which we hinted is already beginning to occur and that the process of closing village shops will be qualified by the enormous increase in the cost of travel and the consequent withdrawal or reduction of bus services. If mobility is once more to be restricted to the villages, at the cost of a heavy cut in the number of visitors, the shop may yet again have its place as an integral part of rural society. The probability, however, is otherwise and a realistic forecast would anticipate a further deprivation of the village community.

(b) Its school.

The economics of mobility in an age of affluence as well as forecasts of a decreasing population also contribute towards the closure of the smaller of village schools. By definition a village school is not large, and recent years have seen a widespread movement on the part of cost-conscious county education officers to close the smallest of their establishments as uneconomic. The following figures (61) provide a substantial base for the Department of Education and Science's forecast of a decrease in

junior school population from a peak of 5.2 million in 1974 to a mere 4 million in 1985 (62).

Pupils in full-time primary education

1967	4,495,259
1969	4,788,571
1971	4,986,855
1973	5,068,833
1975	4,899,452
1977	4,714,868

The situation came to its climax with the super-inflationary period of the mid 1970's which, at one and the same time, boosted the per capita costs in small schools and also made rare the presence of young married couples in the villages. As those with young families declined in number due to the lack of work and cost and availability of housing, so the cost of maintaining the service rose. Salaries of teachers, caretakers and secretaries soared along with the cost of repairing and maintaining buildings that were almost always nineteenth century and often sub-standard when compared with contemporary requirements. The extent of the problem is illustrated from the Lancashire Education Committee's 'School List' for 1978. There are listed six hundred and sixteen primary schools of which fifty have a staff of three, fifty-seven have a staff of two and one manages with but one teacher. These one hundred and eight schools represent 17.5% of the total of that category. The Church's traditional influence in this field, nowhere greater than in Lancashire, is demonstrated by the ninety five schools which are Church foundations, now aided or controlled. Seventy-nine are Church of England, twelve Roman Catholic, two United Reformed Church and two Methodists. Yet is is not, one supposes, the number of such schools that is the heart of the problem so much as the number of children and the relation of that latter number to the teaching staff employed on their behalf. Aggregating the school population figures from the 'School List' one reaches a total junior and infant content of 120,534 of which only 5116, or 4.24%,are to be found in these one hundred and eight small schools. The real percentage will be lower than this for the 'School List' contains 8 larger schools whose populations are not listed. Had the situation been tabulated it would have looked like this :

School size and number

School population	Head + 1 teacher	Head + 2 teachers	Total
Up to 59 pupils	55	23	78
49	49	14	63
39	37	5	42
29	15	2	17

Number of pupils in schools

School population	Head + 1 teacher	Head + 2 teachers	Total
Up to 59 pupils	1969	1076	3045
49	1637	569	2206
39	1109	168	1277
29	361	54	415

Pupil/Teacher ratio

School population	Head + 1 teacher	Head + 2 teachers	Total
Up to 59 pupils	17.7:1	15.5:1	16.9:1
49	16.5:1	13.5:1	15.6:1
39	14.7:1	11.2:1	14.1:1
29	11.6:1	9.0:1	11.2:1

Note 1. There was one school with 15 pupils and a staff of 2. Three other schools, each with 2 teachers, had pupil numbers of 17,18 and 19 respectively.

2. One school had 24 pupils and 1 teacher. Another had 3 teachers for 26 pupils.

3. The average county junior and infant school pupil/teacher ratio, gleaned from aggregating numbers of each in the 'School List', was 22.4:1, exactly twice that pertaining in the 17 smallest schools. The national ratio in 1977 was 23.8:1.

4. A Minute from a meeting in May, 1977, of the County Education Sub-Committee costed some of the smallest schools with this result:

*Priest Hutton: 22 pupils, 2 teachers. Cost per pupil - £653.

Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley, Hurst Green:
29 pupils, 2 teachers. 1 other part-time.

Cost per pupil - £510.

*Blackpool, Sacred Heart :
27 pupils, 2 teachers. Cost per pupil - £490

*Westby Ballam: 22 pupils, 2 teachers
Cost per pupil - £542

Lea: 37 pupils, 2 teachers. Cost per pupil - £446

*Hoghton: 17 pupils, 2 teachers.
Cost per pupil - £793.

*Witton: 20 pupils, 2 teachers. One other part-time.
Cost per pupil - £726.

(County average cost per pupil - £251)

Closures were inevitable and for a time it seemed as if the rural school was about to follow the dodo. Unexpectedly, pressure to retain these schools often triumphed. While it was too facile to say that a village would die when its school was closed and its children taken to another and larger village, for it had survived the 1944 Butler Act which took children over eleven years old away from their previous 'all-in' schools (ages 5-14) and sent them to town schools for their final school education, it was not expected that there would emerge positive arguments which stressed the value of the small classes and the personal tuition of the rural schools together with that of a society offering to the growing child its own understanding of life from the whole breadth of its age range. Although there can be restrictions in the syllabus taught in these schools, they have yet to be recognised as major community resources and used as such, even if, to do this, they have to be grouped together for educational purposes. Cambridgeshire opened one such in September, 1978, in Cheveley. This was a simple new school in terms of administration and staff but operated in the original buildings retained in the four villages concerned. In addition, it was made a community school. With a total of only about one hundred pupils it is still hardly a large school and it is admitted that no great sum of money will be saved by this alternative to closure. In other respects it appears that considerable benefits accrue to the children, to say nothing of the communities. So not only were the closure economics hotly contested - the teachers would still have to be paid and transportation costs substituted for building maintenance - but individual schools put up stout defensive arguments. Not a few of these were

successful. In 1976 the Schools Sub-Committee of the Lancashire County Education Authority published replies received from a number of primary school managerial bodies indicating why their schools should not close. The following quotations come from this document. (63)

Yealand Redmayne and Yealand Conyers are small villages sharing one school half way between them. It has twenty-four pupils and a teaching staff of two. Arguments for its retention include the movement of young couples back into the villages and a consequent increase in social activity. "Without our school it is doubtful if our group of 'Yealand children' would have had any separate identity. Their parents in the two villages would not have been drawn together to organise these events." There followed another unexpected but strong argument. "At Christmas the children have given parties for the older people of the community. Now that the church has no resident Vicar it is particularly important to maintain this contact within the villages or else the sense of belonging to Yealand and being part of its community will disappear." The centripetal effect of the school is then underlined by reference to the centrifugal pull of the social geography. Social, as well as educational, factors blossom. "In its central position, Yealand school is within easy walking distance for most parents. They can, and do, come in during the day to talk to the teachers." As opposed to this, either of the communities into which the children would have to go in the event of the closure of their school are out of walking distance and, with a bus service only once every two hours and few Yealand parents with a car available at home during school hours, parental contact with the teachers would be most unlikely. The managers conclude with typical Lancashire directness:

> "The Managers are not able to accept that there will be a saving in costs if the Yealand school is closed ... as we have not been shown any figures. To be convinced of a saving we should need to study carefully the costs the Education Committee are taking into account.
>
> "We feel that the loss to the community as a whole and the children in particular, in the long term, will easily outweigh any short-term savings or increase in educational facilities."

These are comments taken from the first of the replies made in the document. Other managers took equal care in the gathering and the presentation of their material, much of which is to be found in each

reply. Some show the quality of protection the children enjoy from their local managers. For example, the managers of Aighton, Bailey and Hurst Green, in expounding the academic excellence of their one-roomed school of thirty four pupils and two teachers, go on to observe, "In expressing the view that the results from Hurst Green compare more than favourably with those from many other schools in the area, the managers are not simply looking at the 25% who have gone on to higher education but are even more concerned with the 75% of children who cannot expect, in the normal course of events, to do this. It is these children whom they suggest would be shown in any impartial survey to have developed into responsible citizens, who are conscious that they are members of a community and owe duties to it." This argument meant much to these managers. It recurs later: "It is very easy if the problem is simply looked at as one of numbers and logistics to suggest there might be a small saving here or there by moving children from one place to another. It has, however, always to be kept in the forefront of the minds of those concerned with such proposals that one is dealing with future citizens, each of whom has an individuality and personality of his or her own. Each one should be treated as an individual in his or her own right and not merely as a pawn in a game or a cog in a wheel. These young citizens will form the nation of the future and it is suggested it is much more likely that they will make a contribution of real value to the nation if they are educated in the heart of the community in which they live, with all the advantages which experience shows flows from this arrangement, rather than if they are despatched for mere administrative convenience to some distant area where they have no sense of belonging."

The calibre of these managers reflects the best of a rural community's caring attitude and, without doubt, helped to convince the authorities that a school has a positive effect on the social structure of the local community and, doing this, did much to relieve the pressure to close the small, rural school.

After the publication of the 1978 'School List' Lancashire closed seven more of its smallest schools, with a total population of one hundred and forty seven pupils and fourteen teachers, including the five marked * in the list on pp81 and 82 above. All seven were Church foundations. Five were rural. One more school was closed in 1979 and another in 1980. Eight more small village schools are

currently being investigated with a view to their closure in 1981 or soon after. (64)

Candidates for entry into rural primary schools continue to become fewer and, over the country, small schools continue to be closed. In the south, Wiltshire had 9% of its village schools closed between 1972 and 1977. (65) In the east, Lincolnshire has closed seventeen small schools since 1974. It still has thirty four with less than thirty children in each and it is county policy that these be closed. (66) In the northwest, Lancashire closed seventeen schools having less than sixty pupils on roll between 1974 and 1978. (67) The situation is not made easier for the latter county by a forecast in the North East Lancashire Structure Plan (19.85) that, by 1991, there will have been a reduction of 20% in the number of children of school age, only minimally offset by an increase of 5% in the number of those under school age. While this will affect those that are currently only marginally viable, despite the figures, forecasts and financial frustrations, the Community Council of Lancashire thinks a case has fairly been made for the retention of the village school. It published a paper in May, 1979, entitled "The Case for the Village School in Lancashire", offering a strong argument for the retention of the rural school in its traditional role as an education centre but widening its appreciation of the value of the school by insisting that it is an essential part of the community. "The decision to close a school cannot be taken in isolation from its social context and we would urge that attention be paid to this aspect." (para.4.1.) From the negative side comes reinforcement for this conviction from A.J. Russell: "It is possible to plot in many villages a cycle of decline as the village crosses certain thresholds." (68) The first of these thresholds listed is the closure of the school. But however regretable such closures may be, they are simply pointers to a decline that is already there. At most, they accelerate it; they certainly do not initiate it. As villages become denuded of children schools will close. Though time may bring new rural industries and the return of horse and man power to some farms, these, with their resulting increase in the rural population, will be too late, even if they come at all, to save many more rural schools from closure.

(c) Its church.

If every church has its community, it could well be suggested that in the country each community has its church. Whatever else is lacking in the community, be it garage, school or shop, it is a virtual certainty that there will not be lacking a church. "As a social institution the Church has a complementary and reactive nature to the mainstream of society and historically it has sought to shape itself to the contours of the society which it seeks to serve so that it can witness to the Gospel and Kingdom within the context of the daily life of men. The church in the village is perhaps the most obvious example of this relationship and as settlements were established so a church was built, often in the centre, and as the architectural focus of the village." (69) If the present building is twentieth century, it is more likely than not to be but the latest of a series of buildings which stretch back over several hundred years. Quite often the building, or parts of it, will be centuries old. Not unusually there is a list of its priests which testifies to its longevity. Outside its walls, on them and sometimes also on its floor, are memorials indicating the resting places of members of its community down the ages. Inside and outside neatness and tidiness are its characteristics, but often the inside has to be taken for granted as the doors are locked. Those who are responsible for the insurance of churches and their contents are aware, if only through the large premiums they have to pay, that vandalism, theft and arson are all too common in unattended buildings. The Ecclesiastical Insurance Office, which, as its name suggests, handles much of the insurance of rural churches, not least because most of them are Anglican, issued a circular letter in 1978 and another in 1979 advising the locking of unattended buildings. Although the historic buildings belong to the Church of England, many villages have newer buildings belonging to other denominations. Because they are new they may not occupy a central position, but where the parish church stands isolated, some distance away from its modern population, their newness is an advantage. In other respects, the conditions described above, and below, though using Anglican terminology, apply to all, with the possible exception of Christian stewardship.

With the sparse population of the countryside, it is not unreasonable to expect to find fewer people using the church for private

devotions during the day although, in summer time, it will have more visitors than its urban counterpart. It is not unknown for country churches to have more seating than living population. Yet, when all has been said, it remains true that, apart from weddings, funerals and arranging flowers on Saturday for Sunday, few country folk are likely to be found in church during the week. Indeed, with some notable exceptions, not too many are to be found there on Sundays, either. One Midlands Church Council member, who lives in a group of six parishes, is quoted as saying "Practically nobody in the village goes to church and though people travel from the other five villages for a service, no-one from the village itself attends. Even the members of the village Church Council seldom attend church and when a meeting of the Council is called by the vicar, only one or two turn up. Practically the only frequent church-goers in the village are the children, who also attend services in other villages." (70) The Methodist Church knows the same problem. It knows others, too. Whereas among Anglican worshippers there is not much passing of one rural church in order to attend another (though urban Anglicans often travel regularly to worship in rural churches), Free Churchmen who move out into the country tend to travel back to their old church in the town where they know and are known. This is more than just sad, for although newcomers tend to be traditionalists, that is to say, preservers of their conception of rural life, because of their drive, executive or managerial experience and non-association with any inherited village divisions, they are just the people to revivify dying churches, not least in leading them to an appreciation of a wider, ecumenical, future. In addition to this, Methodism has 'kinship' churches, used by one or two families only and handed down from generation to generation as a kind of private chapel. Conversely, it also has rural churches which draw all their congregations from outside the villages in which they are situated. If we are tempted to take these as isolated or exaggerated instances, it is worth remembering that there are those who can make a good case for a "geography of religion. This is a disconcerting fact, because we are so used to looking upon religious practice exclusively as an individual responsibility. Yet here we find that it is not only individuals that we must classify as practising, indifferent or cut off from the Church, but whole regions as well." (71) Perhaps this helps to explain the results obtained in a seven year experiment on the English/Welsh border, when it was discovered that 44% (110 out of 251) of the Methodist

churches had less than ten members and only 18% had twenty-five or more members. (72) Nevertheless, as will be particularly noticeable on the community's high days, the harvest festival, for instance, or Remembrance Sunday, the percentage of worshippers of any Communion in a rural population is generally far higher than that pertaining among urban dwellers, for, in the country, as distinct from the town, the church is considered to belong to everyone. "For many it has become a religious shrine, a sacred edifice, which no longer remains the property of the institutional Church but which, just by being there, now belongs to the religious life of the local community." (73) Yet the regular, majority attendance this would suggest is not realised but, on the other hand, there is the remarkable success of Christian stewardship in the country, where it has been tried. For many years it was believed that this particular approach to Christian commitment would not find response in rural areas. In the autumn of 1975 three rural parishes in the County of Lancashire, Downham (pop.220), Hornby (pop. 900) and Shireshead (pop.1000) decided to attempt it. Each ran its campaign with its own people and in its own way, though gratefully accepting guidance from the Blackburn diocesan stewardship adviser, who was priest-in-charge of Shireshead. Each parish produced financial results in excess of anything achieved at that date in any urban parish and their success was in inverse proportion to their size.

Stewardship Campaign Results

Parish	No. of promises	Average value p.w.
Downham	31	£1.03
Hornby	47	0.80
Shireshead	60	0.55

These parishes had an overall average promise of 74 pence a week. The urban average at the time was 40 pence.

About these figures there are two points to underline as important for understanding the rural scene and hence for the Church's work in the countryside. First, it is evident that the smaller the community, the more personal the involvement and the fiercer the loyalty expressed both as a percentage of the population, and as a level of financial contribution. Second, although it is most impressive, the level of commitment indicated may be more superficial than it appears for there will be some promises made - and kept - by people whose Christian convictions are not otherwise noteworthy. This

phenomenon is explainable thus: "People speak of belonging to a village, by which they mean that they identify themselves as a unit, they see themselves as constituent members of that unit. The relationship between belonging and participating is not as direct as is sometimes implied. Belonging often carries with it much more the idea of identification rather than any high level of participation." (74) This situation is then described as parallel to that existing between the Church and its rural community. "The similarity between 'the village' and 'the Church' in people's minds is perhaps most clearly shown when they consider 'belonging' to these institutions. In recent years the Church has tended to see itself increasingly as a self-identified community, in which those who 'belong' are those who participate. This is a much more congregational understanding than the Church of England has historically embraced. It is well known that many people in the village do not see it in this light and, though they may attend church very infrequently, will still regard themselves as 'belonging' to the Church. The point that may be made here is the ways people see the Church and village are not dissimilar and that 'belonging' to each is much more a matter of identification than of participation." (75)

No doubt it is partly for this reason that the church building is of such importance. "Buildings act as symbols of continuity and threats to them are threats to the self-identification of the village." (76) So it is that, with help from the Historic Churches Preservation Fund and other charities, the buildings tend to remain while the parish priest disappears, partially if not completely. (The word parish is used here in its ecclesiastical sense in that, for historical reasons, the churches and the clergymen concerned are almost always Anglican. The phenomena described, however, apply to any rural ecclesiastical presence.) Increasingly rural parishes are being grouped and served by a smaller number of clergymen working together. The Hereford Consultation testified of its rural domain that "in the area of the now defunct South Hereford Deanery, at least one hundred square miles in size, a population of 10,700 in 1871 had 26 clergy to look after it. A century later, almost the same population, 10,894, had only 15 clergy. Under the re-organisation scheme there will be six or seven clergy to cater, in the same area, for a population certainly greater, perhaps by as much as one half again

(14,500). " (77) Even allowing for the reduction in the number of clergymen made possible by the advent of the telephone and the motor car, the point is made that the ratio of parishioners to priest has risen from 444:1 to 726:1 in not much more than a hundred years, with a forecast of as much as 2071:1 or even 2416:1 in the foreseeable future. Nor is this process likely to be halted if the Revd. J.H.B. Andrews is correct in his assessment of its main cause. Contributing a chapter on "The Country Parson" in a volume entitled "The Sacred Ministry", he writes, "The Victorians succeeded in restoring the ideal of an incumbent resident in his cure, providing every Sunday the full services of the Church for every rural community. It was done by supplementing the revenues of the benefice from the incumbent's own pocket." (78) Not all parishes, therefore, continue to have a resident minister nor do they necessarily enjoy a balanced diet of worship according to traditional patterns, but at least they still live and the building represents a continuing commitment rather than standing, Ichabod-fashion, as a memorial-cum-museum for an age and a glory that have departed. It is, however, not easy to foresee a reversal of the present withdrawal of clergymen from the countryside. Not only does the scarcity of the men themselves and the money to support them seem to indicate priority for urban ministry but the growth of urban team ministries now offers the means whereby authority can provide light posts for clergymen who are temporarily inhibited by illness or more permanently disabled by advancing years. Until recently rural parishes had often been staffed by such men, as in the case of the eighteenth century revivalist, Henry Venn, who, as Vicar of Huddersfield, had "preached with such vigour that his parishioners affectionately referred to him as 't'owd trumpet'. But he wore himself out and, after twelve years, retired to the country parish of Yelling." (79) If this seemed, by the name of priest and parish, an apt appointment, it is also an illustration of rural parishes being used as repositories for broken men as well as showing that the Church was, even then, urban orientated, rural parishes being thought of as small examples of their urban brothers.

All this calls for a radical reorganisation of the place and the purpose, not only of the rural clergyman, but also of the rural Church. J.R. Anderson, Anglican priest-in-charge of the rural parish of Whitechapel, Lancs., (pop.580), set up a local working

party to consider the effect of the withdrawal of the clergyman from the parish. An excellent report was produced by the lay folk. It ended, "During the time the working party has considered this question we have moved from a position where initially we tended to reject the question completely and to seek alternative suggestions, to accepting the inevitability of the situation, and then passing on to realise that it offered a new and exciting challenge to be faced with enthusiasm and optimism." (80) This Report ought to be widely read and similarly deep studies made ecumenically, that is by representatives of the entire population, could be advantageous to other small rural communities. If the Christian faith survives the pressures which are now exerting themselves - and the Whitechapel Report could be a useful aid in achieving this - it could be that, out of the four public buildings in the village, the hall, the school, the public house and the church, it is the last two which will continue. This is not to deny that where there are two or more church buildings only one will remain. As we shall see in Part 111 of this study, it is expected that the newer, Nonconformist buildings will be used for purposes other than worship and the traditional, Anglican buildings which will be retained for worship.

The building may represent a commitment but it cannot itself activate it. However inevitable it is, the loss of the resident incumbent is seen as yet another blow to the rural community. "But people live in communities, some large, some small, some parochial, some non-parochial. A community may be a village, a school, a hospital, a regiment, a ship. A priest is not thought to be wasted because the members of such communities are numbered in hundreds rather than in thousands. The community is felt to be incomplete without him." (81) Nor is the rural parson simply another formal representation, a mobile figure-head. His life is directly committed to the community. "The clergy are often the only people concerned with the community and to encourage it to be a community. They deal with personal relationships - how people get on with one another in the village." (82) In precise terms "it is beyond dispute that even in a small community there are many personal spiritual problems which only patient personal knowledge will discover. Organisation and a duplicated news-sheet are no substitute." (83) A discussion group in the Canterbury diocese was aware of the danger. "We know that already many parishioners resent the fact that their incumbent does not live among them or seem

to belong to their community. What appears to be a kind of 'tip and run' ministry cannot meet the needs of any church or village. We feel that it inhibits seriously any deep pastoral relationships (I didn't want to bother you, Vicar, as you are always so busy rushing about)." (84) This is, in fact, how the Nonconformist ministry is now operating. The Methodist circuit system has always operated in this manner. The U.R.C. minister now has a plurality of rural charges and, where it applies, this is often so of Congregational Churches. Indeed, unless the minister is retired, it is unusual to find a Nonconformist clergyman living in the country.

If a largely non-participating community and an often absent clergyman reflect the problem for the rural Church today, its mission remains and the same Canterbury study group was beginning to feel after a way to attempt to discharge it. It reported, "On the other hand, the incumbent's existence in the background can be felt just sufficiently to inhibit any responsible initiative by the laity themselves." (85) This growing awareness on the part of some of its lay folk that they have an active, leadership role to fulfil, is also a factor to be included in any sketch of the Church's position in the countryside at the moment. It is likely to be the most hopeful feature in such a sketch. Certainly it serves our purpose in offering a link between what is and what could be. Let the last word come from the Herefordshire village of Ewyas Harold, where they have given it much thought. "We feel that the Church has enjoyed a privileged position in society owing to its historical, political and financial associations, and has, in recent years, lost and will continue to lose, this status. This is partly due to the change in society with a higher standard of living, greater mobility and the impact of the mass media. We feel that the Church has not responded to the challenge of our changing society and for this reason is losing its appeal, not only in rural society. We feel that this inheritance from the past is probably a disadvantage for the Church at the present day, with the emphasis being placed on material matters such as buildings and administration as opposed to the purely Christian viewpoints. There is a need for more lay people to be involved with the Church in rural society, and for them to feel that they have an important part to play in the administration of the Church which, at the present time, tends to be somewhat remote." (86) This last sentence is an anticlimax

for it completely ignores the unique role that the layman has in the non-ecclesiastical world. It is there that the battle must be joined and won.

(d) Its transport.

Several allusions have been made to the influence of the wheel on rural life. It is an influence important enough to warrant a more direct look.

Two of the obvious differences between life in the country and life in the town are that, whereas in the town distances are relatively small and the quantity of public transport on offer is high, in the country the reverse is the case on both counts. If children and old people are the most obvious sufferers, anyone without private transport is considerably inconvenienced.

Few villages ever had their own railway station. Even so, many miles of rural track lost their passenger traffic, if they were not abandoned entirely, in accordance with the policy of Lord Beeching. Current indications are that, in a bid to cut the present subsidy of £440 millions, a further seven hundred miles of rural track, though not all of it in England, will presently be taken out of service. Rural England is being isolated. This applies most obviously to public transport on the roads. Heavy subsidies have been paid for years to support rural bus routes. Even with tax protection, fuel costs have risen steeply, as have crew wages. On routes where vehicles travel considerable distances at well below economic carrying capacity their continuation has been seen as a social service rather than a financial proposition. The Lancashire County Council's transport review has a Statement of Policies which includes, "To meet basic socially necessary demands for mobility in rural areas by subsidy of selected rural stage carriage services and a rural ferry which are incapable of producing a minimum income but are a social necessity for the area served. " (87) This is reiterated later in the same publication (para. 10.2.1.): "The County Council will continue their support of rural services ... insofar as costs cannot be met by reasonable fare increases and service reductions." In fact, reductions in the frequency of services only exacerbate the situation, for non-use of capital equipment increases mileage costs. Consequently routes have been eliminated altogether. The extent of the problem is

hinted at by Richard Knowles, lecturer in Salford University, in an article in the Geographical Magazine of July, 1978. He states: "Between 1953 and 1976 bus transport's share of total passenger-kilometres travelled fell from 43% to 12% ... In most rural areas the decline has been greater than the national average." (p668) Despite a government pledge, made in a White Paper representing the 1977 Transport Policy, to increase rural bus subsidies in England and Wales by about £15 millions by 1980 (p620), "in practice rural public transport subsidies have been very low, averaging only 1.9% of approved county transport expenditure from 1977 to 1978 in the English Shire counties ... compared with 27.2% in the English Metropolitan counties." Expressed on a per capita basis this means that "approved expenditure averaged £1.11 per head for the English Shire counties ... and £5.92 for the Metropolitan counties." (p668)

Various attempts have been made to find reasonable alternatives. One of these is the formation of bus clubs. One such began in 1974 in Horncastle. It soon discovered the financial stresses involved in running rural transport. Not even a subsidy of £600 for 1979/80 from Lincolnshire County Council could avert the necessity for reduced services, increased subscriptions from members and increased mileage charges for occasional travellers. It is still operating, happily, offering a valuable service to the communities through which it runs. There are several such clubs.

In contrast to such private ventures, it was as early as 1972 that "the Post Office, using new bus grants and fuel duty rebate, began operating post and passenger mini-bus services ... and more than 100 such services are now operating." (88) More traditionally, the Ribble Bus Company of Lancashire, began a mini-bus service in the Ribble Valley in September, 1978. Its purpose was to enable residents in the rural areas of the Ribble Valley to visit main centres for shopping and social purposes. The services were backed by the County Council and operated initially for an experimental period of six months. Although later extended for further periods of six months, it seems certain that continuance will depend on county subsidy. All in all it is true to say that "despite experiments with postal bus services and privately operated mini-buses, the future for public transport in rural areas remains bleak." (89) The villager is now virtually back to the time when if he wanted to travel he had

to provide his own wheels or walk. But not all have private transport. The children comprise one group about whom this is obviously true. Even if the family owns a car, and 70% probably do, it may not always be available for them. Where it is, the expense of double journeys is causing mounting problems for the parents who, because they have dependent families, are often among the least able to afford the journeys. Extra-mural activities at school are, therefore, problems for the village child. Evening activities outside the village are similarly difficult. Even those a mere mile away within the community amount to four miles of travel expenditure. Whatever benefits accrue to a child of the countryside, here is an area of definite deprivation. The effects upon a child's social growth and sense of responsibility may be profound. The influence on general family life is not good either, when parents are needed to use their free time acting as chauffeurs.

The other group to whom expense of travel may be prohibitive is the retired. Invested capital, if any, and pensions serve their purpose less and less. Costs do not discriminate and some of those who have bought and retired to snug homes in the beauty and silence of the remoter countryside are now finding themselves isolated by inflation. Not many, if they are newcomers, will be near relations. As bus routes recede, more will become entirely dependent on the kindliness of neighbours. The neighbours, of course, may be in a similar plight. Even if a bus is available, its frequency may make its use a one-way advantage only. In any case, the transport companies' policy of levying maximum charges for the shortest distances makes for little relief. "Those who retire to the countryside are particularly affected by the contraction of local facilities and services, especially when through financial or physical reasons they are no longer able to drive. A significant number become heavily dependent in old age on weekend visits from their children in the towns or are forced to make a further move late in life." (90) There are also, of course, elderly traditional rural dwellers who are finding themselves similarly cut off in what are becoming unserviced and virtually inaccessible areas. They share the same problems as their newly-arrived retired neighbours but with probably less material substance with which to counter them.

It is no surprise to discover that car ownership is higher, per

family, in the country than elsewhere. Almost all the cars can be classed as essential. If not all have garages, not many have difficulty in finding somewhere to leave their cars at night. Nor are there parking problems or traffic jams, though in some places summer visitors can produce these temporarily. Consequently, when the family car is used to transport the bread-winner to and from his work and, in the remoter areas isolation is found to be more than a theory for his wife and the children, a smaller, second car often makes its appearance. This is the car which costs now put at risk and with its sale there is added to the growing total another effectively isolated family. For such a lonely wife a telephone does not always suffice. There are indications that alcohol can become an unhealthy daytime companion.

Compounded with all this is the novel phenomenon of the closing of village garages. Without the benefit of price support offered to some town garages or the immense turn-over achieved by the supermarket or other large garage, the village garage has had to charge up to 16 pence a gallon more than others elsewhere. Now the oil companies are finding it more convenient to deliver their scarcer and much more expensive supplies only to the more accessible of garages and the threat of closure has moved from the economic to the physical. The village garage is liable to have no petrol to sell at any price. At that, the village loses its mechanic-and his workshop - as well. If only due to the cost of oil, our rural population is about to face yet another major upheaval in a life which is still struggling to come to terms with the phenomena of recent years. But herein may lie an unexpected source of new hope. Dr. Russell notes (91) that the "mobility which enhanced village life in the nineteenth century came to destroy it in this century." Perhaps the future will see a reduction of the destructive element as mobility becomes more difficult to achieve, yet with enough remaining to preserve some of the benefits which it alone can offer.

6. Its future.

"I must conclude by putting forward for discussion the greatest heresy of all. That is whether the concept of 'the English village'

is an outmoded one." (92) So wrote Mr. John Wallis, Chief Planning Officer for the Malvern Hills District Council and member of the Department of the Environment's Working Party on Rural Settlement Policy, in his contribution to the Hereford Consultation. No more afraid of the answer, as he saw it, than of the question, he proceeded: "I do not see the village, nor indeed a rural society, in its present form existing in 2000 A.D. There will certainly be a pattern of rural settlement and agriculture will probably continue to be the principal land use over most of the rural areas. However, agriculture will have to share the land with facilities for recreation and leisure and it seems to me much more likely that rural settlements at the end of the century will be much more geared to meeting these recreational demands than to other uses." This may well form part of the future pattern, yet it begs the real question in that, concentrating on visitors, it says little of the conditions of the future rural inhabitants. To this others have addressed themselves.

Some villages, it seems, will disappear. In County Durham this has already happened. Bereft of their own sources of employment and expensively distant from other such sources, increasingly cut off from social facilities of every kind, they will have neither reason nor attractiveness to cause their existence to continue. For those that do remain the alternatives canvassed are various. Bill Goodhand, Senior lecturer in geography in Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln, suggests four of these. (93)

1. The Working Village, which would be "substantially self-supporting in terms of local employment" but at the cost of "disruptive consequences."
2. The Retirement Village, which would maintain "a quiet and attractive physical environment" at the cost of a "falling population ... and a gradual loss of services and social life."
3. The Dormitory Village, composed of "large-scale housing schemes in estate form" which would attract improved services at the cost of a "greatly changed" physical character and the risk of "social divisions emerging between the 'new' and 'old' villagers."
4. The Mixed Village, which would endeavour to hold a balance between age and youth, new and old, industry and rural. Mr. Goodhand, without going into detail, admits that the achievement of this "might be difficult."

Lancashire's planners have produced more possibilities. (94) These they call the Conservation Theme, where "a cautious attitude towards change and new development" was to be observed, with any such being "capable of being absorbed and assimilated" by existing settlements, while the Compact Town Theme would have the same basic aim but would exercise "less overall restraint on new developments." What is described as some of the most attractive countryside in the north west of England would be protected from "over-intensive use and exploitation." The Rural Dispersal Theme aims to "reduce the pressure on the major urban areas, thus enabling considerable improvements to be made to the existing urban environment" by "catering for the growing demand for low-density housing in pleasant, rural surroundings." The Peripheral Expansion Theme is delicately described as not being "quite as sensitive ... to constraints imposed by principles of rural conservation." It was obviously for the 90% urban population rather than the inhabitants of the rural 90% of the area that these proposals were made, for there is little here for the villages. The most they can hope for is to become towns.

Perhaps the situation really is intractable, lying between such a concern for the preservation of the traditional that its death is assured and such an influx of new features that the endeavour to revivify, which these represent, becomes death by suffocation as the village is changed into a town. For some, perhaps for many, these may be the only alternatives as there grows the realisation that the social and economic necessity for them has gone with the passing of the years. Yet this will not be so for all. A future for some is certain. It may be that the best alternative to dying by extinction and dying by absorption is that development which is known as the key village or key settlement. This involves the assessment of communities into categories with some selected villages of suitable size and location being deliberately expanded so that they can support a fairly comprehensive range of services which are then available to the smaller communities in the neighbourhood. This involves the death of one village as an expediency by which others may receive new life. And die it will, as a village, if the figures produced in 1967 by R.J. Green and J.B. Ayton are still valid. These figures indicate the size of population necessary to support a variety of services :

General stores	.. 300
Butcher	.. 2000
Baker	.. 3000
Chemist	.. 4000
Primary school (with a class for each year's intake)	.. 5000
Three-doctor practice	.. 6000
Secondary or comprehensive school	..10000 (95)

Such growth is sufficient to take beyond the scope of this study the key settlements, though not necessarily their satellites.

Martin Thornton, Chancellor of Truro Cathedral, approaching from a spiritual direction, comes to a conclusion similar to that of the key settlement idea. "For centuries the human or sociological centre of rural life has been the village. I think that in important senses this is still true, but the village is no longer an autonomous centre; the social and administrative unit has expanded to a larger area centred on the market town. For whatever reason, economic, administrative, or for mere temporal expediency, the grouping of village parishes round some larger centre is but following fundamental trends. Yet if spirituality is considered at all, the village still has its place and it becomes something like a Cistercian grange loosely linked to the central abbey." (96) Anthony Russell is certain that "key villages and settlement rationalisation are both necessary and desirable if some form of locally based rural community is to continue" (97) yet he is well aware that this is not the perfect answer. He foresees undesirable implications following its implementation, one of which he identifies as "social zoning whereby people of one class tend to live in the same area. In most parts of the countryside, with the exception of the more remote areas, there is a tendency for the cheaper private housing and much of the local authority housing to be located in the key villages which expand at a considerable rate. Whilst there is a tendency for the smaller villages and hamlets to become increasingly desirable for middle class commuters and the retired, who purchase the cottages, often in pairs, for renovation and conversion." He goes on, in the same passage, to predict that "the countryside, outside the key villages, will be peopled increasingly by those who through the medium of the cash and carry, the deep freeze and second car, the private school and, to a lesser extent private medicine, are not dependent

on the public provision of services. They, together with the farming community, would seem to be the future inhabitants of the countryside, whilst those who are dependent on the public provision of services will live in or near the key villages."

If this is contingent criticism there is other, more direct, criticism. Even supposing that the planners have made the correct selection about which villages are to be enlarged, there is the imponderable factor of individual and corporate determination. There is evidence from Lincolnshire which suggests that the planners are not infallible either in their choice of villages or in gauging local reaction. (98) Some villages originally selected for development had declined in size to such an extent that they could no longer be considered for that fate, while others, due to decline as facilities were withdrawn, had demonstrated unscheduled resilience. Emotion, too, plays its part. After persuasively setting out the case for key settlements, Howard Newby introduces the emotional reactions these are liable to provoke. "For reasons principally of economy, most county councils have preferred to concentrate development on a few villages which can then conveniently be provided with the full range of public amenities - schools, shops, libraries, sewage facilities and so on. This saves on the enormous cost of duplicating amenities in every village and helps to direct and contain population growth to a few well chosen sites. In areas of declining population the designation of key villages has been an emotionally charged issue with allegations of villages being left to die by cold-hearted and remote planners ... In areas of population pressure a further rationale has been to 'write off' certain selected villages from a preservationist point of view and sacrifice them to expansion so that surrounding villages may remain 'unspoilt'. This policy of concentration has resulted in housing being provided in the form of large estates, built to uniform design by large building firms, tacked on somewhat incongruously to the old village core. Derived from policies which seek to preserve the landscape qualities of the English countryside, such estates have more often contributed to its deterioration." (99) The language of the penultimate sentence of this quotation indicates that this is an emotional issue for the author, also.

Other criticism is that which notes the economic basis of the key

settlement theory and which points out that there are other relevant bases. One such is the social. "The key settlement concept has been developed in relation to the economic areas of the countryside and if a map of the social areas were to be drawn a different pattern might emerge. Commitment to social activities in the countryside is much more localised than the comparatively large areas of the key settlement's hinterland. A number of adjacent small villages may possess a degree of social cohesion quite independent of the key settlement (and even in contradistinction to it). This area grouping of small villages and hamlets, based on social interaction rather than economic areas, in which the schools, pubs and village organisations play an important part is much the most significant feature of the social geography of the countryside." (100) It is possible to state this tension in even more forceful terms. "This 'area grouping' of the smaller villages in contradistinction to the key settlements in a rural area is an important feature of contemporary rural life. The villages have a strong 'love-hate' relationship with the key settlement. It is where they go for local shopping, health and welfare facilities, banks and professional men, but it is also a symbol of urbanism encroaching into the countryside." (101) Other small villages, with a proportionately large immigrant population, demonstrate a different social tension, to which reference has already been made. Trevor Dorey put it bluntly. "Restriction on building in the smaller settlements inflates house values and encourages the beginning of urban-style social zoning, the protected villages attracting the wealthy, the commuters and the retired, and the key villages, where employment, cheap housing and other facilities are available, attracting the lower income groups." (102) Given that key settlement policies are cheaper on the rates, they are liable to be pursued by the majority of county authorities. This is quite acceptable to the immigrants with transport and wealth but by no means as acceptable to the lower income, traditional inhabitants. These latter will have to choose between continuing to live in a small village or having direct access to services. They will not be able to enjoy both.

It is hard not to have sympathy with the dilemma which faces contemporary rural planners, particularly when, in an industrial

and urban society, so many of the presuppositions stem from urban rather than rural understandings. Perhaps the Church, as an institution embedded in the rural community and the countryside, may be able to provide certain insights into the nature of community and society which have tended to be obscured in recent years.

B. IN PARTICULAR

> "The village has become a symbol of that lost community, that lost sense of belonging which disappeared when society became more sophisticated and affluent. This is the paradise from which the Englishman was thrust out. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that one of the most industrialised and densely populated of countries should possess a deep sense of arcadianism and pastoral nostalgia." (103)

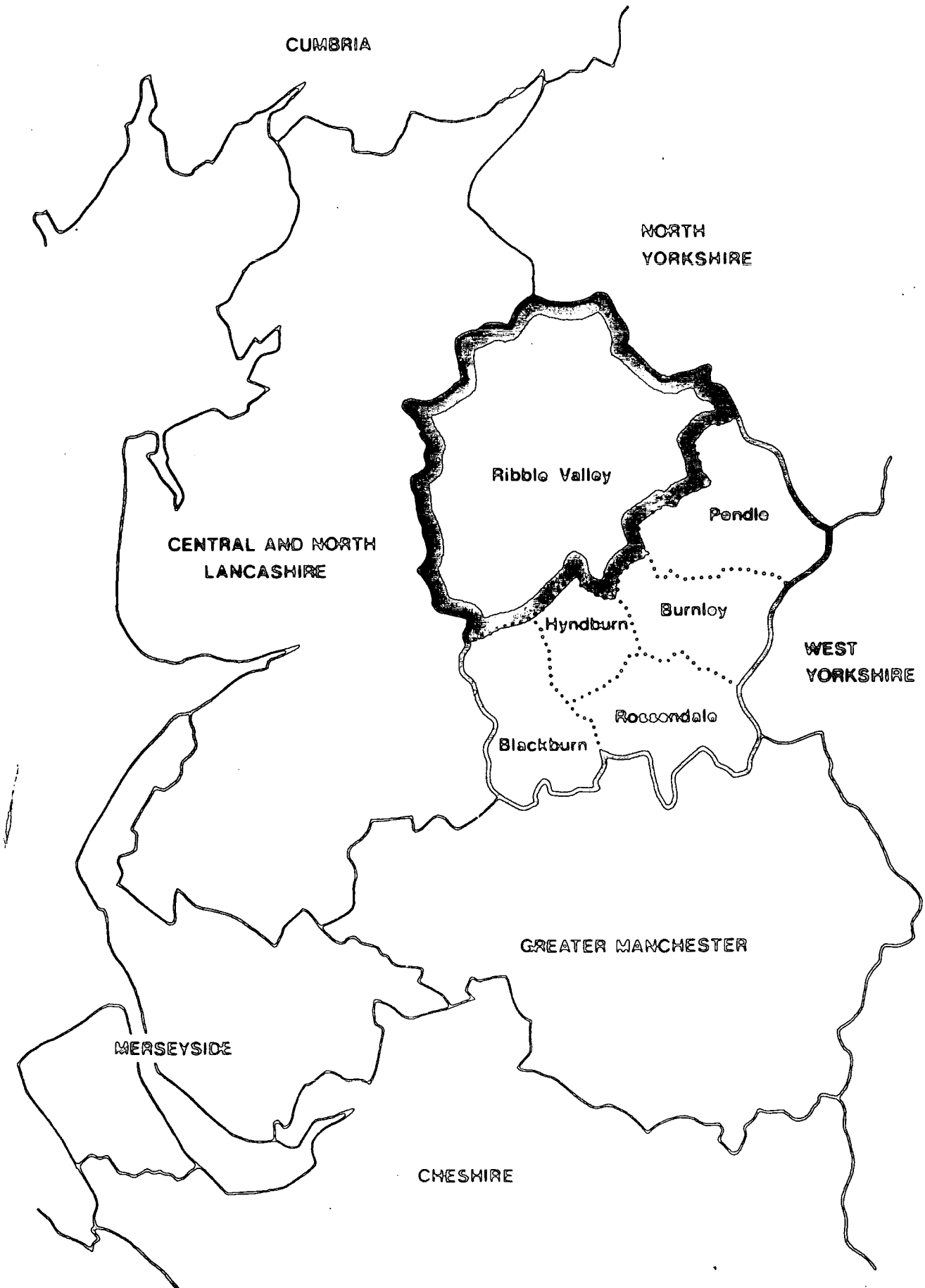
1. Its location.

Let us now see how these generalisations apply in one specific instance. Downham and Twiston are two small rural parishes which together form the ecclesiastical parish of Downham. They are situated in the north eastern part of the Ribble Valley District of the County of Lancashire and, until the local government boundaries were altered in 1974, abutted the West Riding of Yorkshire. At that date the county boundary was moved further east. The ecclesiastical boundaries were not changed and so, in Anglican terms, the unit remains on the eastern periphery of the diocese of Blackburn. Downham has a population of 159, most of whom live in the compact village. This is the more western of the two settlements and is one mile east of Chatburn (pop.1036) which, before the Clitheroe by-pass was opened in 1971, was on the A59 trunk road from Liverpool to York. Twiston has 54 inhabitants and consists of a string of dwellings in a T shape and extending over $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from end to end. One end of Twiston is $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the centre of Downham and the other end is $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles. The combined area is roughly rectangular in shape and covers a little more than five square miles, giving a population density of about 40 people to the square mile. This identifies the parish as central for rural areas in the Central Statistical Office's population density table (see p59 above), classifying it as "sparse rural" as distinct from "very sparse" and "dense rural". Streams form two of its boundaries

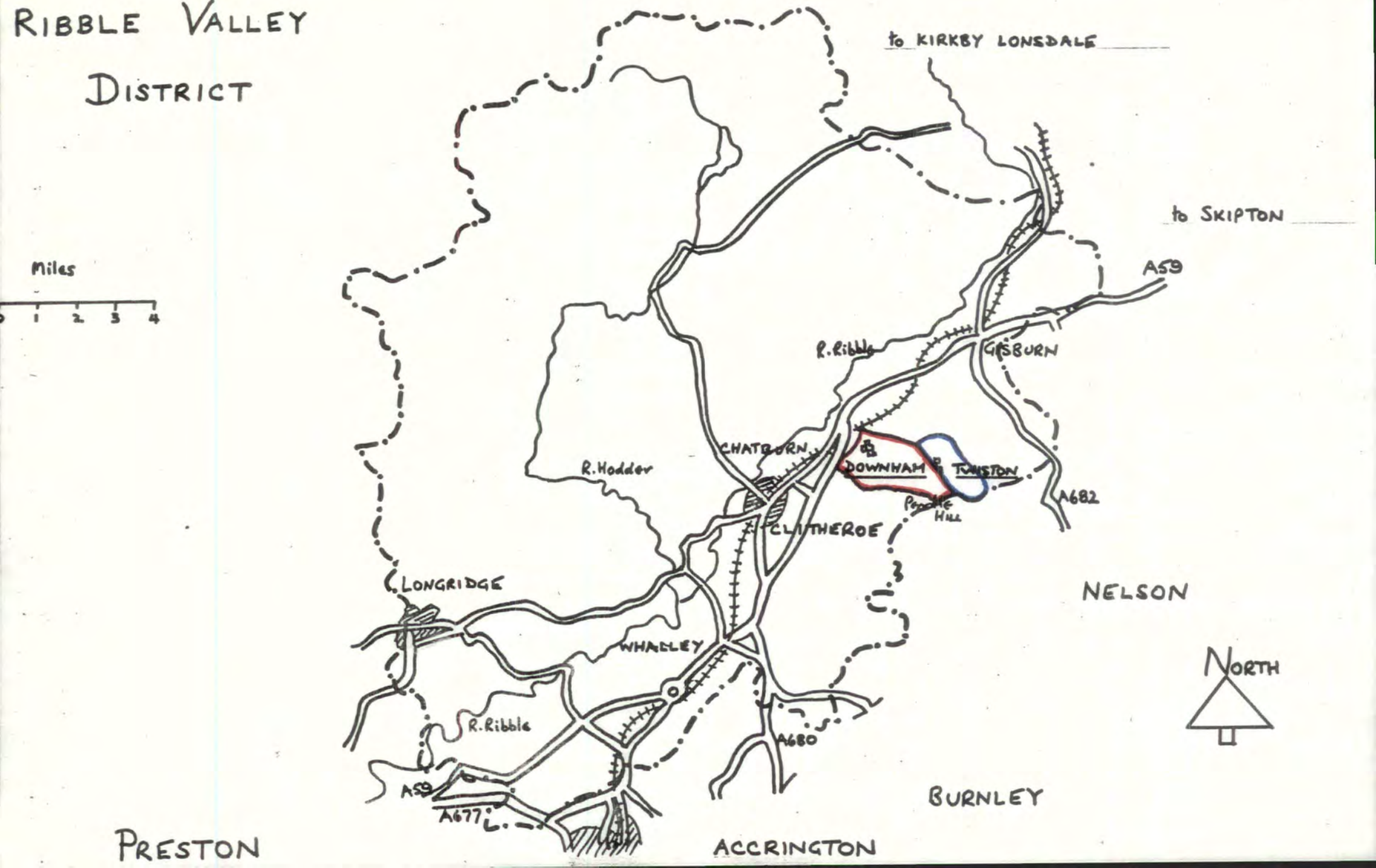
Figure 1 Regional Setting

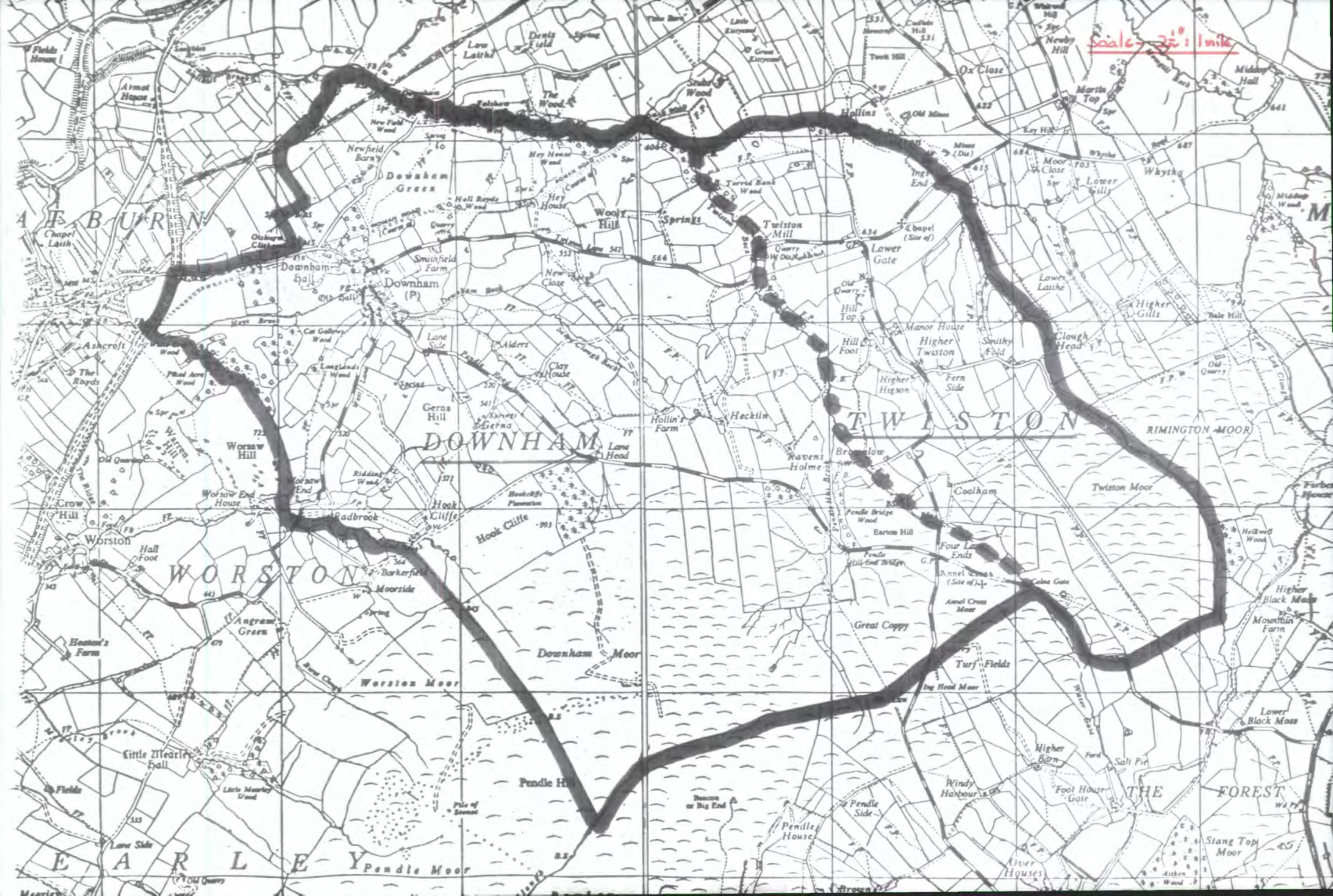
Boundary of Structure Plan Area

District Boundaries



RIBBLE VALLEY DISTRICT




Scale - 2½" : 1 mile
DOWNHAM
TWISTON
WORSTON
RIMINGTON MOOR
Twiston Moor
Downham Moor
Worston Moor
Pendle Hill
Pendle Moor
THE FOREST
Downham (P)
Downham Hall
Downham Green
Smithfield Farm
Newfield Barn
Twiston Mill
Lower Gate
Manor House
Higher Twiston
Smithy Fold
Clough Head
Hollins
Ox Close
Martin Top
Lower Laithe
Higher Gills
Worston
Worsaw Hill
Worsaw End House
Hook Cliffe
Radbrook
Barkerfield
Moorside
Angram Green
Heaton's Farm
Little Mearley Hall
Ashcroft
The Royds
Crow Hill
Hall Foot
Gerna Hill
Lane Head
Lane Side
Clay House
Alders
Hollin's Farm
Hecklin
Ravens Holme
Coolham
Great Coppy
Turf Fields
Annel Cross Moor
Four Lane Ends
Higher Barn
Windy Harbour
Pendle House
Pendle Side
Over Houses
Stang Top Moor
Lower Black Moss
Higher Black Moss
Mountain Farm
Whytha
Low Laithe
Denis Field
The Wood
Armot House
Chapel Laith
Warren Hill
Wooly Hill
Springs
Hey House
Fern Side
Higher Higson
Hill Top
Hill Foot
Salt Pie
Foot House Gate

while a third runs down the spine of Pendle Hill which, at 1831 feet, serves to protect its southern aspect. Three miles west from Downham, through Chatburn, lies its nearest market town, Clitheroe. Clitheroe, an ancient market town complete with ruined castle, has a present population 13,857 and is the administrative centre for the District. It is the site of the local Roman Catholic and United Reformed churches. In traditional fashion it is surrounded, within a radius of two or three miles, by a ring of satellite villages, Pendleton (pop.207), Downham (pop.159), Chatburn (pop.1036), Grindleton (pop.716), West Bradford (pop.603) and Waddington (pop.885). Apart from Pendleton and Downham, the smallest two, each has a Methodist and an Anglican church. All have (Church) schools for the time being. The further end of Twiston is only marginally nearer Clitheroe than Burnley, which is 7 miles distant. Entirely rural, Downham village is the subject of a proposed Conservation Order while its surrounding countryside has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also a closed village, being owned by the Assheton family. Its buildings are all made of local sandstone and limestone, with slate roofs. Of its existing houses, thirty eight were built between 1740 and 1840, including the Methodist chapel, public house, school, shop and vicarage. Some of these, among them the chapel, have since been converted and become the village hall, garages and an electricity sub-station, while the old smithy and blacksmith's shop, reading rooms and a band house are now homes and a garage. There are ten buildings dating from the seventeenth century. All are now houses, one formerly being the police station. Some houses have been joined together to give accommodation for larger families more in keeping with modern standards; others, notably two from the early seventeenth century, have been divided. Downham Hall is known to have existed in 1369 for it was renovated then. A lack of pavements, sign posts and road markings, together with subterranean electricity cables and telephone lines, adds to its distinctly rural aspect.

2. Its inhabitants.

In an area as predominantly rural as the Ribble Valley, it is natural to think first of farming and farmers. Situated on the western foothills of the Pennines, its climate is too wet for arable farming. Dairy farming is the essential business of the valley's

farmers, who concentrate on the high milk yielding Friesian cattle and run sheep (usually crossbred for hardiness) as a useful addition to their incomes. Government incentives have persuaded some farmers to try their hands at beef production but this is still very much a minority occupation. With two exceptions this is precisely the pattern in Downham and Twiston, where there are twelve such farms. In addition to these, there is one which also has battery hens and pigs, while another has completely converted to beef. The relevance of farming to the communities we are considering is best seen when the data are tabulated.

	No. of farms	As percentage of residences
Downham	12	19
Twiston	2	9
Total	14	16

These farms mean work. The following table shows how many households are involved in farming, how many men from the households and how many other, dependent, members there are in their families. Both households and total people involved are shown as percentages of the whole figure for both categories. Households rather than families are counted because there is some inter-relationship which could obscure the picture. Farmers' wives are included among the dependents even though the majority of them do a substantial amount of work on their farms, not least in the matter of book-keeping.

Number of people directly involved in farming

	H'holds	%age of total	Workers	Members: Dependent:	Total	%age of total
Downham	17	27	21	39	60	37
Twiston*	3	14	5	8	13	24*
Total	20	23	26	47	73	34

*There are two others in Twiston who own farm land but which is farmed from elsewhere. Were the land concerned farmed from within Twiston this would bring the latter's figures into more direct parity with those of Downham.

In an area that has no other industry than farming, it is a token of the highly developed state of agriculture that only about one third

of the population is directly dependent on it. This, in turn, implies heavy financial commitment to it. It is therefore, with no surprise that one notices that there are no young men starting out in farming on their own. The only young men with farms have taken them over from their fathers. There are, in fact, only two owner-occupiers of farmland in the parish. One of them, Lord Clitheroe, patron of the local Assheton squirearchy, owns all the land in Downham. There is, therefore, already a situation which admits of but one so-called small farmer and he is in Twiston. Nor does the virtually sole ownership make the area safe from the institutional investor whose connection with farming is, at best, second hand. Land prices and taxation may well shortly open the door that feudalism has held closed for so long.

There are, however, young people in the parish. Seventeen households (20%) have children under school age or at primary school, or, themselves married and presumably likely to have children, though having none at the moment. Of these households half (8) are directly involved in farming. Another definition of 'young' finds for us a further twenty two residents. These are unmarried, though of marriageable age, living at home and working. This is 10% of the population. Of these, thirteen work outside the parish. With such a limited stock of housing there is little possibility of any newly-weds moving straight in, but the Assheton policy is to favour such when property becomes vacant and, among these, the most favoured are those with family connections already within the parish. This has some advantages, among them that of maintaining within the community a number of those whom we have called traditional country stock. It does, however, eventually bring a problem as age advances, children grow up, marry and move away and the community is left with an ageing section, productive, at that stage, neither of work nor of a future generation. While any community lacking the balanced judgement that the experience of maturity alone affords is without a necessary ingredient in its life, nevertheless, a very small country community which depends for its life upon the active participation of its members is not the ideal place for a larger than average percentage of elderly people. There are thirty one pensioners in Downham and Twiston, twelve of whom occupy houses on their own. In each case these figures represent 14% of the total.

As we move from Downham towards Twiston, so we move away from rented property to that which comes on the market from time to time. When it does, we meet the customary phenomenon of the incoming, successful business or professional man who is looking for a haven to which to retire at the end of each day and recuperate from the stresses of the commercial or industrial world. Of the twenty one houses in Twiston, three have been radically modernised - in one case this has meant the conversion of a terrace of two cottages and a barn into one house - one restored from a considerable state of disrepair and two more are converted barns. One is in use as a week-end/holiday home. In the first three of these live active business men, a recently widowed lady who had been the wife of a cotton manufacturer lives in the repaired house and the barn conversions house a self-employed joiner and a retired couple. The cottage of occasional use is rented by a diocesan bishop. Other 'in-comers' inhabiting Twiston properties are a retired dentist, a surveyor and a married couple, both of whom work as school-teachers. Thus rather more than 40% of Twiston's housing has been bought and is being used by people who have moved from an urban address to an extremely rural one. Twenty seven people are involved in this immigration. That is one in eight of the entire population of Downham and Twiston. These figures exclude the episcopal family which, whatever its influence, is, if we may put it so, part-time in terms of Twiston residence. Some of these people have brought great gain as they have placed their considerable talents at the disposal of the community. Among them all, however, it is not difficult to detect a wish to make better, or simply to perpetuate, a rather romantic view of rural life rather than face some of the current rather unpleasant realities of it. Others, again, evince little desire to take any share in the life of the community into which they have come. One and all, though, represent the outside world and the comparative affluence that is to be found there. This is easily communicated to the other residents, even without direct contact, and becomes part - a new part - of their lives, too.

Despite its own peculiar features, the area covered by Downham and Twiston represents remarkably accurately a specific instance of the generalisations which we believe pertain to the country's rural residents as a whole.

3. Its life.

As we have noted more than once, inflation has meant a rise in unit costs for farming products as for products of other types. To counter this two measures have generally been taken. The first is to enlarge what we might call the catchment area, in this case, the size of the area upon which the crops are grown or the cattle are grazed. The second follows upon it, namely, the greater use of machinery to cope with the enlarged work. All this means a much higher capitalisation, specifically in the capital account covering land, buildings, equipment, and where applicable, stock. Not only is there less money available for the payment of the increasingly expensive labourer's wages, but the need for the labourer's services has been substantially reduced. Together, these latter factors have meant far fewer men at work in the fields. Until now this study has concerned itself mainly with these ex-farming people, what they are likely to be doing and where they are likely to be living in their changed circumstances. The time has come to give brief consideration to the quality of life of those, sometimes it seems a minority, who still remain in farming.

It is not unusual nowadays, to come across a man in the cab of a tractor having a radio wedged in somewhere near him. Radios have, of course, become almost ubiquitous with the advent of micro-processing, but to hear one sited in a tractor in the middle of an otherwise empty field seems peculiar. It is when we consider that the field really is otherwise empty that a possible reason begins to emerge. The tractor driver is lonely. He can be on his own all day. He is often on his own for most of the day. A human voice, even a disembodied one, or music that has a human source, verges upon the necessary for him. Nor is it easy for him to break out of this solitary pattern when darkness comes and his day's work is over. He gets out of the habit of mixing with others. When, at last relaxing, he considers the effort needed to clean himself up - and it is a major effort if he deals with animals - he can easily get out of the habit, or even lose sight, of knowing himself to be a member of a wider community than that described by his immediate family and his farm boundaries.

A telephone is only part of the answer, but it is part. No farmer could work without one any more than any other business man could. But in the country especially the use of the telephone is quite a way of life, as many telephone bills testify! The more rural the

situation the more this is so. Of the twenty houses occupied in Twiston no less than eighteen have their own telephones. This is 90%. In Downham, still very rural but on a bus route and nearer all the things a town offers, the figure drops to 69% (forty one out of fifty nine occupied homes; four being vacant). This gives an overall telephone "ownership" of 75%, with fifty nine out of the total of seventy-nine houses being connected. In an age when postal charges are high and the quality of delivery services low, the telephone comes even more into its own. With its aid a scattered rural community can enjoy a pseudo-corporate life as information passes with a speed and efficiency that could be the envy of the Reuter organisation. It is difficult to overestimate the value to the rural resident of the capability. Even disallowing, for general purposes, the extreme weather of the winter of 1978/9, when the telephone was the only link for days on end that some residents had with others, and putting aside those, fortunately rare, occasions of human emergency, the telephone functions in an almost personal way in linking together the members of the community and giving it a real substance that it would otherwise lack. Against this conviction needs to be set the fact that the 25% of the population which does not have its own telephone, though having fairly ready access to one belonging to a neighbour, contains six pensioners who live alone and three others, not pensioners, who live alone. Of the pensioners, one is aged 92 and three more are 84 years old or older. If these ages account for an unwillingness to handle new-fangled machinery, they also represent the people who are more in need of an easy and immediate means of communication. Village life being what it is, three of these people have close relatives living in the community and all of them are seen by somebody every day.

To see and be seen is, of course, preferable to any number of telephone conversations, the latter being but a substitute for the former. With many inhabitants now having employment outside the community and most having their own transport, there is less internal social activity than previous years may have known. This is not to say that there is none. The organisations may travel for their annual celebration but they meet within the parish for the remainder of the year. There are, then, opportunities for the determined farmer, his family and their neighbours, to spend an evening together as

members of one or other of the organisations. These latter include a branch of the Women's Institute, a cricket club, a youth club and a church choir, all of which function regularly; even the cricket club, which organises indoor practices during the winter. On a completely informal basis there is a Chat Club to which any ladies may go simply to chat. On the same level of unrestricted membership are the Church activities, liturgical and social, the events in the village hall (usually monthly whist and domino drives but occasionally a dance or outdoor barbecue) and, of course, the public house. Few, if any, are untouched by one or more of these though it is apparent that the new-comers of Twiston, as distinct from the new tenants of Downham, tend to become involved in specialised features of the community's life, for example, the cricket club or the school, but not those features which involve, at least in theory, the whole community, for example, the harvest festivities. It seems reasonable to conclude that there is a basic unity among the traditional type of folk and only an occasional and, to that extent, marginal unity felt by the new, independent owner-occupiers. Although this could pose a serious, it may even be mortal, threat to any rural community experiencing it in sufficient quantity, so far this unity has not been upset by the high percentage of 'in-comers' in the Twiston area nor yet by the many from each part of the parish who live there but work elsewhere. Within the latter category are all the 'in-comers' of Twiston but only one traditional resident, while in Downham, all the residents either work within the parish or have very long, usually family, connections with it. There are no exceptions to this. Taking into consideration the 40% of Twiston families, who as immigrants, have no relations in the parish, the following figures demonstrate how closely knit the population is.

Household Relationships

Non-Related (56.25%)		Related (43.75%)	
	Parent/ Child	Sibling	Aunt:Uncle/ Nephew:niece
45(56.25%)	19(23.75%)	13(16.25%)	3(3.75%)

Nor does this tell the whole story, for these figures do not show the other, lesser, relationships of, for example, column 4, when the people concerned have already been counted in a closer relationship with someone in column 2 or 3. Of the forty five households who have no

relations in the parish,

1 (1.25%) lives in at Downham Hall,

6 (7.5%) are tenant farmers,

17 (21.25%) are, or were, themselves or their parents, employed by the Assheton family in the Hall or on the estate,

6 (7.5%) are the necessary present and past immigrant families in the vicarage, the public house, the 'school house' and the shop. Putting the two sets of figures together we see that only fifteen households (18.75%) have no previous or present ties in the parish through blood or sweat.

There is, then, a high degree of active community life which stems from common bonds. On those occasions which are overtly common to the community, jubilee celebrations, a village concert, a church flower festival, it seems that there are small groups everywhere working industriously at their contribution. Passively, there is the unifying factor, for the whole of Downham and some of Twiston, of the Assheton family, whose tenants they are, and to which they look for assistance when in trouble, confident that its influence will resolve their problem. Benevolent in appearance and, no doubt, intention, the Assheton policy is as rigid and all-embracing as any of its feudal predecessors could have been. Few things can be contemplated and virtually nothing decided without reference to it. Its will is done. It is arguable that the benefits deriving from it are greater than its deleterious effects. However, one decides about that, it cannot be ignored for it is the most prominent particular feature in the life of that community.

Downham and Twiston have another prominent feature. This is one which small communities have in common and consists of the universal offering of good neighbourliness of a type quite comparable with that of the title figure in the parable of the Good Samaritan, despite the frictions which are inevitable where two, three or more people are closely associated. One of the practical evidences of this characteristic of rural society is its capacity to turn its hand to most things necessary for its continuing life. If the tractor gearbox disintegrates, someone will mend it on the spot. If a spade goes through a boot and into a foot, someone will attend to it, either completely or sufficiently to ensure a safe arrival in the nearest hospital casualty department, anything from seven to fifteen miles

away. With this sort of interdependence, with everyone happy at your new baby or condoling in your bereavement, interested in your new car or concerned at the destruction of your respective cabbages by the same plague of caterpillars, even if, at the same time, annoyed at the noise your son's motor bicycle makes late at night or hurt that you brought Mrs. White's prescription home from the chemist but not Mrs. Black's, there is a healthy state of affairs to which Church and State could alike look with advantage.

4. Its work.

Employers in Downham and Twiston are obviously few. Despite what has been said about diminishing numbers being employed in agriculture and thelack of employment possibilities within villages, the picture for Downham and Twiston is interesting. For ease of presentation and assimilation it has been tabulated.

Residents of Downham in full-time employment.

	Place	Male	Female	Total
(i)	Farming here	20 (44.5%)	1 (4%)	21 (30%)
(ii)	In the community but not farming	5 (11.1%)	3 (12%)	8 (11.4%)
(iii)	In Clitheroe * (nearest town)	15 (33.3%)	13 (52%)	28 (40%)
(iv)	Beyond Clitheroe *	5 (11.1%)	8 (32%)	13 (18.6%)
	Totals	45 (100%)	25+ (100%)	70 (100%)

*Those whose jobs involve travel are categorised according to their work bases.

+There are, in addition, five women who work part-time. Three of these work in the village in the shop, as school caretaker and as church cleaner.

Apart from the expected disparity between male and female farm workers, the total of 30% of the parish's work force still being employed in farming is unexpected although hinted at in our review of the parish's inhabitants. The others who are employed within the parish are evenly matched at 11.1% (male) and 12% (female). The former consists of the incumbent, the publican and three who work for the

big house. The latter total represents the village headmistress, one who works at the big house and the postmistress. Other than on its farms, the big house is still the major employer within the parish, with five employees (7.1%) from Downham and, as we shall see, one other from Twiston, making a total of 6.4% of the entire working population of the parish.

For the male workers of Downham, other than those employed in farming, one in five has employment within the community, three in five find it in the nearest town (3 miles) and one in five go further afield. Of the latter five, four had no choice but to go further afield in order to obtain the specialised employment they wanted. With 88.9% of the male workers having work within a three mile radius, 55.6% not having to leave the community, and none being without work, the employment situation is good.

For the women the position is somewhat different. Although on a parity with men within the village, 84% of them travel to work, 32% of them beyond the nearest town. Half of them (52%) have work in Clitheroe. Of the eight (32%) whose work is based beyond Clitheroe, four could hardly have found similar employment nearer. There is not much scope for complaint here, either.

In relative terms, the total number of those who have work within the community (31.4%) is roughly equal to those working in Clitheroe (40%), while only half that percentage (18.6%) has to go further abroad.

Residents of Twiston in full-time employment

	Place	Male	Female	Total
(i)	Farming here	5 (27.8%)	-	5 (20.8%)
(ii)	In the community but not farming	2 (11.1%)	1* (16.6%)	3 (12.5%)
(iii)	In Clitheroe + (nearest town)	6 (33.3%)	2 (33.4%)	8 (33.3%)
(iv)	Beyond Clitheroe +	5 (27.8%)	3 (50%)	8 (33.3%)
	Totals	18 (100%)	6 (100%)	24 (100%)

* "Within the community" is here taken to include Downham where this lady works at the big house.

+ Those whose jobs involve travel are categorised according to their work bases.

There are also three part-time female workers.

Neither in Twiston nor in Downham is there any reason to suppose that the part-time workers want to be full-time, with the proviso that this might not be true, in time, of those who now have children at school.

It is interesting to notice that those travelling a short distance to work are equally matched and, given the extremely small numbers, the same could be asserted of those who work, other than in farming, within the community. Indeed, with the exception of those women in Downham who travel a short distance to work, it will be seen that both men and women in both Downham and Twiston seem to have had equal success in obtaining work within the community or just outside it.

Where Downham has a higher percentage of men in farming, Twiston has as many men travelling some distance to work as it has in farming. This is due to the presence in Twiston of recent immigrants from the towns in which, on the whole, they continue to work.

Again we notice that the total of those employed within the community (33.3%) compares with those working near it (33.3%). In Twiston's case, however, the same percentage (33.3%) travels some distance, though we have just noted the main reason for this.

Let us now put the figures together for a complete parish picture.

Residents of Downham and Twiston in full-time employment.

	Place	Male	Female	Total
(i)	Farming here	25(39.7%)	1 (3.2%)	26(27.6%)
(ii)	In the community but not farming	7(11.1%)	4 (12.9%)	11(11.7%)
(iii)	In Clitheroe	21(33.3%)	15 (48.4%)	36(38.3%)
(iv)	Beyond Clitheroe	10(15.9%)	11(35.5%)	21(22.4%)
	Totals	63 (100%)	31 (100%)	94 (100%)

The total figures confirm a previous comment that as many find work within the parish (39.3%) as those who go just outside (38.3%). About half that percentage (22.4%) go further afield.

We notice, also, that for every two men at work there is one woman. This, we suggest, is a high percentage of women workers in any community. If it is partly due to a need to augment the income of a not well paid farming family, it is probable that as big a reason lies in the wider interests such employment brings so that, while in any farming community the majority of the women need to travel to work, it could be seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage that no less than 84% of the working female population of Downham and Twiston goes outside the parish for its working life.

For both male and female in this parish it is reasonable to suppose that anyone who wants work has got it and those who have more than a minimum distance to travel to it have chosen so to do.

By no means the least important feature about the working life of this parish lies in the fact that Clitheroe is a traditional market town wherein many of its inhabitants know each other, even if they are not actually related. The work pattern for the residents of Downham and Twiston, therefore, seems to cement its basic unity, giving it an active insight into and place within the wider world, while enlivening itself with some virtually extended-family type input. To this extent it is suggested that this is a healthier situation than one in which the majority live and work in the same small and introspective circle.

5. Its amenities.

The basic amenities of Downham and Twiston are the same as in any other rural community, spaciousness and fresh air. To these Downham and Twiston add beauty and peace but not much more. To call their own they have few public buildings; a village hall, a school, a church, a post office/shop and a public house, all in Downham. They also have two public telephones; one in a grey box in Downham and the other in a red box in Twiston. The continued existence of none of these, not even the telephone boxes, can be taken for granted. Let us briefly examine the state of the shop, the school and the church and that additional essential, the means to travel.

(a) Its shop

For the third time in the last eight years the shop in Downham

is about to change hands. That, in itself, could almost be an adequate summary of the place of shops in villages today. It is a small shop, but it is the only one and is located in the centre of the village at the bus terminus. It is, of course, essentially a grocery shop with appendages, including the expected post office corner. It has recently been reorganised to provide a tea-room for summer visitors and a fancy goods room for much the same clientele. These are signs of the type of initiative we have already indicated are probably necessary for the continuance of its life, although they were begun only after the Post Office had improved its mail delivery service by taking it from the shop-keeper and giving it to a postman driving a van out of Clitheroe, who then brings it as much as four hours later than it was brought before. This one move was not sufficient to do more than threaten the shop's existence, but it had consequences. Loss of the mail delivery facility meant that it was uneconomic for the shop to continue to deliver just newspapers for the majority of the week and groceries on only one or two of those days. This meant that a unifying activity for the parish had disappeared and that, with people having then to come to the shop, the volume of trade dropped. Fortunately, it also freed the husband who found work in Clitheroe and left his wife to run the shop. Had either of them felt unable to undertake their new roles, the crisis would have been even larger. Ironically, the tea-room cost so much in staff wages to run that it was soon abandoned and the articles in the fancy goods room appealed only to a small minority. Neither was helped by the 60% rise in the cost of petrol and oil during 1979. So a fourth family in one decade is about to assume the problems and the opportunities the shop presents.

The last tenants were in residence for only about half the five years that today's outgoing family has lived here. It was, no doubt, the vision and the drive of the latter family, which has extended their stay and probably pointed the way for the shop's continued existence. Yet the family which preceded both of these was in residence for nineteen years. While accepting the relevance of social change over the quarter century thus spanned, it seems unlikely that this alone can account for the different lengths of tenancy. A point that is perhaps of more relevance is that the first of the tenants was an experienced grocer before taking on the tenancy.

The other two were not. This experience must help to maximise the profits while minimising the prices paid by the customers. Both parties benefit. Without this experience it is more likely that only one party will benefit. If it is the customer, the shop becomes uneconomic to run. If it is the tenant, village trade will soon decline. In either case the shop will soon require a new tenant, with the pragmatic villagers being the first to take their trade elsewhere. The more affluent newcomers, with their imported conviction of what a village should be, support the shop, as they would say, and in the saying disclose their philosophy.

A travelling shop may be an alternative but it is nowhere near as acceptable. It will attract no loyalties in that it will not be a part of the community. Nor will it be there on those occasions when the village shop is most useful. Yet the immense increase in transport costs, public as well as private, leave open the possibility of the shop continuing. It will need to expand its services to the resident villagers as well as to the summer visitors, but above all, it must be run on a sound commercial basis as regards its basic wares. There is no lack of affection for any village institution. Given the opportunity, the pragmatism that took them away could bring back the local shoppers and with them would come a continuing place in the community for its shop, though if current government thinking about the closing of sub-post offices is effected, this would almost certainly cause its demise.

(b) Its school

The school in Downham, nominally Church of England, was provided by and is ultimately in the hands of local Trustees though it has, by law, the usual managerial body. Built in 1839, its one classroom is divided by a sliding screen of wood and glass, floor to ceiling, and separates a new, but miniscule, staff room-cum-kitchen from the small, though adequate, necessary offices for the children. On two sides it has a tiny concreted area to represent a playground but the children, in fact, go out into the field immediately behind the school for the majority of their organised games and their play times. The school is in the middle of the village on the main street.

For its staff it has a head teacher, who lives with her husband in a cottage in the village, and another lady teacher who commutes from Clitheroe. A third teacher comes in for two mornings a week. A secretary also comes in on a part time basis. A fully equipped kitchen and dining room are provided in the village hall a quarter of a mile away. All expenses, including the payment of a cook, an assistant and a part time caretaker, are met by the education authority. The expense incurred in accommodating, heating, feeding and teaching the parish's children under the present arrangements must make the school's per capita costing among the highest in the county. This is the factor which presses when pupil numbers are considered. From the county's 1978 School List it is possible to gather a list of those schools which have the smallest number of children. After extracting from that list those schools closed in 1978 and 1979 the smallest ten schools in the county are :-

School	No.of children
Yealand	24
Bleasdale	24
*Bashall Eaves	21 (15)
*Bolton-by-Bowland	29 (17)
*Downham	30 (26)
*Tosside	27 (19)
Samlesbury	24 (one teacher school)
Skelmersdale	26 (urban)
Dalton	28
Chorley	28 (urban)

The picture, in fact, is worse than it looks, for the four Ribble Valley schools (marked *) all suffered a drop in numbers between 1978 and 1979. The 1979 roll totals are in the brackets on the right of the table. As the result of this, Samlesbury and Chorley were closed in 1980 and discussions are taking place in 1980 with a view to the closure of Bashall Eaves and Bolton-by-Bowland in 1981 or soon after. Dalton and Skelmersdale seem likely to amalgamate in new premises in the new town. Any further economies within the county's education budget will surely include a re-assessment of the continued existence of the remaining four in the list, including Downham. A continuance

of the current general decline in school numbers would have the same result. Both appear probable.

The following table breaks down the Downham numbers as 1980/1 begins.

	Families	Children
Downham	9	14
Twiston	3	3
Beyond the parish	6	7
Total	18	24

Note 1. 9 of the 24 are infants; 15 are juniors. It has its own ageing problem.

Note 2. Expected leavers in 1981 and 1982 number 7; expected entrants number 5.

Note 3. There is a heavy dependence on children coming from outside the parish.

Note 4. Two Twiston families have between them three children of this age in schools other than Downham. For one of these this simply means remaining at the school he attended before his family moved into Twiston. The school concerned was not his village school either.

Whenever a property becomes vacant in the parish it is the Assheton policy to try to introduce a young couple into it so that the child population remains high. With such small numbers the movement of even one family with children either into or out of the parish makes a considerable difference. Whatever its immediate benefits, this policy suffers from a long term defect. Young couples grow old, their child producing days soon pass, and it is a long time from then until the house becomes vacant again through death.

An advantage of the school's small numbers is that, given the technical competence of the teaching staff, the quality of education should be high. The personal attention that is possible can bring to the surface and develop talents that, in a large class, might remain unsuspected. Moreover, not only are the parents often to be seen in the school so that they and the teachers combine to produce the best results in the children, but the village as a whole feels itself involved in the process of making its youngsters capable

of dealing with their developing lives. This does not put the ways and personnel of the school beyond criticism but it does put them both close to the communal heart. There is, for example, no parent-teacher association. Although a bus brings the more distant in the morning and a taxi takes them away again in the afternoon, many of the most distant parents, as well as those in the village, arrive to deliver or collect their children. This gives them the opportunity to talk with others similarly engaged and also to see, or be seen by, the staff. The managers are all parishioners and support whatever ventures are initiated by the staff. The parents are as active. A parent-teacher association is not needed: the school is very much a community phenomenon.

Herein lies its possible continuity. If it once begins to function as a community centre, in its widest sense, any future threatened dissolution might be avoided. Although the village hall hosts the social affairs of the parish it should be possible to find other ways of adults using the facilities of the school so that, without losing its specialist nature, in which role it is already an integral part of the parish's life, it becomes even more firmly part of the community's structure. "In a new ordering of village society the school, used as an educational, social and recreational centre, even as the base for transport and medical facilities, can be the foundation of a flourishing community and amply repay the costs of administering it." (104) Again, however, it would need to be professionally excellent in its basic function before any extension to, or diversification in, the use of its building would be acceptable. If it manages to be efficient as a school and if its supporters have the necessary vision and will to widen its services to the community, a most desirable feature of the rural life of this parish may be retained indefinitely. All this, however, must be deemed unlikely.

(c) Its church.

Although the present church building in Downham dates only from 1911, the local stones of which it is constructed have been used more than once. Local custom indicates that they may have been used in as many stone-built churches as have graced the site

in the last eight centuries. At the last restoration traces of early Norman, or even Saxon, foundations were discovered. The churchyard level has been raised at least twice to provide three strata of burial accommodation. It is a pleasant building with a stone and wood floor, chair seating for one hundred, a small two-manual organ and a home-made stained glass east window. Its font is fourteenth century and the tower, which houses a peal of five bells, was built in the fifteenth century when the building was a chapel of ease belonging to the Cistercian Abbey in Whalley, seven miles away. Its registers date back to 1653. It stands in a corner of the parish geographically, though in the middle as far as population is concerned. With the public house, the shop, the vicarage and the bus terminus, it forms the working centre of the village. Half a mile away, on the opposite slope, stands the village hall. This is a composite building, having a new, single storey extension to an older, two storey structure. The original building was a Wesleyan chapel, built in 1816. There were never enough Methodists in the parish to warrant or sustain this building or its ministry. It depended on drawing membership from beyond the parish boundary, specifically from Chatburn. When a chapel was built in Chatburn in 1883 the future of Downham's chapel must have been sealed. It carried on, however, until just prior to World War 11 when its use was reduced to one annual service. After a war-time existence as a temporary school for evacuees and then a store-room, it was sold to the squire in 1946 as the basis for the proposed village hall. The latter was opened in 1959. There remain eight families in the parish who are known to have one or more Free Church members, Methodists or Congregationalists, five with Roman Catholic members and one with a Quaker. While a small minority of these worship infrequently outside the parish, none feels inhibited by this from attending the parish church, though not all do. There is one Jehovah's Witness family also. This family will not come to the parish church though its children were educated in the school.

Who does come is an interesting matter. We begin with those families which have one or more members interested enough to be included on the church's Electoral Roll.

	Families (Total)	On E.R.	Percentage
Downham	59	25	42.3
Twiston	20	4*	20.0
Total	79	29	36.7

*There is a Congregational chapel nearer Twiston than the parish church. The traditional Twiston families are all linked with it.

The Electoral Roll membership was, until its renewal in 1978, about 50% higher. At the renewal period it was pointed out that membership carried responsibility. We are left with a situation which corresponds with the general rural pattern, whereby belonging means more association than participation. Nevertheless, one third of the families are on record as being prepared, at any rate, to be active about Church business. This must be a healthy sign when a prognosis for the Church is required. Nor can there be doubt that, should it be necessary to issue a general invitation for involvement in any particular matter, this figure would be much increased.

The Church's membership, however, extends, through its Electoral Roll, beyond the parish boundaries.

	Families on E.R.	Active adults	Other members
Within the parish	29	48	22
Outside the parish	16	26	17
Total	45	74	39

There are, in fact, rather more than half as many Church families outside the parish as there are inside, with more than half as many active adults. This is a major source of strength for a rural Church with but eighty four properties in its own territory even when all are inhabited. This outside element provides two Church-wardens (one of whom is also the secretary of the parochial church council), the P.C.C. treasurer, who is also a sidesman, two more P.C.C. members and four more sidesmen, one of whom is a bell-ringer and another of whom is a P.C.C. member. This makes two out of three wardens, six out of sixteen P.C.C. members and five out of

ten sidesmen. Perhaps the residents would respond more freely if these from outside were not involved. It is more likely that there would be crisis in the parish without them.

When we aggregate the residents with those members of the Electoral Roll who live elsewhere we get the following figures regarding attendance at worship.

Church attendance.

	Frequent	Fairly frequent	Infrequent	Very infrequent	Virtually Never
Downham	18	3	17	20	62
Twiston	-	-	3	4	27
(E.R.external)	7	6	3	9	1
Total	25	9	23	33	90

These are rough categories and are, therefore, productive of rough results but the pattern is evident:
Those quite likely to be met in church: one in five of the total associated people.
Those occasionally to be met in church: one in three of the population.
Those very unlikely to be met in church: one half of the people.

The following is the above table simplified to three columns and reduced to percentages.

Church attendance

	Frequent (Total of Cls. 1 & 2)	Infrequent (Total of Cls. 3 & 4)	Never (Cl. 5)
Downham	21 (17.5%)	37 (30.8%)	62 (51.7%)
Twiston	-	7 (20.6%)	27 (79.4%)
Electoral Roll (external)	13 (50%)	12 (46.1%)	1 (3.9%)
Total	34 (18.9%)	56 (31.1%)	90 (50%)

Insofar as the non-resident Electoral Roll members have made a conscious effort to opt into the Church their attendance figures will be higher. In any case, to cease to come qualifies for removal from the Roll, though in each category entitled 'Virtually Never' or

'Col.5', there is at least one person who is infirm or elderly, virtually or actually housebound. For the residents, the figures of attenders at 48.3% (Downham) and 20.6% (Twiston) correspond reasonably well with the number of families on the Electoral Roll, at 42.3% and 20% respectively (see p124 above).

During 1979 there was one baptism in the parish, four young ladies married and left and one fifty-five year old farmer died and was buried. Throughout the year three services were held each Sunday, one with a largely female choir whose average attendance was 16. When the incumbent is absent the Churchwardens take the evening service. Other services are held on high days and holy days. Prayers are said in the church each weekday morning. On four of those days they are led by a lay person. There is an average of seven communicants at the 8.30 a.m. Series 11 celebration of holy communion; the congregation usually matches the choir for numbers at 10.30 a.m. (1662 matins and Series 11 holy communion alternatively); evensong is usually said by five or six. Both this and the early service take place in the chancel. Income is basically by direct giving. With tax reclaimed from over £1500 worth of covenants, this amounted in 1979 to £3129. Casual donations, wedding and funeral fees and special collections brought the total income for that year to £3394. Of this, £379 was given away for missionary or charitable purposes, £1369 went towards the incumbent's stipend and expenses, £294 was needed for the vicarage dilapidations fund, while £233 went on church insurance and £365 as diocesan quota payment. Added to the remainder of its expenses, this left the parish with outgoings of £3383. Insofar as that figure includes sinking funds for the fabric, the organ and the boiler, this is a commendable achievement which is unlikely to have been bettered by many parishes, urban or rural.

Although this state is unlikely to be mistaken for the New Jerusalem, at least it is hale enough to continue to have its own incumbent, even though that official is a diocesan officer. In a time when clerical manpower and ecclesiastical money are said to be in short supply, this is an arrangement which is beneficial to both diocese and parish. One of its advantages is that there has been recognition of the need for much more active lay participation

in terms of some of those things which traditionally have been associated with the ordained ministry. In this and in the willingness to play an active part in deanery matters and the affairs of the Ribble Valley Church Council and in exercising a general, if fairly nominal, sense of responsibility to others much further afield, lies the main hope of a recognisable Christian community remaining in this place. On the other hand, the arrangement of sharing its incumbent with the diocese may not continue. Should the parish ever decide that it is unable to afford its share of its incumbent or should the diocese transfer him or his diocesan responsibility elsewhere, then it would become even more essential that the stock of goodwill which exists towards the Church be activated and its ministry more effectively undertaken by its own (lay) populace.

(d) Its transport.

Mobility is an essential feature of modern life, which demands it and usually provides it. Although there are fewer people in the country than in the towns and therefore correspondingly fewer with the need to travel, the distances in the country are usually greater and the physically immediate presence of places for work, shopping or recreation much less. The relative demand for mobility is probably at least as high as in the towns but the fewness of the people makes the provision of it so much more expensive.

There has never been a rail link in Downham or Twiston although there used to be a passenger station operating in Chatburn. A bus route from Burnley to Clitheroe and back used to run right through the parish and though this left half the parish's main road system without public transport, it did bring it within easy reach of almost the entire population. That service has not functioned for many years. All that is left is a service every two hours between Downham and Blackburn, via Clitheroe, augmented by an experimental mini-bus service, as mentioned on p94, which links some of the local villages with Clitheroe on a one-way circular route. While no public transport service runs through Twiston, the mini-bus comes into Downham three times a day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Wednesday is the local early closing

day for shops but Saturday, the one other weekday without the service, is one of the two local market days. Nor do the timing and routing of this service appeal to more than one or two of the parishioners. More use is made of the regular service which allows them to travel into Clitheroe on one bus, have one and a half hours to shop and come back on the next. Unfortunately for some, not least the youngsters, the last bus arrives at 8 p.m. on weekdays and 6 p.m. on Sundays. Despite it costing 22 pence to travel to Chatburn and 48 pence to go to Clitheroe (partially alleviated in the case of pensioners by the free issue to them of tokens to the value of £10 a year), even the regular service must be among the county's least self-supporting over the last mile from Chatburn to Downham.

With no internal public transport services and minimal external connections, the residents of the parish are virtually totally dependent on their own cars. Perforce they have them.

Car ownership by households.*

	None	One	Two or more.
Downham	11 (18.6%)	39 (66.1%)	9+ (15.3%)
Twiston	3 (15%)	11 (55%)	6+ (30%)
Total	14 (17.7%)	50 (63.3%)	15 (19%)

*No account is here taken of motorbikes or scooters.

+Includes one company car.

Of the nine families in Downham having two or more cars, five, including the squire, are farmers whose second car, so to speak, is a working land rover; two others each have five members out at work.

Notable is the higher percentage of two car families in Twiston, the other categories being reasonably comparable. Of these six families, one farms and three others have two members at work outside the parish. These latter three and the remaining two are all newcomers with their original extra-parochial work being continued. All in Twiston who need their own transport to get to work have it. Three need transport to shop. One is without. One is a cripple. One doesn't drive, though having a family car. None appear to suffer. At least they don't say so.

For a clearer evaluation of these figures, they are now placed against those for North East Lancashire as a whole and for its most rural part, the Ribble Valley District. The latter two sets of figures are culled from the 1971 census by the authors of the "Rural Settlements Survey" (105).

	Downham & Twiston	N.E. Lancs.	Ribble Valley
Households with no car	: (14) 17.7%	58%	37%
Households with one car	: (50) 63.3%	36%	49%
Households with more than one car:	(15) 19%	6%	14%

82.3% of the parish's households have their own cars. This is almost double the figure (42%) for the County region. While it is said to be cheaper to insure a car that is country based rather than town based and it is certainly easier to park and garage it in the country, the distances to be covered involve greater expense and the lack of alternative transportation make it more necessary. In virtually every case the country owned car is essential.

But what of those for whom this apparently essential possession is non-existent? Of the fourteen households without a car, eleven are people living alone. Of those eleven, ten live in Downham and seven are pensioners. In that it was the latter whom we noticed were often without a telephone, it is now possible to complete a table of these socially isolated people.

Residents with neither car nor telephone

	Lone pensioners	Others alone
Downham	6	2
Twiston	-	1
Total	6	3

This, again, is almost entirely a Downham list, only partly due to the larger (roughly 3:1) proportion of the population which lives in Downham rather than in Twiston. Equally relevant is the fact that the majority of the housing in Downham is terraced, while this is rarely the case in Twiston. Of the six pensioners living without car or telephone, all are in terraced houses and so in immediate contact with someone else. This is true also of two of the three others living alone without car or telephone. Of these

three non-pensioners, two are active walkers and bus users. This includes the one from Twiston whom we previously noted was without a car for shopping. She walks $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles each way to and from Downham before and after catching the bus there. The second rides a motor scooter. The other household without car or telephone also lives in Downham, both its members being spritely bus users.

It is the social activities which are at risk in this situation. For a choir member to travel to church from within the parish twice each Sunday can involve driving up to twelve miles. All the senior schools are in Clitheroe, between three and six miles away. When it comes to extramural activities there, unless the parent who does the chauffering can be usefully employed during whatever waiting time is involved, this can mean journeying up to twenty four miles each time. The same is true for the assuaging of those other minimal teenage requirements, a trip to the cinema or the swimming pool. The health clinic, now housing the area's doctors, is there, too, as are the chemists, the hair-dressers, dentists, solicitors, council offices, library and a reasonable range of shops. When the car is in daily use for life's necessities, there is an additional reluctance to enter it again even for enjoyment. In fact, country people get inured to car travel. With a commendably wide appreciation of the need for a balanced life, they continue to use their transport to this end. Country people are also fairly phlegmatic. Rising costs are criticised but, as far as they apply to transport, which included no joy-riding to begin with, they are accepted and the cars continue to be used for what are deemed to be, and usually clearly are, essential journeys. Not without its difficulties and inconveniences, transportation is one of the least of the worries of one parish at least.

6. Its future.

The major statutory document behind Lancashire's planning policies is the County Development Plan of 1956, reviewed in 1962. In this Development Plan rural settlements intended as centres for social, educational and health services were identified with reference to the existence and planned provision of community centres, primary schools, secondary schools, health centres and sewage schemes. No

doubt it was through the possession of a primary school that Downham was identified as one such settlement. But the passage of time brought change so rapid that the Review of 1962 had to be more precise. Another survey of all rural districts was carried out to place settlements in one of three categories:

Category A: Settlements suitable for substantial expansion.
Category B: Settlements suitable for smaller expansion.
Category C: Settlements where development is to be severely curtailed.

Both Downham and Twiston found themselves placed in Category C.(106) Then came the North East Lancashire Structure Plan and, to assist its compilation, there was commissioned a technical report which was eventually published under the title "Rural Settlements Survey". Describing its own methodology, it says, "For the purposes of the study a rural settlement has been defined as a settlement which conforms with the three following requirements:

1. It is physically separated by undeveloped land from areas of continuous urban development.
2. It contains at least one of the following -
   - public house
   - place of worship
   - petrol service station
   - post office/shop
   - school/community hall.
3. It contains not more than one urban enumeration district."

(107). (An enumeration district is the base statistical area in the Housing and Population section of the 1971 Census. If urban, it is more than 50% built up; if rural, less than 50% built up.)

Downham qualifies in all respects except that it has no petrol service station. It finds itself on the Survey's list. Strangely enough, Twiston does, too, although it does not possess even one of the five qualifying marks in section 2. There is, however, yet another division into settlements Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3. Type 1 settlements are without one or more of the five marks listed in Section 2. This covers both Downham and Twiston, removing Downham from the Development Plan's intention for it as a centre, for "Settlements of this type do not act in a significant sense as local service centres for other settlements." (108) The only future

plans, therefore, for Downham and Twiston, as far as the County is concerned, relate to their inclusion in Category C, i.e. any development to be severely curtailed. In the event, both populations have declined.

Population

	1961	1971	1979	%age decrease
Downham	181	160	159	12.2%
Twiston	72	55	54	25.0%

The figure for Twiston would have been even worse had it not been for a barn-to-house conversion in 1976 which brought in a new family of five.

Moreover, the combined population is changing at an average annual rate of 6%, which would provide a theoretically fresh population every 18 years. In practice, the bulk of the population remains. It is a minority which, for one reason or another, goes as well as comes. Nor, without new housing, is it a population which can do anything other than age, no matter how high is its percentage of children at any one time. In both change and age of population, the parish follows the general trend as described in Section A.2 above. There is no way in which the parish can be anything other than continuingly dependent on the outside world, maintaining its traditional status as a satellite of Clitheroe. This is not to say that Downham and Twiston are dying and that the services provided for them by Church and State should be conditioned by that belief. The situation is not startingly new. Both communities have long since learned to live with the sort of thing we have been describing. Provided that its houses are not sold and its school is kept open, it is possible to see for the parish a future which, if its inhabitants will have it so, need not be largely dissimilar to that which it now enjoys. This includes the sort of social interplay which A.J. Russell records under the title of social geography (see above, p 101). This undoubtedly helps to sustain life in the small communities with which we are concerned in this study. In Twiston there is a house with an indoor swimming pool which is put at the

disposal of the parish (and its friends) for swimming lessons. Rimington, an adjacent village, has a pack of Brownies which includes girls from this parish. Chatburn, another adjoining village, offers facilities to Downham's Mothers' Union members, while Downham accommodates Chatburn's Women's Institute members. Whist drives in each village are arranged so that people from the three can attend each one. Sales of work, dances and other social events are similarly timed, if possible. In addition, a cricket team from each village plays against teams from the other two. Youth club members seem to be interchangeable on the same three-way basis.

If the parish life is thus well leavened by such contacts with its immediate neighbours, it is also, untypically perhaps, happy with its relationship with Clitheroe, the equivalent of the area's key settlement. Both relationships obviously depend upon Downham managing to retain its own identifiable life. It is here that, however confident we can be about this in times of normal development, we have to be aware that the times may, from now on, be other than those of normal development. Unanswerable questions are about to be asked in connection with oil and micro-processing. If oil ceases to be generally available, either through physical shortage or excessive cost, then two things could happen. The attractiveness to business men of rural life could lessen as they found it more difficult to get to their work, continue their social and cultural pursuits or even heat their homes. This might make rural housing more readily available at a more acceptable price, though it must be noted that the newcomers often produce new houses through the conversion of barns. This is a practice unlikely to be followed by the normal villager. The potential stock of housing might, therefore, decrease. At the same time, traditional village life, however modified by the passage of time, could be revivified as it became more necessary to find and enjoy home-based leisure. If it was already the policy of the local authority to create for its town dwellers leisure facilities in rural areas, this would simplify the matter for the villagers. The advance of the use of micro-processing could work to the same end. If much repetitive work would be done automatically, the need to travel to work outside the village would be restricted to fewer people. How many would thus be freed for leisure and service will depend on the type of local industry already operating. This, in turn, will be

partly dependent on its geographical location. Much work in the Ribble valley is of the service or trade type with little of the mass-production processes. Here, therefore, the impact would presumably be less than in other places but, at however low a level, the combination of these two factors, with other implications arising from them not mentioned here, could as easily spell renewal as disaster for some, at least, of our villages, including Downham and Twiston.

Bill Goodhand thinks that the village does have one major claim to future survival. This he identifies as "its possible success as a cohesive social unit, members of which feel they belong and can participate in a relatively stable and neighbourly community, a settlement form small enough to retain the human dimension." (109) Clearly we live in an urban and industrial society and it is unrealistic to imagine that we shall all return to some sort of rural community life in the future. Yet villages are important in that they seem to say things about the nature of society which can so easily be overlooked in the wider world. If society as a whole can recognise this and agree that the rural community is to have a life and integrity of its own in the future rather than being regarded merely as a place of retirement, retreat and seclusion away from the mainstream, urban and industrial life of our country, the detailed planning of its constituent parts will be the more effectively achieved.

PART 111

TOMORROW'S SCENE?

"If we are serious about our mission to the nation; if we seriously believe that the Church is not a set of religious clubs for the benefit of its members, but a task-force sent out into the world to be the bearer of God's peace in the life of the nations, then the question of unity is absolutely central. So long as we remain competing societies we are bound to obscure the gospel which we are commissioned to deliver; we are bound to direct attention to ourselves rather than to Jesus and his Cross. There are indeed differences between us, some of them involving real issues of truth. But when these are allowed to divide us they necessarily appear as if they were more important to us than the one thing which unites us - the Gospel of the incarnate crucified and risen Lord. The real issues of truth have to be faced, but they must be faced within the one fellowship of those who - in spite of their different understandings - have been accepted, redeemed and commissioned by the one Lord." (1)

THE RURAL CHURCH

"The pioneers of the modern ecumenical movement, properly subordinating ecclesiastical questions to the kingdom of God, believed that the Churches could be united by their work in the world, by their commitment to evangelism, or by working out a 'social gospel' based on a liberal theology, through hospitals, colleges, clubs for the unemployed and organisations for peace and temperance. When the dismantling of the colonial empires destroyed the old simplicity in the missionary enterprise, and when the social gospel seemed powerless to heal the deep tragedies of the nations, the Churches began to acknowledge that the ecumenical movement must be more costly. If the Christian mission was to be discharged in the world, if the gospel was to be proclaimed meaningfully and practised relevantly, if the Church was to be a model for society, there must be changes in the Churches. To Churches as to individuals the word had been spoken: they must die before rising." (2)

1. Its identity and purpose.

"In Britain the Church was one of the central features of community life throughout the Middle Ages, providing a sphere in which individuals learned to live together and also a supernatural cement to give cohesion and stability to society as a whole. This did not survive the Industrial Revolution, but until almost the end of the nineteenth century the parish church was a focus and expression of community life in the remoter parts of rural England." (3)
Today that picture is almost entirely changed, even in rural England. There, too, with the different composition, expectations and mobility of its communities, with church attendance no longer a condition of employment and with requests for prayer for rain virtually unknown, the parish Church has gradually moved to the periphery of life, has suffered a consequent and considerable drop in active membership and has largely lost both its identity and sense of purpose. Indeed, as it becomes more self-centred and committed simply to its own survival, so it becomes of less moment still to its neighbours, who are approached only when it needs help from them and who see it, therefore, as an object of charity. If this describes a Church

totally different from that of two centuries ago, it also describes a Church which is the opposite of that of nearly twenty centuries ago.

"Most country people, I suspect, think the Church is the parson and his building." (4) All too often older members of the community say of someone who has a vocation to the ministry that he is entering the Church. In one breath the whole doctrinal understanding and practice of baptism is dismissed, almost the entire Christian family unchurched and an outlook owing more to Victorian ideals than Christianity revealed. Accepting that this outlook has its origins in the feudalism of the past, it is disconcerting that it can still be found. A study group in St. Gerrans, Cornwall, recorded "The Church was mainly involved in a personal/person-to-person ministry through the Rector." (5) The lack of an exclamation mark and the use of the word 'mainly' indicates this outlook. Perhaps it now remains as a vestige of the time when the squire represented society to such an extent that he was thought - as much, perhaps, by himself as by others - to be society, while the parson was likewise thought to be the Church, in that he took all decisions made about it and did all that was done by it, except the manual work. Certainly the rural clergyman may expect to be addressed as Sir, or have hats raised to him, or both, where this thinking is met. In a time when many rural communities have lost, and many more may expect to lose, their clergyman, an equation of that figure with the Church poses a serious problem for the remaining residents and for the Church.

By no means all rural communities have had or remember a past of that nature; not all equate their clergyman with the Church. Probably more cast the building in that role. There seems to be a more ready acceptance of the ministry of a non-resident clergyman than the closure of a building. It is the latter occurrence which seems to strike at the root of this popular concept of the Church and it is true, of course, that a consecrated building in a community is more than a photogenic relic of days of yore; it also stands as a reminder that God is still in the middle of his people and that they have a relationship with him. There is a problem, however, arising from the equation of the building with the Church at those times when, and in those places where, the former is kept locked. A major criticism of the results of holding this view of the Church was written by the sociologist, Leslie Paul,

in the report of his examination of the Church of England. "But the buildings (church, parsonage house, church hall) become the plant which must be serviced and kept going, often at all costs ... Moreover, the attachment of the Church to its buildings and to the sentiments they generate over the centuries tends to institutionalise the Church heavily. The faithful laity and the people at large come to think of the Church as the buildings it displays, to which the clergy are sent as of necessity. Much evidence has come my way of the tenacity with which the laity will fight to preserve an actual church even when all pastoral justification for it has gone, and really it only encumbers the ground. For them loyalty to the Church is loyalty to that building. No wonder some parsons ask, 'Why was I ordained? To preach the gospel or to look after this particular set of buildings like a caretaker?" (6)

If these are two local reasons why the Church has lost itself in so many places, an equally relevant, but more generalised, one lies in the institutionalism mentioned by Paul. In practice it is difficult for the Church to be a pilgrim. Apostolic conditions may be seminal but they are impractical where the Church has existed for many years. By the very fact that Christianity is a corporate affair, it needs to be organised. This organisation is of the most rudimentary type and of the least importance where the gospel is real news but, from then, the result is either no Church or an organised Church. History gives ground for the belief that, in the latter case, the organisation may easily assume greater importance than the gospel, not least when there is any formal association of the Church with the State. Of the Church of England, with its institutional link with the State, a Bolivian Christian in the International Ecumenical Team which visited the north east of England in April and May, 1979, wrote: "I do not find her (the Church) to be a critical or prophetic community. It would seem that the affluence of the capitalist system has tamed her, so that all she is doing at the moment is to try and alleviate the pains caused by the system. The establishment of the country's majority church seems to have counted for a lot in this, for there can be no doubt that it is difficult to be a prophet when you are organically harnessed to the system." (7) Even discounting any official links with the State, it is evident that eventually the Christian life is liable to become heavily

burdened with the necessity of maintaining its organisation. When its resources become strained, as they currently are, this can mean the abandonment of the gospel in favour of the structure, as we have just noted. Even without coming to such a pass, it is incredibly difficult for a highly organised Church to effect any change in policy or practice before the need for such change has gone. As long ago as 1965 Bishop John Robinson produced his book 'The New Reformation?'. The Church, he argued, meaning the Church of England, has the characteristics of the dinosaur and the battleship, saddled with an organisation and a programme beyond its means so that it was constantly involved in problems of supply and pre-occupied with survival. Its inertia was such that the financial allocations, the legalities, the channels of organisation, the attitudes of mind, were all set in favour of continuing and enhancing the status quo. Anyone who tried to go across these channels in a different direction would exhaust most of his energies before getting anywhere at all. (p26)

The Church, of course, must have organisation, but it is essentially and primarily an organism because it is the earthly body of God's Son, alive through the subsequent and continuing presence of the Spirit of his Son, and a living-and also, sometimes, a dying-creature. But a creature in his service not its own. Its organisational processes must not be used like machinery, whose function it is to feed on raw material and transform it into predetermined and uniform shapes. It must not, that is to say, be seen as an end in itself, manipulating its members to serve it, but rather to arrange its life so that its members have the maximum opportunity to develop their individual and collective talents - the growing up of parts of the body and the body itself - so that it can the better serve him who is its head. This is as true in the life of the rural Church as in any metropolitan regulating body.

It is not altogether inappropriate to compare the rural Church with a village well. It is very much part of the village. It has 'always' been there. It attracts tourists. The villagers are proud of it for both reasons, but they rarely, if ever, need to use it. Nowadays they get their water from the Water Board, piped conveniently into their homes. Rather are they accustomed to receiving calls for help from its custodians as its masonry falls into disrepair. It is antique and has a certain charm, but is of

dubious real value. Nevertheless, plans to alter or abandon it will provoke instant opposition. It is with this realisation that questions begin to be asked. What is the building and the clergyman for? Does the Church have a role in the countryside today? If so, what is it? These questions need both to be asked and answered for there can be no attempt to formulate a Christian strategy without already knowing what is the purpose of the Church. It is only when the objective becomes clear that it is time to devise the necessary means by which it can be attempted. In that different objectives produce different strategies, "it is essential for every organisation to keep a careful watch on its objectives and to be prepared to change or modify them ... Every organisation has to decide what it really exists to do. Once this has been thought out it is able to define its overall objective. Only then can it act with full effectiveness, for only then has it clarified what its business really is." (8) When others are involved this becomes more necessary. Can two walk together except they be agreed? "To travel together, we have to be sure of our destination" wrote Cardinal Suenens. With his ecumenical theme uppermost in mind, he went on, "In this case, we have to define very clearly the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ, toward which we wish to direct our steps." (9) This is not to shut the door upon adaptation and amendment as the journey proceeds so much as to be clear about the objective. This relationship between flexibility of means and definition of the end is admirably stated by the Churches' Unity Commission in its gloss on its first proposition. "We believe that in this country the visible unity of the Church must be pursued in terms of movement and process. The urgent task is to prompt such movement and initiate active involvement in such a process. The end cannot be seen from the beginning. Nevertheless, the goals at local or national level must be sufficiently clear to indicate the immediate steps along the way." (10) Likewise, after the successful formation of the Church of South India, Bishop Michael Hollis, its first Moderator, reviewed its situation with a view to offering possible advice to other union planners. "Do not," he said, "plan everything for the new church in advance of union; achieve union and then in a period of growing together leave the church free to find renewal and true unity." (11) This is not the voice of an anarchist. It is the voice of one who is

clear about the purpose of the Church but is confident enough in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to be flexible about the details by which it will be achieved. A living Church with a role in a changing world demands that balanced guidance. It reminds us, too, of the inseparability of the purpose and the identity of the Church. So the questions need to go back one step further. If the tactics fulfil the strategy, the latter depends on a knowledge of the objective. This can only be realistically attempted when the body deputed to achieve it is known. We need another look at the identity of the Church.

It was in 1964 that Gibbs and Morton wrote their timely book, "God's Frozen People". Its sub-title gave a broad hint as to its theme. It was 'a book for - and about - ordinary Christians.' Knowing that what they had to say would sound novel in many ears, they wrote, "Perhaps we think that when we discuss the laity we are looking at the Church in yet another peculiar way. And perhaps we think it is a new way, a bit odd: interesting but off-centre. But the laity is not just another aspect of the Church which has been rather neglected. Nor is it just a part of the Church ... It is the whole Church." (12) This cannot logically be true if the clergy are also of the Church. Its point, evacuated of any antithesis between the clergy and the laity, is better made by just saying, "the mystery of the Church is simply that it is people." (13) This rediscovery that the Church is people is of immense importance to the rural Church for, in the country, people loom large. They are much more evident than in a town because, rather than despite, their being fewer in number. When we think of the massive, towering blocks of flats in our towns where neighbours are unrecognised, if not unknown, and then think of the country scene where nothing is unknown about anybody, the difference is plain. In the country everything is translated into personal terms. While this has its drawbacks, it is a very considerable advantage, for the God in whose name the Church ministers is personal; at the incarnation he became a human person and the response to his advances is, in both the first and last resort, a personal matter. The rural Church is well placed, for all the sheep can be known by name, almost always by their Christian names. How much of an asset this is we can guage from a statement by Pope Paul V1, who spoke of

"always taking the person as one's starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God." (14) New Delhi's ambition to achieve "all in each place" being "brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship" is obviously easier to contemplate in a rural setting. Yet it is insufficient simply to say the Church is people. What is missing is supplied by an English Roman Catholic Report on its pastoral strategy which gives the definition much more precision when it says "we would stress the fact that the 'Church' to which we refer is not primarily an institution or an organisation. The Church is people - men, women and children. Some of these people are ordained, some have taken vows, but all who are baptised are the People of God." (15) The relationship between identity and purpose is made explicit in a subsequent report which states, "Through baptism the Christian is united with Christ and shares his mission of work, witness and apostolic charity." (16) Gibbs and Morton describe this succinctly. The Church, they say, is "the people of God living the life of Christ." (17) Granted that definitions vary with the purpose for which they are made, for our present purpose this last is a better, if briefer, definition than that officially adopted for other purposes by the Church of England which runs, "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. " (18) This is too static for our purposes, too inward-looking, for it says nothing of the purpose of the Church. In this respect it is similar to the Lambeth Quadrilateral, which likewise identifies the Church by its possessions. When he whose body is claimed to be the Church was asked to identify himself, he set about it in another way. His self-description was conveyed in dynamic terms. His questioners were told to report what they saw was happening because of him. "Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dread skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor." (19) Vatican 11 took up this dynamic approach to the Church. "The Church, consequently, equipped with the gifts of

her Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God." (20) Richard Stewart, secretary of the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission for England and Wales, drew out some of the implications of this. "Thus the Church will be (a) Catholic, knowing how to express what is universal in the Christian message of God's love for all; (b) Evangelical, reaching out effectively to share this Good News by word and life in community; (c) Reformed, willing to engage in self-criticism and to weed out what is not authentic in thought and practice." (21)

Thus, if the Church is people who have been brought into such an intimate relationship with Jesus that they can collectively be described as his body, then it follows that "each member of the Church is sent to offer Christ to the world." (22) This was, historically in Jesus of Nazareth, a matter of self- sacrifice. It is, in the members of his continuing earthly body, the same thing. Offering Christ to the world means offering themselves. "So the Church exists for the world ... It is present in the world in order that the world may be changed." (23) Under God, people are the subject and the object of the Church. That should put the rural Church in the van when it comes to demonstrating the Church's identity and purpose.

2. Its renewal.

Having reached the point at which we see the Church to be people whose lives have been changed by their union with Christ and who are sent by him to change the lives of the people who comprise the rest of the world, we have to admit that the evidence does not support the theory. Bruce Reed supplies an uncomfortable standard of judgment. "The task of the prophet is to evaluate the performance by the Church of its primary task. He does not judge its effectiveness by its attendance, spirituality, or the scope of its activities, which are the measures so often used by the members of the churches themselves. His yardstick is the state of the society in which the Church works." (24) If the general conviction is correct about society being markedly less Christian than at other times in living memory, then this could as easily be due to

the Church being less Christian, also, or to a different conception of what it means to be Christian, as much as to the determination of the populace at large not to be converted. A certain change in the outlook of society must be accepted. In that the Church is part of society, we must accept that the Church changes, too. "There was a vigorous lay life in the Church so long as economic life found its productive unit in the family and the obedience of a Christian could be adequately expressed in family life, public service and private morality. But this simple pattern based on a simple agricultural economy did not long survive. New discoveries in science and new developments in industry broke it. Men had to go out of their homes to work. New and larger groupings of men were created in factory and shop and office. A new split appeared. This was not the old one between clergy and laity but a new one between Church and society - between what a man heard in church and what he did in the world. The new forms of industrial and economic life developed outside the jurisdiction and outside the concern of the Church. A man's Christian obedience was still in the old terms of family life, public life and private morality. But these, which before had covered the whole of his life, now had to do only with a part - the private, domestic part lived in a man's leisure time. The layman's obedience came to be seen as in the Church, not in the world. It had nothing to do with his work and his livelihood. This naturally did not happen at once. Indeed it can be said to have happened fully only in our own day." (25) This is the situation of which Leslie Paul presumably found sufficient trace to cause him to suggest that "it would seem that the Church is still the focus of a natural group in a natural rural community, that in a town it is a congregational group and that in the suburb it plays an ambivalent role." (26) Whether or not this is, or was, true of the suburbs, it is, in fact, doubtful whether it still pertained (in 1963) in more than a very small number of rural places. Almost two decades after Paul made his suggestion, the rural Church had all too often and all too obviously acquired the ambivalent role he attributed to it in suburbia, reflecting the social change that had widened the lives of its flock and was, not infrequently, well on the way to the congregational status he accorded it in the town. So, Michael Taylor, the Principal of the Northern Baptist College, speaking on

team ministries, refers to "the gathered churches with which I am familiar but which most of us are now becoming." (27)

Where the demands of the workaday world were sufficiently comprehensive or pressing in other ways, Christians were compelled to choose to live either in the Church or in the world. There should be more sympathy than criticism for the many who felt bound to choose the latter. This was, at least in part, due to the fact that the Church had failed to recognise that the life of its laity, particularly its rural laity, had ceased to be homogeneous. It had, that is to say, been unaware that it was its own life that was being changed by the new pressures exerted on its members.

This brings us to the tension inevitably experienced by the Church as it tries to realise and present its eternal verities in contemporary form. In a rapidly changing world there are some who contest any change in an organisation into which they can periodically retreat for mental relief from these changes. Others, finding contemporary agnosticism, or even ecumenism, too much to bear, demand the continuing spiritual support of an unchanging routine, language or rite. The authors of the forward-looking "The Church 2000" published a review of the reactions they had received. Here the demand for an unchanging Church reached its limit. "Adaptation to the modern world ... is adaptation to evil." (28) Yet, if the record of scripture - and supremely that of the incarnation - is any guide, the unchanging God acts among men in a way which is so much a part of their daily experience that he can be overlooked or completely misunderstood. In this respect, a Church that is prepared to change is to be commended not criticised, and if its rigidity has been one of the causes of its current weakness, openness to the present must be encouraged. This is not only to recognise the essentially pilgrim nature of the Church militant, but also to accept that, humanly speaking, "it is characteristic of our personal existence, as well as of the course of history, to be necessarily on the move; there is no standing still in history. Every generation has to set out anew ... What is true for the individual is no less true for the Church as a whole. It, too, is constantly being called on to break camp, and it has to leave behind what was once its gain ... (though) ... it is our misfortune that the Church, like the old Adam, is rarely willing to set out

and trek across the desert; it would rather stick to the good old ways, even when Jesus, as high priest, calls it to perilous freedom and to a heavenly festal gathering on Mount Zion. The Christian world has continually been getting weary on its long journey through time, and has always been tempted in like manner to apostatize from the faith." (29)

The Church is in the world if not, eschatologically, part of it. In many ways Church and world must change in the same things and at the same time and speed. Mathon and Cradley, two rural communities just West of Great Malvern, provided a working party prior to the Hereford Consultation in 1976. Recognising the need for change, part of its report said, "What is wanted is not a shoring-up of old traditions but, in the light of pressing social and economic change a fundamental reappraisal of the Church's role in the community, a return to first principles." (30) A retreating Church, declining in numbers and steadily losing contact with its surrounding community, lacks the vision, the conviction or the courage to face up to the changes it is experiencing. Unable to see that this may be the cause of its decline, it looks back to its reputedly better years. " ... we are used to church meetings where we anxiously examine the falling graphs of church membership. So far we have mostly assumed that the appropriate response is to call in the stewardship advisers to help bolster things up or to lay on a mission. Behind this lies the hope that if we can find the right note to strike the numbers of adherents will return and things can go on as before." (31) What is needed, rather than this, is the free recognition that "the essential nature of the Church does not change, and today, we are called to understand that nature and reassess that mission in the light of our own circumstances. We have to do it, not in the security of the time worn structures with which we are so familiar, but in the rapidly changing and unfamilar world of today." (32) It is significant that the writers, on behalf of the Church, see the world not only as rapidly changing but as unfamiliar, whereas, for the majority of people, however rapidly it is changing, today's world is the familiar one and the Church unfamiliar. Hundreds of years ago, Deutero-Isaiah gave voice to the proper attitude for God's people to take in this sort of situation. "But the Lord says, Do not cling to events of the past or dwell

on what happened long ago. Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already - you can see it now." (33)

One of the new things comes as the result of the Church's new ambivalent position. There is no lack of testimony to the effect that "in the countryside there is very little open antagonism to the church; rather a profound apathy, and an almost invincible inability to see that church-going has much to do with being a Christian, or indeed with life itself." (34) Perhaps all this shows is that the rural vision is restricted to the immediately practical business of physical living. It need not imply that the Church is singled out for special non-attention. In 1972 there was an investigation into the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers in 44 parishes in Suffolk. "68.1% of the members interviewed had never attended a branch meeting in the year before the interview. Moreover, 23.5% of the members could not even state accurately which branch they belonged to. The main reasons given for not attending branch meetings were, 'not interested' (34.2%), 'no meetings held' (20.5%), 'no time' (15.1%), 'not informed' (9.6%). This display of apathy at the branch level is, of course, by no means unusual in the trade union movement as a whole ... Since most members rely on the existence of the N.U.A.A.W. as a safety net which is simply 'there' in times of need, like an insurance policy, there is little incentive to engage in active participation in union affairs." (35) This is so typical of the Church, especially the rural Church; with minor adjustments, even the reasons are the same; certainly the underlying belief is. If this attitude has never been far from the surface, it has become unmistakable in recent years. It is at this point that the problem of the church building and its clergyman is most exposed. Of what use is a shepherd or a fold if there is no flock? The population knows precisely the answer to this. Christmas and Easter, "Mothers' Day" and harvest, baptisms, weddings and funerals occupy both fold and shepherd. The signing of passport applications and the writing of references will probably come next highest on the majority of lists of the shepherd's usefulness. Satisfactory though this may be for the population, the clergyman is often still left with a conviction that, apart from these popular occasions when nearly everyone is present, his flock is almost

non-existent and his role as shepherd questionable, outdated by the passage of time. Is the Church's ministry today to be mainly an attempt to perpetuate a form of social service for which there is not simply still room within the various State-run caring agencies, but a real and possibly growing demand that these agencies cannot assuage? If not that, then perhaps the Church's ministry ought now to be basically prophetic, involving not only the speaking of God's word for our time, but also encouraging a specific and recognisable response to it. "In settled times there may be little or no pressure to articulate a mythology or theology. In times of change the rituals may no longer be adequate to contain and give meaning to the experiences of the community ... In this case the survival of the people and their religion may depend upon a prophetic initiative which reinterprets the ancient symbols or introduces new ones." (36) This may repel rather than attract, but if the regaining of the roles of shepherd and flock are important, it may offer the best way of achieving them. At that, the understanding of the purpose of the clergyman and 'his' building as primarily for worship would also re-emerge.

But all this ignores the discovery that the Church is people, not a building or a solitary person. This can result in a dilemma which has been portrayed as a choice for the people who know themselves to be the Church as to whether they will choose to exercise their ministry by being the equivalent of the biblical metaphor of light or that of salt/yeast. The Revd. John Poulton, when secretary of the Archbishops' Council on Evangelism, explained the nature of the choice. Writing of the former, he said, "the theology of it is that you first convince individuals of their need to be converted to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and thereafter draw their attention to the need for Christians to be good parish councillors or members of the PTA. In other words the argument is from the personal to a more general view of the kingdom of God." Referring to the 'salt' or 'yeast' people, he says, "they focus where they believe God is in action, and is to be discovered, served and proclaimed (i.e. in the whole life of the community). Together, clergy and laity will be found on local committees, action groups, community-care organisations, and so on. Were they to think about it, they would say that somewhere or other in the process, individuals

may come to find Jesus Christ for themselves." "In such a setting, evangelism is seen primarily in terms of making God's kingdom known (i.e. lived) in the whole community, with some (the priestly group on behalf of them all) doing the 'religious' bit in church (encouraged by most of the others at the major festivals). " (37) The basis of his recommendation of a choice for salt/yeast is simply that a rural community finds the alternative hard to live with. "Moreover, a constant preaching for crisis-decision whether in terms of Christian commitment or of loyalty to the institution ... seems somehow to be out of scale in a small community. In a highly mobile town or suburban setting, such preaching can appear to be having results ... But when numbers and movements in and out are reduced to 'knowable' proportions, as in a village or small country town, another dynamic takes over." (38)

Another contributor to the same work seems to reach the same conclusion. With explicit reference to country people, we find Prebendary R.Dore, of Hereford cathedral, saying, "... they expect the Church to identify with them and work with their grain rather than against it. This often represents something of a quandary : whether to identify with the popular folk-image of the 'successful' Church life of the 1900's and try to put the clock back to that period or whether to identify with the realities that secular change has wrought. If Christian thought is about truth, it is surely better to opt for present reality than past illusion. Moreover contemporary change in the Church itself gives little opportunity of putting the clock back." (39) On the other hand, Claire Easman, who came from Sierra Leone in 1979 to visit the north east of England as a member of a Partners in Mission team, said this of a chaplaincy to showmens' guilds, theatres and clubs. "It was evident that the Chaplain had established vital links with the people he served. What was perhaps not so clear was what part the Gospel actually played in these relationships. One of the people interviewed had known the Chaplain for fourteen years. When asked about gambling as a social evil he confessed that he had voluntarily closed that area of his business, but one did not feel that that had been an expression of a sensitive Christian conscience. It was not at all clear what this gentleman had gained from the pastoral ministry, besides the good relationship which obviously existed ... Is

ministry only going to be seen as a service to men, or also as part of calling on men to respond to God's provisions for redemption?" (40) While not pretending to be rural, this is a radical criticism of following a salt/yeast policy.

It is important for the Church to realise that there is a polarisation between these two views of itself and its work and that the distance between the poles is large. (41) Whichever is favoured, the dilemma remains. Crudely stated, it is that the 'light' Church, by maintaining its role as an unambiguous beacon indicating the path to the kingdom of God, may forfeit its effectiveness by being too removed from the people it would assist, while the 'salt/yeast' Church, in its endeavour to avoid the danger of losing contact with the world in which it is set, may become so identified with it that its purpose there is lost. This is a real and pressing dilemma in a village. The Church is taken to be part of the village and expected to fit in. Its role is responsive rather than initiatory. If it does initiate, it will be in reaction to village need. The occasional place that the village finds in its life for the Church's services corresponds with the demands it makes on its other assets, the hall, the shop, the public house and the school. The Church, however, or more usually, the clergyman, may well reverse this pattern and consider the village to be the Church's constituency. The village's occasional reference to the Church may reinforce the latter's latent conviction that there is a division between the two, and the situation which offers the Church a role as salt/yeast is rejected in favour of its own choosing to be light. If, however, we can bring ourselves to differentiate between the Church as the ordained ministry and the Church as baptised people, the choices need not be mutually exclusive for the laity has a dual role which embraces both metaphors. In their places of daily living the Church's lay folk are called to be salt/yeast, working out their Christian commitment from within a situation they share with their work-fellows, families, leisure associates. When they gather into Christian (Church) groups they represent the metaphor of light, acting in a manner distinguishable from, though open to, the rest of their community. If, in either case and at any stage in either process, the dangers we have mentioned are immediate, in the country, where there is still a reasonable proportion of people whose

homes and employment, and perhaps even recreation, are located within the one community, there is more opportunity of presenting the balanced life that Jesus presumably intended when he used both metaphors. Wherever, in any specific instance, the emphasis for renewal is laid, to be effective it must correspond to the gospel and the situation as it actually is. It must also be clear enough for all to understand. Harry Morton, as general secretary of the B.C.C., addressed an ecumenical meeting in September, 1977, with the words, "The differing patterns of Church life are shaped by the needs of the gospel and by historical circumstance ... Therefore, the Churches, acting together, need to discern the signs of the times that they may be freed from many forms of redundancy and false commitments and to define afresh the priorities of the gospel and engage together in a diversity of witness." If this doesn't solve the problem, at least it describes it well, as also does the comment that "... the local Church cannot become related again to its environment unless it transforms its own self-concept and its own form ... Ultimately the problems both of the renewal of the Church and of evangelism can be solved only through ecumenical co-operation." (42)

3. Its reunion.

To speak of engaging together for the renewal of the Church, both in general and in its rural manifestation, implies a fresh evaluation by it of the relationship of its various parts. "Ecumenism is an integral part of the renewal of the Church and its promotion should be the constant concern of the local church." (43) This is true whether one holds the operative part of John 17:21 to end with the word 'us' - "that they may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, so also may they be in us" (N.E.B.) - implying an ontological reality which is to be desired for its own sake, or whether one includes the subsequent clause - "that the world may believe that thou didst send me" - implying a desire for unity the better to evangelise (cf. Edinburgh, 1910). It even holds good in the face of the suggestion that when the parts of the Church were in competition they flourished; that it was only when they began to experience weakness, first abroad and later at home, that they

recognised each other and gave birth to the ecumenical movement (cf B.R.Wilson, "Religion in Secular Society"). Although some sections of the Church still find extreme difficulty in associating themselves with other sections, it is now generally true, with exceptions and varying reservations, that each accepts the others as part of the one body. There is, then, implicit within the thought of renewal, an impulsion towards reunion, whether the latter is considered as something already extant but needing to be realised and demonstrated (cf. "Ten Points of Christian Unity: An Alternative Statement, privately written and published in reply to "Visible Unity - Ten Propositions") or whether it is considered to be something which the Church has to work to gain (cf. "Visible Unity - Ten Propositions"). Similarly, there can be no serious attempt at reunion without a preliminary and continuing aptitude for renewal. Archbishop Ramsey drew these threads together when he said, "If Christian unity is made a theme in isolation it is in danger of being seen solely in the dimension of dogma and ecclesiastical life, but if it is linked with the theme of spiritual renewal then it comes to be seen also in the dimension of the call to holiness and the call to evangelise the world. Unity is deepened and extended as Christians grow together in the way of holiness, and as they serve humanity in the name of the gospel of Christ. Unity is realised as the Church is in its human elements purged of blemishes and so enabled to follow better both its heavenly calling and its mission to the world." (44)

Holiness, unity and the service of humanity are today's expressions of the biblical commission to love God and our neighbours as ourselves. If each is desirable for itself, all benefit from association with each other. In practice, however, there are differences of emphasis. Stress laid upon holiness asserts the truth that the nearer each of us, individually and denominationally, gets to God, the nearer we shall find we have drawn to each other. This is our vocation to inward, spiritual growth. The usual simile for this sees God as the hub of a wheel and us as the spokes, with one of our ends, hopefully behind us, when we are, at one and the same time, as far away from each other and from God as the perimeter of the wheel allows, and the other end anchored within God and as close to each other as it is possible to get. To be able to practice holiness in more than a tentative or wistful way seems

always to be the privilege of the few. It is not easily done in the country, for whereas an urban few would be lost in the crowds, a rural few stand out. Unless their commitment is of an order higher than customarily met it is more liable to provoke resentment and disunity than achieve the desired results. Nor are they sure of success even if it is. Jesus was crucified. Yet without this open-ness to God, this willingness to be truly formed in his image, there can be no meaningful claim to be the Church. Impossible this may seem to be; utterly necessary it certainly is if real and substantial Christian progress is to be made.

Accentuating unity conveys the conviction that violence has been done to the intention of God, as expressed in Christ, that his people should be one. As unity is recovered, so doctrine is justified, power renewed and purpose made more possible of achievement. This is not a call for uniformity. It is the recognition of differing disciplines and the determination to work within these constraints, labouring the while to reduce them to the minimum. Here the usual picture is that which St. Paul used when he spoke of the Church as the body of Christ, pointing out the necessity for all its disparate parts to acknowledge and work with and for each other. To accentuate unity is not easier of achievement for the rural Christian. If there is more than one branch of the Church in any strength in the community, denominational tradition is reinforced by family memories, and while it is one thing to attend each other's harvest or carol services, it is quite another to think in terms of one building closing and all attending the other regularly. In fact, far from there being two strong denominations, very many villages have only one - and that not necessarily strong - and its one building. What to do then is another puzzle for the accentuator of unity. In practice, it is unlikely that unity will be achieved simply as an organisational merger. A pre-condition is the merger of the people concerned into a mutually recognised family of Christ. This may leave differing continuing organisations but will have the heart of the matter, the unity that is provided through a primary relationship with God. "Structures cannot create life, but are needed to contain it. No amount of buckets can create water: but once get some water and buckets are so important that, for all practical purposes, it seems that the equation holds good - 'no buckets, no water'.

Structures become important once life is found, but if there is no life then no change of structures will bring it about." (45)

To underline service demonstrates the belief that the Church does not exist for its own sake and that its preservation and unity are of importance only if it is trying to share what it has been given with those who have not yet apprehended that gift for themselves. As with the miracles of Jesus, this will be the natural and outward expression of a union with the holy Father and a recognition of the unity and needs of his creation. "Once you have seen the focus of Church activity as outside itself ... it is very difficult indeed to make ecumenism peripheral." (46) Professor John Macquarrie puts it even more profoundly. "This type of ecumenism therefore comes as a timely reminder that the end of history, according to Christian belief, is not the church but the kingdom of heaven, and this is a more inclusive concept, gathering up both church and world in an eschatological unity." (47) In a rural setting, underlining service is the easiest of these three emphases, though that is not to say that it is easy. It is well received by some because they see it as a remedy against the disintegration of rural life, a modern cement of empire. Leslie Paul seems to see it this way. "Yet, I feel a combination of socially active, socially oriented churches and chapels, with voluntary organisations, and using the facilities statutory organisations have to provide and in alliance with Parish Councils, could go a long way towards regenerating rural life." (48) A more important advantage is that it appeals to the rural residents themselves as being uncomplicated and directly pertinent. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the community's ethic. There is an inherited ability to put aside family feuds and frictions in case of necessity. All can be relied upon to give whatever help is needed by whoever is in trouble. Confident of this common contact, a group from three small villages straddling the Herefordshire/Radnorshire border, Old Radnor, Knill and Kinnerton, is sure that "the basis for developing Christianity in the rural areas must be friendship, getting to know people and caring." (49) But from the Christian point of view this emphasis will not stand on its own indefinitely. It needs a power centre if it is to be more than an occasional and preferential activity. "One of the great weaknesses of the talk of the Church throughout this century about lay ministry is that little recognition has been given to the

priority of spirituality. A layman, like a clergyman, cannot exercise a fruitful ministry unless he is himself open to God and gifted by him for the task. It is the Holy Spirit who is the key to ministry. Only when empowered by him will lay ministry forward the kingdom of God ..." (50) "Social awareness and spiritual depth must go hand in hand in our Christian mission." (51)

Thus, if personal and corporate characteristics issue in a distinction of emphasis between holiness, unity and service, this must never be at the expense of a continuing view of the complete picture and an acceptance of the positive value of the parts being contributed to the whole by those whose emphases are different. Equally there must be no denial of the fact that the essential unity, the essential Christian vocation, is between us and Christ. Here we must acknowledge, albeit briefly, the Church's debt to the people who are described as neo-Pentecostals or charismatics. A.M. Hunter diagnoses the Church's weakness as due to the loss of the Spirit which, he says, "has gone out of our Christianity" and, picking up Gibbs' and Morton's phrase, he goes on, "and that for lack of it we are in peril of becoming 'God's frozen people.' (52) In our generation it is "the Pentecostals who in their own - often uncouth - way have recovered the lost power of the Spirit. Criticise them as we may ... none may deny that the Pentecostal movement ... has revitalised many moribund churches and that it has promoted warmer Christian fellowship." (53) Most impressively, this has happened without regard to denominational boundaries, to cultures or to continents. A new and deep fellowship in the Spirit has been developing among people of differing, even conflicting, doctrinal positions and they are sharing a transformed and renewed life. Although "total integration of charismatic renewal into Church life will be synonymous with the realisation of unity among the Churches," without waiting for this, already "for many people, charismatic renewal has provided the first real experience of Christian fellowship across denominational boundaries. It is the first example of a mass movement in which Christians from across deep divides (Catholic - Protestant; critical - fundamentalist) have experienced in their hearts a unity in the Lord's work transcending their differences." (54)

There is no doubt that, even if not at that depth for most of the Church, one of the main reasons for the advance in its

ecumenical prospects since the 1960's has been a similar determination to quarrel less over the things which divide and to realise more the things held in common. This is most easily done, of course, when theology is avoided. So we have seen how the ecumenical movement established itself in its early vulnerable years by its practical activities, the first Councils of Churches being aimed at the improvement of their surrounding social environment, the self-descriptive Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship of 1924, and the Life and Work movement preceding that for Faith and Order. We noticed, also, how 99% of today's Councils of Churches work for Christian Aid and how this activity topped the list of their most worthwhile tasks in their opinion. If operating this way is easier for the Church in its internal disarray, it is also easier for it in its relationship with the wider world, to which, in its better moments, it remembers it is sent. Rupert Davies ascribes to the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission's Louvain meeting in 1971 the more widespread acceptance of the idea of the Church and its unity as sacramental, a necessary prelude to the unity of the world. This meeting, he said, "widened the scope of the ecumenical idea by taking as its theme 'The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind'. The theme itself was treated in a way that seemed to many to be over-academic, but it was now firmly on the ecumenical agenda; the unity of the Church is seen not as an end in itself, but as a stage in a means towards the unity of all mankind and above all as a 'sign' of what is to come ... The Churches are not called to huddle together; they are called to open themselves to the world by offering an example of diversity in unity to a world which knows little of unity and too much of diversity." (55)

Whereas, in some ways, it is presently difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the Church from the rest of the world, this is usually due to the failure of the Church rather than its success. In other ways the difference between the two could hardly be greater, though, sadly, this does not always imply the Church's success. It is not so much that the Church inhabits a little world of its own, with its own language and activities, and finds difficulty in translating the one and explaining the other in terms which make either appear significant to the uninitiated, but rather that its unspoken assumptions are becoming incommunicable to an increasingly

secular world. Unity here may be thought to involve some action similar in principle to the Incarnation. The worker-priest is, perhaps, the most obvious illustration of this, but this way is immediately seen to be available to the smallest minority of Christians. More fruitful for this is the rediscovery that every wage or income earning Christian - indeed, every Christian person - is already an integral part of that world and that the gap between the Church and its mission field is spanned quite naturally by a major proportion of its members. When these unite for practical action in their secular world the prospects begin to be more hopeful. "Ecumenism is an activity of love, and love does not consist simply in looking at each other but in looking together in the same direction." (56)

For the most part, however, this practical ecumenism is of a type which is confined to leisure hours and takes the form of small groups, for example, a member of the Church of England Men's Society and a member of the Knights of St. Columba, attending to some social need in the locality in which they live. This can be effective, in that alleviation of social disorder can be achieved, and impressive from an outward looking Christian point of view. For this, the rural Church is well placed. In such a circumscribed community, which still has a basically inter-related life, members who are an integral part of that life are ideally situated. Even the urban necessity of contriving small groups (of strangers) is obviated. As individuals and together they belong there and are related for support to the other Church members and related for ministry to their co-sharers in the larger life of the community, although, as we have already noted, mutual support for rural residents is a normal feature of their lives and is given and received without reference to Christian allegiance. No doubt the same is true of heaven. This is the major reason why Church and society alike should pay the closest attention to such traditional rural life as is still extant.

It has even been possible to include evangelism in this type of activity, as was seen in the days of Call to the North as well as the more local Campaign for United Evangelism in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, the New Initiative in Birmingham, the Mission Unlimited in Surrey. Currently we have the Nationwide Initiative

in Evangelism. These have all had Roman Catholic participation, which was urged upon the membership of that Church, long known for its fear of indifferentism, with the publication in 1975 of its Ecumenical Commission's pamphlet, "With One Voice" and, more recently, in 1978, "What can we do about Christian unity?"

Professor John Macquarrie, for instance, is so convinced that the rendering of service to the world is the way for the Church to proceed towards its destiny that he envisages a united Church coming as a consequence of it but, embedded in its heart, there lies the theology which cannot continually be ignored. "From a Christian point of view, this non-exclusive secular ecumenism is not just good works apart from the gospel but a common obedience. Its basis is not a non-Christian humanism but the recognition that all humanity is the creation of God and the concern of God, and has a share in that image of God that is perfectly expressed in Christ." (57) So it is that, if the Church's mission is to effect the transformation of society, it will only be successful in this when its actions within society are explained in specifically Christian terms. (58)

This is the moment when house groups make their appearance. Suffering from the major weakness that they appeal only to a minority and giving rise to the impression that "we have turned the faith into a talking point ... something preached, an examinable subject in school or university" (59), they nevertheless make an indispensable contribution. Apart from the obvious acquisition by the group's members of a deepening grasp of Christian doctrine and the discovery of what members of varying Christian allegiances hold dearest, there is the added, and originally unexpected, bonus of finding that what the members hold in common is as likely to run across denominational boundaries as within them; often more so. As important as anything is the involvement of lay folk that house groups bring. We shall meet the groups again later as they could be a key feature of rural ecumenism. For the moment we are content to record their existence, their contribution to ecumenism and their place as a link between the emphases on practical action and on worship, between the outside world and the inside Church, so to speak, for it is not long before the house group wraps its deliberations in prayer and sometimes, eventually, a sacramental meal. Other opportunities to worship

together are provided through prayer groups, retreats, special days of prayer, ecumenical services and vigils, to name but the most common. Thus do the three prongs of the ecumenical movement, holiness, unity and service, find expression at local level.

Here is the place to record the widespread sentiment to the effect that old suspicions and rivalries are gradually crumbling as we discover what it means to think of ourselves as one Church, so that no matter what happens nationally, for example, to the Churches' Council for Covenanting, what has taken root locally will assuredly continue. Not that conviction is entirely absent at national level. The Bishop of Oxford, having been chairman of the Churches' Unity Commission, expressed to his diocesan synod in March, 1979, his belief that "there is no sufficient reason why orthodox Trinitarian Christians should not be within one community by the end of the present century." (60) But even if the Bishop is correct, "unity cannot be 'imposed' by some sort of peace treaty signed simultaneously in Rome and Canterbury." (61) David Thompson speaks sterner words about this. "It is worth noting in passing that much opposition to ecumenical schemes is opposition to centralised bureaucracy even though this is not a unique characteristic of the ecumenical movement." (62) Indeed, the days of nationally initiated schemes could well be over. National Church leadership may now consist of permitting local developments and providing the subsequent structures to support what is best in them. If this reverses the previously intended chain of events, it has sufficient precedent, not least in the New Testament. Cardinal Suenens sits even looser to the inherited hierarchy of authority. "The success of ecumenism does not solely depend upon whether or not Christians will eventually be reunited in one Body. Ecumenism is already succeeding, day by day, when it leads us to open ourselves, together, to the gifts and riches of the Spirit which lie beyond all confessional barriers ... Ecumenism is not primarily a matter of negotiations between the Churches, but a movement of deep inner Christian renewal." (63) This is a salutary counter to the bureaucratic, who may see the rural situation as ideal for the introduction of a measure of rationalisation. Like an ecclesiastical Monopoly player, he may be tempted to deal in property - a chapel and the cost of its heat and light for an empty vicarage, a place in

the team ministry and a share in the use of the parish church. In fact, it is not so much a question as to whether the Anglican thumb will co-operate with the Methodist finger, but if either will obey the prompting of the brain, for if the Church is, as scripture indicates, the body of Christ, he is the head, the brain, and should be the controlling influence, with the Church's share being that of accepting and then doing his will. In 1975 there was issued a Joint Statement by the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Reformed Churches of the U.S.A. It was entitled, "The Unity We Seek" and its very first words were, "Our consensus is that the first step in understanding the shape of the unity we seek is an understanding of the Church as the people of God ... i.e. the abiding core of the Christian life is our oneness in Christ through faith and baptism ... any distinction is subordinate to this unity and to be judged by the priority of our commitment to Christ." (64) Fr. Jean Tillard, a member of A.R.C.I.C., sums it up: "The question of ecumenism is fundamentally not a question of goodwill or generous involvement, but a Christological problem: the problem of the true acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ." (65) As such it should grow naturally. It cannot be forced but it can be fostered.

One of the most encouraging features of this unstructured approach is that it has helped all to see that because others hold differing beliefs they are no longer automatically to be condemned as being in error. Indeed, "it is extremely unlikely that, if we were given the opportunity of dividing up Christendom according to its present differences, the limits of the various denominations would fall even approximately where they lie today." (66) Further, we are beginning to understand that "not all differences are necessarily divisive. Some differences may help us all to a richer understanding of the truly infinite riches of the mystery of Christ and his Church." (67) In a passage of insight and love, Cardinal Suenens wrote of this, "Ecumenical sensitivity quite naturally engenders an attitude of honesty and sincere respect for others. No one has the freehold or even a leasehold on the full light of truth: Jesus alone is God's definitive Revelation ... I have to respect what my brother sees and to appreciate the measure of truth contained in his assertion. Our most hardened controversies generally stem from our inability to reconcile two partial truths that are not mutually

exclusive. At all events, the path of ecumenism starts with love, which engenders hope and leads to an ever-increasing faith." (68) Rupert Davies is blunter and without trace of finesse. "The cause of continued divisions is as often social, historical, economic or political as it is theological. Most often of all, it is reluctance to change what has been valuable in the past, for fear of losing the psychological security which established ways of doing things provide. What seems to oneself to be a proper reverence for the past is seen by others as obstinacy or prejudice, and this is sometimes exactly what it is." (69)

There are, of course, differences which are genuinely theological and deeply divisive. One hopes that they will all eventually be seen to fall within Cardinal Suenens' assessment of our approach to them. Given one Lord, we may expect this to be so, unless we are dealing in error.

There remains one further category of difference. This is in the realm of the peripheral, if not inessential. At that, we remember that the ecumenical aim is for unity not uniformity and if it can be argued that the strength of an article can be greater if that article is composed of a number of parts, as in the case of laminated wood, than if it is a solitary item, then a composite Church, of wide comprehension, will be stronger - because truer - than a monotypic Church. "But it must be stressed that unity and diversity belong together in the Church. Both are essential to its life and health ... A stark unity freezes the Church and inhibits development. A sheer diversity would dissipate the Church and cause her to disappear. Only unity and diversity together can be fruitful." (70) This positive use of difference is to be commended, providing those differences are frankly acknowledged and not blurred by re-phrasing or ambiguous presentation so as to appear other than they really are. It is this tendency towards duplicity as seen by some, for example, in the intended Church of England/Methodist Act of Reconciliation, as well as in some of the expressions used in the A.R.C.I.C. Agreed Statements, that adds to the numbers of clergymen who are suspicious of official ecumenical advances.

Clergymen, as a whole, are almost as indifferent to ecumenism as most of the laity. Not that this is necessarily a criticism of

ecumenism. Neither group is notable for its interest in much outside its own community, though there are conspicuous exceptions to this. While subscribing to ecumenism as a principle - and not all get so far - few clergymen pay it more than lip-service and fewer are likely to embrace it with joy if it directly affects their existing congregations. It is not solely from the laity that "there is still considerable resistance to the pursuit of Christian unity, particularly when the ecumenical movement threatens the identity of a particular Church or community." (71) It is surprising, therefore, that Bryan Wilson should conclude that ecumenism is a defence mechanism, mounted primarily by clerics for their own professional survival. Because of their professional competence and their wider ecclesiastical contacts more of them should know more about it than their congregations. It would be reasonable to conclude from this that some of them will be more enthusiastic about it than many of their people. Thus David Thompson writes, "It remains significant that ministers are relatively more committed ecumenically than laity, and this is due to their position as ministers: but it is not primarily related to sacerdotalism or a desire for higher status: it is because in the nature of their position they are more likely to be exposed to the sort of experience which stimulates ecumenical attitudes. Pre-occupation with the local is what hinders ecumenicity. Thus itinerancy in Methodism gave the ministers a greater sense of identification with each other than with their congregations, and this influenced their attitudes to reunion. But this situation was virtually unique to the Methodist denominations since in both the Church of England and the older dissent it was more natural for ministers to identify with their localities, even though there were still differences between ministers and laity. In the twentieth century more people have been exposed to the kind of social experience implicit in Methodist itinerancy." (72) On the other hand, if the last sentence is extended to cover the widespread benefits of television, cheap newspapers, ownership of cars and foreign holidays, then this difference between any clergyman and his people is much diminished. Thompson is, however, a little rash to predicate that, if ecumenism is fostered by travel and other widening experiences, lack of these experiences inhibits ecumenism. Pre-occupation with the local can be as much an advantage as a hindrance. Whatever their internal differences, villagers see

essential division in life to lie between them and the outside world. In that it conforms to externally located regulations, the Church has been one of their big dividers. Given the opportunity, they could equally well decide for or against ecclesiastical unity, or anything else, simply because it suits their particular situation. Their conclusion may well be reached because of, rather than despite, their lack of ecumenism-producing experiences. It is true, also, that no ecumenical theory or plannning can become more than that unless it is given practical form in specific, i.e. local, instances. Unless those forms are given under duress then, in every instance, there will come a time when theory and the outside world are excluded and the decision reached on purely local expectations.

In the event, neither part of the Church, the clerical or the lay, can sidestep ecumenism as long as the Church remains true to its vocation to evangelise. Mission and unity have long been seen to go together, so much as to be the equivalent of the two sides of one coin. So, Archbishop Coggan could say in a sermon preached, notably, in Westminster Cathedral, on St. Paul's day, 1978, the 70th. anniversary of the first Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "The command to 'go into all the world and make disciples' has never been withdrawn; and obedience to this command is only weakened - I had almost said vitiated - if we go separately and dividedly." (73) In similar vein, Pope John Paul 11 can write, "... the only possibility we see of fulfilling the Church's universal mission... is that of seeking sincerely, perseveringly, humbly and also courageously the ways of drawing closer and of union." (74) Direct though both of these statements are, each is capable of implying that, in practice, it is possible for there to be a division between mission and unity. Bishop Alan Clark, Roman Catholic co-chairman of A.R.C.I.C. and president of E.C.E.W., will have none of this. "It is now inconceivable to promote the mission of the Church, particularly a Church resolved to renew itself and its spiritual resources, without that Church becoming irreversibly involved in the pursuit of Christian unity." (75) Of nowhere is this more true than the countryside. The United Reformed Church, with a display of its awareness of the conditions from which it had just sprung, wanted to know "if mission and unity go together, then we ask why it is that we have come to accept ecumenical approaches as the

relevant method of work in new towns and not in the older areas and in approach to the nation? " (76) The rural Church is surely subsumed under this query. Perhaps there, more than anywhere, evangelism demands the closest ecumenical co-operation, both in planning and execution. Without ecumenical goodwill, expressed in joint action, no rural evangelism will get very far. It is probably more inherited tradition and lack of a sense of urgency than conscious decision that have produced the situation described by the United Reformed Church. With society being so markedly urban orientated, the rural Church has been left alone, not to say neglected. The urban prizes are immensely greater, if numbers of people are the criteria, as they still are in a democracy. Post-war arrangements of urban populations have also demanded action from the Church. So it is there that the action has been. The rural Church has had to get along the best it could in the old ways. Insofar as these old ways have, until now, included a stauncher adherence to the faith, the official laissez-faire attitude that has generally prevailed has apparently been justified. But the times have brought change to the rural Church, too, and attention must soon be directed towards it - and not simply as a source from which the towns may draw reserves of clergymen.

There are places where the boundaries between urban, especially suburban, and rural communities are hard to define. Yet it would be neither sensible nor realistic to refuse to admit that life-styles differ and the life-style of some people means that the Church must make a different approach to them than it needs to make to their brothers and sisters having another life-style, though the purpose in each case would be the same. If we accept that the rural Church and the urban Church share one ecumenism, we must also accept that the ways to its achievement will have differing elements, for rural and urban communities differ. Thus we are led to ask if there is anything specifically rural about rural ecumenism and, if so, what are its distinctive features? It is no special case; in that it is rural, it is affected as much or as little as anything else that is rural. Five of the determining features of rural life stand out. These are they which make rural ecumenism distinctive.

1. Obviously, numbers in the country are smaller. This is the overriding and determining factor of rural life and which is its essential difference from urban life and that from which its other differences stem. Whatever temporary embarrassments this scarcity of population may bring, it does mean that there is at least a minimal social cohesion based upon what is often a complete set of personal relationships. There is a real unit and that unit is personal. This offers an understandable focal point for any local endeavour. What is proposed is viewed, as it were, from a corporate personality and has, therefore, a lively impact not always evident in comparable urban deliberations. Decisions are made accordingly.

2. It follows from this that every member of a rural population has an importance within the community that is not enjoyed by his urban counterpart. The views of all in the countryside can easily be canvassed, if they are not already known. It is particularly important to obtain as wide a consensus as possible, both because minimum numbers are usually needed for the successful prosecution of any project and also because even a few dissenters can have a disproportionate effect upon any programme. Neither of these reasons pertains in urban matters because the latter's numbers are so much higher. On the other hand, the possibility of obtaining widespread consent, or at least agreement, is evidently higher in a rural community and the potential effectiveness of any planning correspondingly enhanced.

3. Because of the intertwining of rural lives, the wider, worldly aspect of ecumenism is already extant. The Church has still to achieve its particular aspect within this. If this makes it appear that the cart, as it were, has preceded the horse, it is by no means certain that it has not reinstated horse and cart in their correct relative positions for "the use of the word (oikumene) in the New Testament is to describe the inhabited earth rather than relationships between different groups of Christians ... Here is no religious word with a meaning limited to ecclesiastical joinery, but one which gives a vision of the whole of life as the object of God's activity." (77) Real ecumenism, of course, is neither new nor strange outside the Church. Without even knowing the word, perhaps, the rural population generates it in all it does together.

If it ever became conscious of ecumenical need, all that would be required would be the removal of what are, to it, the artificial restraints which are introduced by the Church's restrictions on the life which is implied by the word. This would put on the same ecclesiastical footing those who, in others respects, consider themselves to be so already. Such a conception, even conviction, of corporate unity is a feature of the rural, rather than the urban, population.

4. In specifically ecclesiastical terms, two other major differences require mention. In an urban area there could be, and sometimes are, teams of clergymen of differing denominations who minister together to the members of an area. The reverse position applies to the countryside, where one clergyman is called to minister to members of differing denominations, who may well be present in one congregation.

5. Finally, we notice the great imbalance of denominational strengths in the countryside. With the exception of Cornwall, the areas immediately south of the Scottish border on the east of the country and, perhaps, the Yorkshire Dales, the Church of England is in a dominant position. For example, over the area covered by its rural diocese of Hereford it has no less than 79% of the total clerical manpower; in Norwich 73%, in Ely 71%, in Bath and Wells 70%. (78) (For comparison, in built-up areas the Church of England strength is roughly one to one with a combination of the others.) A local survey conducted in north Lancashire shows how the percentage of rurally employed Anglican clergymen is also being reduced. In a constantly changing situation, but always changing in the same direction, the percentage of these clergymen in that area has dropped recently from 21% to 14% (seepp 190/1below). Although there are non-Church of England rural churches and chapels, few clergymen other than Church of England now live in the countryside and many villages have only a Church of England church. The type, the form and the objectives of ecumenism under these conditions will be different, though this has still to be acknowledged or experienced in more than a handful of places.

B.

SOME PROGRESS AND SOME PROBLEMS

"Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren to dwell together in unity." (79)

"After six months of 'Working Groups', the time has now come for a gathering together of the Clergy, Church Officers and Group Members involved to present their findings, discuss the issues and resolutions raised, refer back to the Churches items for discussion and decision, and plot the next six months of work." (80)

1. Things begin to move.

In the Report on Councils of Churches which he produced for the B.C.C. in 1971, the Revd. R.M.C. Jeffery included a chapter on Rural Ecumenism. The introductory paragraph of this chapter said, "It has proved difficult to collect a great deal of material on this matter and as we shall show at the end of this chapter, this is a subject which requires much more detailed study." (81) The chapter concludes, "We therefore recommend that a Committee is established to investigate the question of rural ecumenism further." A year earlier there had been an ecumenical Consultation at High Leigh, Herts. Its report contained the comment that "It was accepted that, in purely rural areas, few people seemed aware of any scandal in disunity ... it was not easy to find any sense of mission in country parishes. So seriously did the Consultation take this situation, that it recommended that rural areas should be examined and, where co-operation is growing, designated as areas of ecumenical experiment. It was hoped that this would result in all appointments and changes in manpower being made with a view to encouraging ecumenical co-operation: this involves planning for the future in the countryside being done with constant regard to its ecumenical aspects." Ten years later it must be recorded that information about rural ecumenism is still difficult to obtain. For this a number of reasons may be adduced.

(i) The research may be faulty. To this suggestion there is, of course, no adequate response, either in the affirmative or negative. It is, however, unlikely to be faulty enough to miss a majority of instances although it is probable that it is responsible for the omission of some. A rural incumbent of 21 years' standing responded to a query from the researcher of the material for this study; "You are the first person in all those years to ask a serious question of me about ecumenism in rural areas." (82)

(ii) Rural ecumenism may be happening but be unrecorded either because it is entirely local and unassociated with any recognised ecumenical ecclesiastical structure, such as a Council of Churches, or because it is so much part of the continuing ecclesiastical scene that it is considered locally to be unremarkable. Examples of this would be harvest or carol services, either held jointly or, often, one after the other so that the villagers have two of each, all attending both.

(iii) Instances of rural ecumenism may be few. The Ecumenical Officer for England is one of the most likely people to know the truth of the matter. In 1977 this Officer wrote, "I have nothing directly on the subject of rural ecumenism." (83) As we shall see, denominationally authenticated instances are, indeed, few but there is much that falls within the categories mentioned in paragraph (ii) above.

There has, however, been some action at national level. Following the High Leigh report of 1970, there was set up in 1972 an ecumenically composed Joint Working Party on Rural Ecumenism which, progressing towards a report of its own, Minuted its ambition: "It was decided that the report should be readable yet provide a useful working paper for ecumenical officers, those involved in rural ministry and others in authority. It needed vision of what paths ecumenism could follow in the future rural setting; and reality. It must look at what is new and end on a constructive note." (84) The members of this Working Party laboured hard for three years. By April, 1975, there was circulating a final draft of their proposed report. It lacked only an introductory chapter. That chapter was never written and the report never published. No-one knows why. It was somewhat akin to the mystery of the Marie Celeste.

Life just seemed to have stopped in mid-journey. Perhaps the members were disappointed to find that what they had uncovered seemed so ordinary that it didn't merit publication. Certainly the original plan was immensely, possibly unworkably, detailed and the simpler, final product could have been undervalued by comparison with that, rather than valued because its ingredients, common enough in themselves, were uncommmon when mutually associated. However, attention had begun again to be directed towards the role of the Church in the countryside and, no doubt, encouragement was given to those who, like the members of the Institute of Rural Life and the Methodist Church in Rural Life Committee (soon to be joined by the Centre for Rural Social Studies, in Lincoln) were already engaged in this field.

Shortly after this, in 1976, the Anglican diocese of Hereford celebrated its 13th centenary by mounting a major programme on "Rural Society and the Church". This was by far the most comprehensive and well-ordered investigation yet undertaken into the specified theme. Many rural groups took an active part and professional support was available as required. The findings were published in 1977 under the title, "The Hereford Consultation". The Bishop of Lincoln, representing another very rural area, was so impressed by this that he asked the Centre for Rural Social Studies at Bishop Grosseteste College to plan a subsequent Consultation for 1979. Its objective was to review the developments in rural society identified by the Hereford meeting and to look ahead to the nature of rural society by the end of the century. It was structured similarly to its Hereford forerunner and, indeed, the organisers of the latter were generous in their encouragement and support of it. Its findings were published in 1980 as "the Lincoln Consultation on Rural Society" and smaller, shorter, regional conferences were planned so that these findings could be widely disseminated.

The Arthur Rank Centre, in the National Agricultural Centre, at Stoneleigh, near Kenilworth, exercises a continuing Christian ministry to and within the agricultural segment of society. It has two notable agents in this, the Revd. Canon Peter Buckler and the Revd. Canon Dr. A.J. Russell. Their services were used in Hereford, Lincoln and Luton (see below) and are readily available to all who ask for help in this area of life. So, too, the Arthur Rank - sponsored Methodist Luton Industrial College holds an annual

consultation on the agricultural industry. In December, 1978, it provided an occasion for a number of invited participants, who were known for their involvement in rural ecclesiastical matters, to consider rural ecumenism. As with Lincoln, regional mini-conferences were arranged to follow it so that the benefits of it might be generally shared.

It was at the 1978 Luton Conference that the work of the Joint Working Party on Rural Ecumenism was raised. The Revd. A. Masters, a member of it, used the occasion to outline what had been seen as the major problems facing rural ecumenism. Although we have looked at some of these, to gather them all into one list should be helpful. Briefly, they were,

1. People's attitudes to their churches. It has been said that many would prefer to see their own church gracefully die rather than join someone else's. Ecumenism is seen as a threat.
2. Organisation is congregational and becomes increasingly introverted under pressure. Outside concerns, including ecumenism, are seen as extras which divert resources and constitute an additional burden.
3. Conflicting boundaries hinder ecumenical action.
4. Monopoly situations demand an appropriate response from the monopoly church.
5. Cultural styles vary and divide churches as much as theological understandings.
6. The ordained ministry remains a prime obstacle.
7. Different understandings of what constitutes membership is another barrier.
8. Buildings remain emotive points in that they are regarded as foci for community loyalties and identities.

The chapter to which he had been referring ended with the words, "The combination of all these factors and the failure of the churches as a whole to overcome them has meant that with a few exceptions little advance has been made in ecumenical understanding in rural areas when compared with urban and suburban areas." (85)

If each of these difficulties can claim to be major, there is, nevertheless, a hierarchy of importance. In addition to those

we have already considered, some will be mentioned in passing as this study proceeds; others are judged to merit rather more attention. To these we now turn, remembering that the problems inherited from the past are present opportunities for future progress.

2. Structures.

Shortly before his term of office as Ecumenical Officer for England ended, the Revd. John Nicholson gathered together the accumulated experience of the problems and opportunities facing ecumenism in general and related them to five associational levels - neighbourhood, town (or suburb), district (city or borough), county and region. (86) Although this study is concerned only with the first of these categories, the problem of structures is common to them all.

(a) There is a social structure, as narrow as one individual or as wide as a whole community. It is a received tradition which is especially strong and noticeable in the countryside. "Feudalism is a kind of game, set and match with partners at both the serving and receiving ends knowing exactly what is expected of them and abiding unquestionably by the rules." (87) One aspect of it still sometimes crosses the memories of the older inhabitants who recall the landowner-supported Anglicans resenting Nonconformist intrusion into their domain and ensuring that the chapel was pushed into a remote corner. (88) If any of this still rankles it is probably true to say that it is in Nonconformist, rather than Anglican, breasts. It may not always be possible to trace the feudal origins of the social structures of a rural community, but to deny the existence of the structures, be they based on the historic work-politics syndrome or the more novel company car-wider world syndrome, is unrealistic. This division of society overflows into the ecclesiastical world. Dissent is dissent wherever it is met. Nowhere is this more evident than in those communities which are small enough to have the divisions personalised. A village is such a community. One needs to be careful to determine, therefore, when noticing the reluctance to worship in a church of another

denomination, whether this is occasioned by differing tastes in liturgy or whether it is indicative of a division having nothing religious in its original basis. Insofar as the basic unity is the family and rural family pressures are strong, those concerned with rural ecumenism are going to need to take a very long view. What the Joint Working Party called 'cultural styles' can be comprehended in a similar, sometimes identical, social framework, although the possibility of change in this is higher. Insights of this nature are absolutely vital for the rural ecumenist and his cause progresses as those with awareness of them help him to know and to use them.

(b) If we are accustomed to thinking of conflicting boundaries in denominational terms, they also present a problem for the Church as it tries to relate to society. Both Church and State have organisational problems in the countryside due to small populations and large areas, and their boundaries rarely coincide. To attempt to draw people in different ways is folly, at best, and divisive always. If 'twos into one won't go', no more can a rural community be so divided and prosper. It must be possible for Church and State to consider the same people and their prospects with a commitment that is as nearly as possible identical. The Roman Catholic 'Ground Plan' (Catholic Information Office, 1974) goes some way towards showing what can be done about this. It is to be hoped that more research will be done to ensure that both authorities have the same focal points, whether these be extant market towns or new key settlements, and sufficient flexibility in bureaucracy allowed to accommodate the victims of any residual organisational differences.

(c) The same requirements apply to the relationship between the denominational structures, only in this case that covers more than simply physical boundaries. One of the most encouraging pieces of progress lies in the subscription of all the Churches' Unity Commission's members to "agree to continue ... to develop methods of decision making in common." (89) This is fundamental to any unity. Quite evidently there can be no reunited Church without it. It involves Church structures and organisation as well as goodwill and Christian conviction. There are, however, many difficulties in the way. Structures themselves are liable to hinder novelty. All the pieces of them fit together. To disturb one is to upset

them all. The forces of stability are, therefore, impressive. They are also comforting for they offer a known place to each of us. They offer us protection but they can also stand between us and reality and can, themselves, usurp the place of whatever they have been devised to attain. It is easy, then, to stay in safety within the structures but this involves the risk of losing sight of their original purpose. Conversely, it requires determination and courage to venture beyond their protection, to leave the known - which values you - to pioneer where you are unknown and where you have to earn your place, possibly subject, as you try to do this, to criticism emanating from behind the structural barricades you have left. Not all will have the necessary qualities to attempt this. Perhaps not all of those who have these qualities will venture over the barriers without external incentives and support. As things stand, each denomination is structured for its benefit alone; each Church leader appointed to look to the well-being of his denomination only. Any attempt at ecumenism is, at one and the same time, a departure from the norm, entailing either an alteration or an addition and an implied criticism of the present state of affairs. Those whom the present state of affairs have elevated to positions of leadership are not bound to look favourably upon such implied criticism and can, in fact, interpret it personally, as being the representatives of the denominations. They may be imprisoned in their own structures which include, of course, not just the bureaucracy but also the accepted way of thinking. "It is obviously easier for Churches to devise ecumenical structures for decision making in situations where there are not already denominational structures." This is most evident where there are local ecumenical projects. "The fact that the majority of these are in new areas shows that it is far easier to start from scratch than to adapt existing structures." (90) Rural ecumenism is thus firmly situated in the area of greatest difficulty. In addition, both locally and denominationally, the Church is under considerable pressure in matters ministerial and financial and, as we have noted, in its rural components, is by that much less inclined to concern itself with others even though its future may depend on that concern. It is also evident (vide the Anglican Sheffield Report, for example) that because the bulk of denominational resources and commitments are located in urban areas,

attention is focused there rather than on the rural Church. These very constraints will surely enhance ecumenical progress for, as we shall see, there is virtually only one Church in the countryside now (which one it is varies slightly, from area to area) and the Free Churches are already accepting that their members may have to join congregations other than their own, while the Church of England has opened its altars to non-Anglican communicants. Unless there is a virtually complete ecclesiastical evacuation of the nation's rural areas, Church leaders will only be able to exercise their responsibility towards their rural members by committing them to the daily care of whichever denomination has an official presence in the locality and all the denominations will have to learn to think more ecumenically in rural terms than they have usually done so far even in urban, because rural ecumenism is likely to call for the support of one presence operating on behalf of all.

(d) What has been conjectured of denominational leaders is proportionately applicable to local Church leaders although it is easier for them, if they have the vision, to obey the spirit of the law rather than its letter, if there can be found some difference. The informality of rural life offers them encouragement to be open to new insights, to foster new relationships and to contemplate taking new action in the name of the one Lord, especially in those circumstances and on those occasions when such novelty challenges accepted denomination custom. Though they will encounter traditional thinking from both traditional residents and some immigrants, the personal level at which life is lived in the countryside opens the way to possibilities that it would be unrealistic to contemplate in a town.

(e) If there is one single positive item that could revitalise all of this in an instant, that item would be the renewed conviction that the Church exists to spread the Good News. If this were really accepted as the reason for the Church's existence, the necessary structures to achieve it would be acquired and those which hinder it would be eliminated. Unfortunately, effective evangelism is largely emasculated by a disunited Church. The Joint Working Party asks "that the Churches cease to make separate and unrelated decisions about the deployment of their resources in the rural areas" and

says that "whilst many problems and difficulties exist it is hard to see how rural ecumenism will be forwarded until this nettle is grasped." (91) If evangelism was truly the determined policy of the Churches, both these things would happen. Present structures would seem to make it unrealistic to expect this, but there is both hope and progress coming from another direction. Councils of Churches represent extra-denominational structures which can more readily be fashioned to assist the work it is intended to do. In no case is there a Council existing which is as much as 70 years old. All belong to the present lifetime. None, therefore, has an inheritance which has had time to become as one of the laws of the Medes and Persians. Most Councils are urban but a few embrace rural communities. We have already noticed some of the defects exhibited by a majority of Councils, but, accepting these, Councils do represent one way, sometimes the only way, by which decisions can be made in common and a common policy prepared and pursued.

There are two main forms of involvement of village churches in Councils of Churches. The first is that of an association of villages in a Council. This suffers from having no natural centre and being subject to the tensions which can arise from an agglomeration of basically independent, not to say competitive, communities. Public transport is unlikely to link more than a minority of the villages and then only spasmodically. Many villages are unlikely to have facilities to accommodate any largish number. Such a Council might find it difficult to generate any sense of reality, composed as it would be, of fairly powerless units. There could be difficulty in producing an acceptable programme or even agreeing a name. Yet, such a Council does at least provide a locus for the sharing of prayer and serves as a stimulant to its constituent parts as well as providing a framework for constructive action, if such can be agreed. The second form is that which has a market town and its satellite villages as its components. The obvious problem here is the relationship between the town and the villages. The former can soon become dominant. Public transport makes it a centre for meetings; so do its shops and its market days. If big meetings are to be held or well-known preachers invited, it has the only buildings capable of holding the numbers gathering. Only

the town has the unknown and un-numbered aged, lonely or otherwise deprived, who merit some combined act of service. The Local Authority is found there, too, as well as the bulk of the population, ecclesiastical and civil. Despite its potential disadvantages, this arrangement introduces the village congregations to a wider experience of the Christian family, different traditions and other problems and provides them with the opportunity to worship in more encouraging numbers than customary and to hear speakers and preachers who would not normally be available to them. This type of rural Council is preferable to the purely village one and need not be dominated by the town. While many events will best be undertaken in the town, not all need be. Combined services which are purely local, that is, having no imported speaker, can easily and happily be arranged in a village. The town church folk will, as ever, be glad to make a journey into the country, especially to a country church, while the villagers concerned will either enjoy as they take part, or be impressed if they merely watch, the increased numbers which will fill their church and reassure them of the reality of the communion of the saints. Equally, village Christians are happy to attend one of the large town churches for the sort of occasion they could hardly emulate in their own church. What is probably better than either of these alternatives and represents a hybrid development, is that which has recently happened spontaneously throughout the urban Councils of Lancashire. Without exception - and without collusion - these have all now split into smaller units for normal working. If this were to be repeated in the countryside it would mean the formation of ad hoc groups, perhaps of two villages only, which unite for a specific purpose while remaining members of the larger Council.

(f) All this relates directly to the local churches. It is not possible to over-rate the importance of local involvement in both planning and action, yet there is a limit to what can locally be done without the agreement and support of denominational parents. Progress here was made when the Churches agreed the third of the Ten Propositions: "We believe that this search (for visible unity) requires action both locally and nationally." National action is rather beyond the scope of this study but an exception can be made for county action. Here lies another good opportunity for the

denominations to consider together how to fulfil, for instance, the Joint Working Party's requirement for concerted action with regard to the deployment of resources in rural areas - all the rural areas covered by the County Council. If it is permitted, this can be a powerful and effective body with real authority, subject only to the county's Church leaders. Bristol has a Council of Christian Churches, which covers the old city and county of Bristol. It sees itself as a stimulator of ecumenical interest and activity but acknowledges that its vitality depends on the vitality of its local Councils. (92) It recognises the virtue of presenting a co-ordinated Christian viewpoint to the county's secular authority and, therefore, judges a county based Christian body to be essential. (93) "It is important, in order to have a co-ordinated Church representation, that only one body should be responsible and be the official address to whom the county can turn." (94) Other counties have somewhat similar bodies with a greater or lesser amount of executive authority and, hence, usefulness. The Lancashire Ecumenical Committee is one of the latter; the Sponsoring Body for Lincolnshire and South Humberside is one of the former. There, notably, one Anglican priest is recognised and used as Ecumenical Officer for the Church of England, the Methodists, the United Reformed Church and the Roman Catholics. John Nicholson sees Ecumenical Officers as "prophets for the future" and considers that "the test of the Churches' sincerity in respect of Proposition 8 (decision making in common) must surely be seen in the appointments they make in this field." (95) He concludes his report with words that will conveniently draw towards its close this section of our study. "It is not difficult to envisage a pattern throughout the country where there could be either one person with the major part of his time available or a team of people working part-time to enable the Churches to work together at the various levels." (96) If such were given a specific commission to initiate local rural ecumenism under the care of a county body, to operate as a link between areas of ecumenical activity, between those areas and their denominational leaders and between the leaders themselves, to function as a communications system between areas of ecumenical activity and those not yet at that stage and to act as a mobile resource centre for all and sundry, progress would be assured.

3. Buildings.

"Since people come first and buildings exist to serve them, ministry is more basic than the buildings erected for ministerial purposes ... But buildings, as the Church recognises in her rite for the consecration of a new church, have a sacramental significance: they are (or are meant to be) effective signs of that which they signify. Shared premises will then signify an existing degree of co-operation in mission, work and worship; but they will also deepen and strengthen this co-operation and carry it to a further stage." (97) Church buildings can be a priceless glory or a great embarrassment. They can, indeed, be effective signs of that which they signify, but they can also demand such a proportion of the Christian community's resources that its other work is restricted to the point of virtual non-existence and people take second place. Even the traditionally high incomed Roman Catholic Church admits "we could cripple future mission because of commitment to bricks and mortar". (98) Since the Sharing of Church Buildings Act it has been possible to have a third choice of action which saved congregations being impaled on the horns of the dilemma which involved them either in maintaining a building but doing little else or of concentrating on people but paying less than sufficient attention to the building. From 1969 it became possible for denominations to share buildings. "Shared Premises and Team Ministry" - the source of the quotation which begins this section - was published in March, 1970, and represents an immediate Roman Catholic commentary on the new situation and its possibilities. Its prospectus is completely urban, with particular reference to new towns. As such, it correctly interprets the situations for which the Act was intended. Its application to rural Church buildings has been minimal but is expected to grow. At any rate, it is available and offers a number of advantages when implemented. There is, of course, great saving of time and money in using one building only. The initial costs saved are only the beginning. Running and repair costs are heavy and increasing. It is the latter, rather than the former, which matters to the rural Church for new buildings, if any, will be smaller replacements only for larger, irreparable predecessors. In use, the legal formalities of the Act give security of tenure to all parties and free certain funds from denominational

restrictions so that they can be applied to buildings other than those of the denominations concerned. Likewise, denominational restrictions of practice may be circumvented. It is not a method of reunion: theological, doctrinal and liturgical differences remain, the congregations keep their own identities and follow their customary practices. It is no more than the sharing of a building yet, insofar as this would not occur without much prior agreement, it may be a step towards a greater unity. Such sharing is not restricted to places of worship. It extends to church halls and church domestic premises also. The Sharing Act applies to those parts of the Church which were members of the Churches' Unity Commission, together with the Church in Wales. All those likely to want to take advantage of it are included.

Rural communities, even in their non-worshipping members, are attached to their church buildings. Against a background where a very small minority of the population regularly worships in church, a very large majority would regret the disappearance of it. Reed writes of one such community that "in spite of this non-use of the church, the villagers have maintained the church building and its graveyard over the years and when the church tower needed repairing, the whole village worked and contributed so that this could be done. The heating failed but there was no difficulty getting it seen to. In other words, while there are obvious and practical reasons why the church should be closed down, it continues to be maintained by a community which does not wish to make use of it. This situation has persisted for thirty years." (99) Many of these buildings are ancient and splendid witnesses to craftmanship, vision and Christian commitment. This is not to say that they have only museum value. Besides providing a reminder of the presence of the Lord among his people and the place for the continuing round of prayer and the crucial occasions in life, parents, grandparents and their grandparents have a permanent place in their churchyards and platoons of headstones outline the history of the various families of the villages. The community has the Church woven into its life (or vice versa?) and even if it makes only spasmodic use of it, views its potential closure as an attempt on its own life.

The multiplicity of such buildings in towns and cities is not usually repeated in the country. If the urban Church is anticipating a reduction in the number of its buildings and a growth in house churches, rural Christians have the preservation of their buildings as a high priority. Yet financial strictures and dwindling congregations press hard. Where two denominations have buildings in a village support of both can be criticised as a waste of resources and bad stewardship. But at least progress can be made for their uses may now be combined. Generally speaking, the Anglican church will be older and more traditional and so have claim for retention, yet the same two characteristics make it far less economical to maintain as well as making it less saleable. There are exceptions to this. A Methodist investigation resulted in the finding that "one of the most disturbing factors in rural work is the poverty of many of our places of worship. Many of our buildings are so dreadful and comfortless that affluent, gay and progressive young countrymen of today will never enter them. In view of the advent of new day schools in attractive premises in the countryside, we must ask why rural leadership is reluctant to face the fact that these old buildings have served their purpose?" (100) The United Reformed Church takes a view of this which is realistic, imaginative and positively helpful to rural ecumenism. "Most of our rural buildings are less than 150 years old, while many parish churches are much older and of historic value. This means that although a U.R.C. building in a village may be more suitable for modern ideas of worship, more flexible and adaptable, it is also the one which can be sold. There is a considerable moral and legal obligation on the Church of England to maintain its historic churches (you can hardly sell a fifteenth century church and its graveyard for warehouse or holiday cottage!)" (101) Even without disposing of a building something can be done. In Gooderstone, Norfolk, the ancient parish church, which is expensive to heat, is used in the summer and the modern, conveniently heated, Free Church building in the winter. This arrangement is not unusual. Not all villages find an easy solution to their problem. More than one implication may be drawn from the comment that "there are people alive today who can remember what it was to live in a village which was divided

between church and chapel. The two factions were often not on speaking terms; they might, as far as possible, deal with different tradesmen." (102)

Whether there is to remain one building or two, some edifice is necessary for some people. Keeping in mind the closer involvement in the life of its community of a rural, as distinct from an urban, church building, what Canon David Diamond wrote of the inner city in an article in the Church Times on June 23rd., 1978, is at least equally true of the country. "A few years ago a survey was made in an area that had recently lost its parish church building. Over eight-five per cent of local residents questioned gave the answer that, since the church had been demolished, they had lost any sense of 'belonging', of 'pride' or 'security' in their district. In fact they felt the heart had been torn from their community. This being the case, what tremendous potential is invested in the parish church." Bruce Reed concurs. He tells of a segment of society for whom "it is important ... that church buildings should remain standing, that they hear the church bells ringing and that they see people going to church. This group have no apparent interest in church-going, but our studies have indicated that they constitute a considerable group in society which may not be made manifest until the church building is threatened with closure. For many of them, the church is a place to stay away from, but upon which they covertly depend, like the adolescent who apparently abandons his parents when he runs away from home, but likes to think they are still there if he should ever want to come back to them." (103) Even this side of Utopia it may occasionally be possible to satisfy all needs. The parish of Melplash, Dorset, has 240 adult inhabitants and a nineteenth century cruciform church seating 250. In 1974 its congregation numbered 12 and its annual income amounted to £480. As it was but one in a team of twelve village churches it was expendable. Instead, all seating except for 50 in one transcept was removed and sold, as was the organ. The nave was screened off with glass. A congregation now numbering 30, and with an income of £3000 p.a., meets in warmer, more inspiring surroundings, while the rest of the Church is open for many other community activities. The rector is happy because the parish has come to realise that "in

a team every member ought to bring a distinctive contribution (rather than being another boring duplication)..." and through this "has gained such self respect and such self confidence that it has grasped the initiative throughout the whole team in instituting various progressive ideas." "I have no doubt", he concludes, "that other churches would be similarly revitalised if they could break out of old strait jackets and discover new roles." (104)

Despite the reluctance to close rural churches, the existence of too many poses "two basic questions (that) must be faced by all concerned.

1. To what vital element in the Christian gospel are we witnessing by remaining distinct 'come what may'?
2. Is the stewardship of so many buildings a proper stewardship of money, fuel, manpower and other resources in the light of the needs of the world-wide Church and of mankind today?" (105)

These questions are of greater moment when ministerial residences and church halls are also involved but the determination to retain them must never be minimised. "If given the option, most country churches will prefer to raise money for their church buildings than for their priests, perhaps because buildings are more obvious symbols of a Christian heritage; they are much less costly; they are much more durable; they are much less demanding." (106)

But "the Church needs to remember that she is not alone in having to face radical change. It is not too much to say that in the deep countryside more village schools have closed than parish churches, or as many police houses sold, in proportion to their former numbers, as parsonages." (107) Closure does not inevitably spell stultification of the Church in that place, let alone decease. Indeed, there may be a significant release of energy and resources which can be redirected towards the mission rather than the maintenance of the Church and bring new life and hope to a dying and defeated congregation. It is to be hoped that many authorities will follow the lead given by the synod of the Anglican diocese of Chelmsford and the authors of "The Sharing of Resources", the successor to "Shared Premises and Team Ministry". In December, 1971, the diocese resolved: "As far as it lies within the power of the Church of England to determine, no new place of worship should be

planned or built without prior enquiry as to the possibility of its use as a shared building, erected and maintained in co-operation with other Christian communities." Peter Hocken and John Coventry wrote, "The sharing of resources with other Christians is possible anywhere. And, if possible, necessary." "Whether we 'go it alone' or whether we 'go ecumenical' are not two equally valid alternative policies between which we can choose. Our Christian faith and our theology demand that we 'go ecumenical': this does not mean a shared church in every place, but combined planning and strategy in every place. The practical questions as to the most suitable ways of working together, and as to what buildings this requires, are subsequent matters,secondary to the basic principle." (108) This implies sharing much more than buildings. If we are to share them, what about the people who officiate in them? We began this section with the comment that "ministry is more basic than the buildings erected for ministerial purposes." Already there are fewer clergymen than buildings. What about sharing them?

4. Ministry.

If the location of the seat of authority is the basic divisive factor within Christendom, its most evident manifestation is the status of the ministry. If reunion proposals can overcome the difficulties relating to the ordained ministry they have won the day. After a lengthy initial period of early growth Christendom settled down to a generally accepted pattern of a three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. This became the rule until, in the sixteenth century, the Church in western Europe began to fragment. If the Church of Rome denied valid Orders to all who at that time rejected her discipline, the Church of England, retaining, as far as it was concerned, the traditional ministry, took the same stance in relation to both the independent reformers and, later, the followers of the Wesley brothers. Protestant Churches were thus denied a place within the Christian family (see, for example, the Lambeth Quadrilateral). Time passed and four centuries later the Anglican Communion, while continuing to commend traditional episcopacy, followed its 1920 Appeal to All Christian People with a Statement accepting non-episcopal ministries as "real ministries...

in the universal Church." (see Part 1, Section B3). Vatican 11 maintained its own position but accepted that these Churches - and the Anglican Communion - were (half) brothers in Christ. For their part, some Protestants continue to associate the Church of Rome with the forces of evil and some, fewer, embrace a theology which dispenses them from specific ministry altogether, but it is largely true that the sort of problem 'Catholics' have with Protestant ministries is not reciprocated. If the 'Catholics' require (re) ordination of Protestant ministries, the latter demand nothing of 'Catholic' ministries but insist on recognition of themselves as they are. Thus this issue of ministry has governed ecclesiastical thinking for some centuries, Churches recognising each other, or not, according to their views of their respective ministries. The clergyman is given similar status in popular opinion for purely practical reasons. Perhaps it is because ministry has been full-time and professional that, no matter what the involvement of the laity, it has been, and remains, a considered-and unconsidered - opinion that where a clergyman is, there is the Church. Congregations may not have their clergymen resident among them but there is one who is 'their' clergyman, to whom they relate and whose association with them guarantees them a place in the wider Church. This relationship is of two kinds, based either territorially or associationally. In practice, neither is quite as distinct as it sounds. The Free Churches have their territorial boundaries, as do the Roman Catholics, but both are essentially associational, or congregational. The Church of England, because of its State connections, has a territorial, or parochial, base so that all the nation's inhabitants have a citizen's right to a Church ministry, but, beginning with its Electoral Rolls, it lives associationally. It is evident, also, that if one part of the Church considers the entire population to be its responsibility through its territorial division of the country, duplication will occur whatever theological concept regulates the organisational form of any other parts. In fact, every town and every village in the country figures within the territorial divisions of all the major denominations. Every village is, likewise, ministered to by a clergyman from the Church of England as well as clergymen from as many of the other denominations as are represented among

the residents. To this situation a study of rural ecumenism must address two questions. The first asks to what extent, if at all, these overlapping or, at least, neighbouring ministers may, or should, work within some form of agreement. The second asks to what extent, if at all, those who are not ordained may, or should, exercise their particular ministries within some form of agreement with those ordained.

Legitimate differences of opinion may be held about whether the ministry should be full-time or part-time, professional, semi-professional or amateur, male or female, appointed locally or centrally, exercised by one person or a group of people, be for a life-time or for a shorter pre-determined period, but one thing is indisputable: any group needs leadership. It is equally evident that if the group is of more than minimal size or its engagements other than the most simple and occasional, its leadership should include one or more people who have the time, the ability and the training to enable it to fulfil its ambitions. Furthermore, its leadership must be acceptable beyond its own boundaries unless the group is to be isolated. When the group is a modern Christian community its response to these requirements is virtually unanimously to produce someone who is first educated, then housed and given a stipend so that he may devote his full time and the benefit of his experience to the Church. Yet it was only for a brief period, towards the end of the nineteenth century, that the ideal of a clergyman resident in each local community was realised. Although this was a tidy and comprehensive Anglican arrangement it was not, in fact, ideal. Some communities were too small to warrant the full-time services of a clergyman. Some still are. (109) A century later, all the major parts of the Church have suffered and are suffering a decline in vocations to their full-time ministry which has reduced their numbers so that a similar arrangement would not now be possible by a very large amount. Over the last century this is illustrated, as far as the Church of England is concerned, by the fact that "in the 1870's there were approximately 16,000 clergymen ministering to 16 million people. Today there are approximately 13,000 clergymen ministering to 44 million people." (110) That represents an increase in the population of almost 200 per cent during a time when the decrease in the number of clergymen has been about 20 per cent. From a ratio of 1: 1000 we have come to one of 1: 3150. Not only are parishes of vastly differing sizes but the Church of

England has 13,750 of them over which to spread her 13,000 men. To complete the picture, there is a total of about 10,000 clergymen belonging to other denominations. For all the figure is steadily dropping. This shortage has meant that comparisons have been made between the clergy/laity ratios in the country and in the urban areas, and if we may again instance the Church of England's Sheffield Report, clergymen are being withdrawn from the former to serve in the latter. "A minority of dioceses argued persuasively for the proposition that the Church's strategy should be one of reinforcing success and that it would therefore be a mistake to adopt a policy of moving men out of rural into urban areas. We have given this argument careful consideration but have not found it possible to accept it, because it would involve giving up the idea of fair shares for all dioceses." (111) If we may observe, in passing, that this principle would look strange if set alongside the New Testament or other early Christian documents, its effect on the Church in the countryside was assured by the formula by which the allocation of clergymen was to be made. The population figure had an overall majority over a combination of the three other factors, 8 points being allocated for the size of the population, 3 each for community factors (number on electoral roll and number of churches to be served) and 1 for the area. (112) Put into practice, this compounds the shortage as far as the country communities are concerned. Nor is this the end of the story.

We have already noted some of the sociological trends which have tended towards a reduction in many rural populations. Some are finding it difficult to support a clergyman, even when they have one. Inflation is a continual aggravation of this difficulty. "Three themes recur in diocesan replies with great regularity: the expected decline in the number of parish clergy, the problem of finding the money to pay adequately those who will still be needed, and the fact that some parishes are now too small to provide an adequate job." (113) Christopher Newton, Oxford Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, produced a forecast of parish shares for the Swan and the Schorne team ministries for the years 1979-85. They comprise 15 rural parishes covering about 100 square miles in north Bucks, and have a population of some 7500. Between 1979 and 1982 their parish shares will nearly triple

from c£2000 to £6000 for Swan and from c£4750 to £13,400 for Schorne. Admitting the difficulty of forecasting beyond 1982, Newton nevertheless attempts it. For Swan, the 1985 figure is £11,952 and for Schorne £26,156. Even converted into the value of the £ in 1980 they are still staggering sums at £7424 and £16,246 respectively. (114) The particular method of financial assessment on parishes in the diocese of Oxford may contribute to the size of these figures, which may themselves be inflated in Newton's hands. Whatever qualifications may be applied to them, they do indicate a controlling factor in the life of the Church in the immediate future. This is particularly true of the rural Church where the financial pressure bears exceedingly heavily. Overheads, which have to be born by any parish, urban and rural, and which include insurances and heating, churchyard maintenance and vicarage charges, the incumbent's stipend and several other sizeable routine responsibilities, are roughly identical in town and country. Incomes, however, are not. Respectable contributions from 2% of a population of 8/10,000 are adequate, if not riches. A similar contribution from 5% of a population of 8/1000 can be hardly sufficient.

In the very small rural parish of Downham, Lancashire, the annual accounts for 1949, 1960 (no copy available for 1959), 1969 and 1979 demonstrate a number of interesting trends, the parish's financial commitment to its successive clergymen being one. (Admittedly, this is a more traumatic experience for the Church of England, shielded from reality as it has been for so long through the payments made through Queen Anne's Bounty and then the Church Commissioners.)

Cost of resident clergyman in Downham

	1949	1960	1969	1979
Stipend (direct)	-	-	-	963
Easter Offering	13	23	30	48
Heat, light, N.H.I.	-	-	100	-
Housing	-	154	186	294
Office expenses	-	50	24	357
Total cost	13	227	340	1662

Clear though the message is from these figures, they become more impressive when set against the remainder of the parish's

income and expenditure for those years.

Downham Parish Income and Expenditure

	1949	1960	1969	1979
Income	£233	609	1099	3394
Expenditure	£411	590	1285	3383

Cost of resident clergyman as percentage of parish income and expenditure

	1949	1960	1969	1979
Percentage of income	5.57	37.27	30.93	48.96
Percentage of expenditure	3.16	38.47	26.45	49.12

Originally the ministry of such parishes was maintained by income deriving from land endowed by the local landlord who had built the church, augmented by a system of tithes and other small dues. Because he had built the church and endowed it, the landlord assumed the right to select the priests to staff it. In that such a priest needed a balancing episcopal institution and induction that claim was reasonably exercised. Nowadays the rights are still claimed and exercised although the substantiation for them is much changed. This is adequately illustrated over even as short a period as eight years by the figures which pertain to the parish of Downham. The following table shows the positions in February, 1972, when the present incumbent was instituted, and in April, 1980 the latest figures available.

Stipend composition of living of Downham

	1972	1980
Endowment	£340 (24.76%)	340 (9.18%)
Glebe	33	64
Trusts		67
Parochial Church Council*	154	-
Fees	8	71
Easter Offering	32	49

Diocesan augmentation	806	3109
	+ 1373 (100%)	3700 (100%)

* Included in Diocesan augmentation in 1980.

\+ Both totals exclude special payments made by the diocese to the incumbent as follows :-

Special payments to present incumbent of Downham

	1972	1980
As Ecumenical Officer	£250	300
Child Allowance	25	-
	275	300

When these figures are added to the previous totals we find that in 1972 a total stipend of £1648 included 20.63% of endowment; 1980 a total stipend of £4000 included 8.5% of endowment. In 1981 it is expected that the endowment will be just 6.9% of the stipend total.

It must be expected that any other part of Christendom uniting with the Church of England will be unhappy with an arrangement that continues to afford so great a traditional privilege at so minimal a contemporary cost.

With stipends likely to increase at a rate of at least £500 each year - the figure for 1981 is £900 - the relative cost of a resident clergyman could become too heavy for the smallest communities to bear, particularly as it seems evident that most, if not all, of the increase will have to be produced locally. In January, 1980, the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England confirmed that the figure showing the number of single church parishes of under 1000 population recorded in the Paul Report (1961) is still the latest available. There were 1262 of these in the twentynine dioceses of the province of Canterbury and 304 in the province of York. (115) None of these 1566 may expect to have its own incumbent much longer unless there are special circumstances applicable; for example, that he is a diocesan officer with diocesan financial support. From the Paul Report, also, we learn, that, at the beginning of 1960, all of these parishes had their own incumbents, who represented 15% of the total number. (116) This has already

been much modified in the succeeding twenty years and the process of modification will continue for, from whichever point we approach the matter of the resident rural clergyman, we reach the same conclusion. In the communities covered by this study, his days are numbered unless some new factor intrudes. This withdrawal of clergymen from the countryside is now a well established fact, particularly noticeable in the case of the Free Churches. A not untypical comment comes from the Vicar of Alwinton, Northumberland, an area with a rich Presbyterian history and where the Church of England is in a minority. He writes, "During the last 10-15 years there has been a considerable withering of the new U.R.C. and a consequent withdrawal of manpower. In my own parish (250 square miles) I am now the only resident Christian minister." (117)

An investigation into the situation on a wider scale was done in Lancashire, north of the river Ribble, in November, 1979. The area chosen was predominantly rural, though it includes a number of sizeable towns, among which are Blackpool, Fleetwood, Lancaster, Morecambe and Preston. It has a population of 522,700 (mid-1978 estimate of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys), of which 147,300 live in densely populated Blackpool, and is served from 396 churches, Blackpool possessing 49 of them. Even including the other towns we have named, the remaining population of 375,400 has no fewer than 347 churches for its use, an average of one church for every 1081 people. This is a good indication of the rural nature of the area. The various Church directories then supply us with the information that their clergymen are deployed within the whole area, including Blackpool, as follows :

Parochial clergymen in north Lancashire

Denomination	Total	Rural(a)	Rural percentage
Baptist	15	1	6.66
Church of England	131	19 (b)	14.50
Methodist	36	-	-
United Reformed Church	23	-	-
Roman Catholic	133	7	5.26
Totals	338	27	7.98

(a) Population of 1000 or less.

(b) This figure includes five United Benefices, which still have

a population total of less than 1000. This means that there are several other rural communities (parishes) which have already lost their own clergyman and been amalgamated, some of which are hidden within the rural figure of this table but some of whom, because their amalgamated population tops 1000 are excluded. The original figures were :

Church of England parishes by populations

Total parishes	Pop: under 501	Pop: 501-1000	Pop: 1001-1500
119	18	13	9

Thus there were originally 31 clergymen - 21%- employed in parishes with 1000 or less population. The position now is that, of the 19 rural clergymen, 14 (including one with a diocesan appointment) have responsibility for populations going as low as 501; 3 (including one with a diocesan appointment) have populations ranging from 500 to 251; 2 part-time diocesan officials have parishes with populations below 250. In aggregate these 19 men serve 11,943 people, giving a ratio of 1:628. These numbers represent entire populations, not Church of England members.

The Free Church figures are as expected and indicate what is virtually a complete withdrawal of their clergymen from the countryside. One only out of a total of 74 (1.35%) lives in the country.

A Survey conducted by Gallup in 1978 reveals that although the Roman Catholic figure is high this has a historical explanation. The north west contains 25% of the total Roman Catholic population of the country and represents 21% of the total population of that region. (118) Normally, "it is comparatively rare to find a Roman Catholic parish church or resident Roman Catholic priest in an English village." (119)

Of the total of 207 non-Church of England clergymen, eight only (3.86%) reside in the country. A similar percentage (3.81%) of Church of England clergymen is employed to serve independent communities of fewer than 501 people. Well may it be said that

"since the steep decline recently of rural Methodism the Anglicans dominate the Christian life of rural England." (120) There is no reason to doubt that this is a fair representation of the national situation: a Free Church withdrawal, an occasional Roman Catholic presence and a continuing, but decreasing, coverage provided by the Church of England. Point is therefore given to the two questions we posed concerning the relationship of these men with each other and with their charges.

It is, of course, easier to contemplate and conceive such relationships within denominations than across their borders. In that, in general terms, the Church of England is the only one still to field anything like a full rural team, such relational experiments as have already taken place between rural clergymen have been predominantly Anglican, though other experiments have, perforce, been undertaken. As far as the Free Churches are concerned, ministerial shortage and consequent withdrawal from the villages and rural churches has produced a grouping of several of the latter so that they may share the services of one of the former. Alternatively, they may be placed under the oversight of a town or suburban church. These arrangements follow the same two patterns we have seen to be used by rural Councils of Churches. Methodists are already conversant with these types of arrangements for their work is normally done on a circuit basis, where a larger number of churches is grouped together to share the services of a smaller number of ministers who may, or may not, act as a team. For all others such grouping is a traumatic experience, while the working together of clergymen who have been trained to work - and been at work - as individuals is equally difficult. Moreover, Methodist experience holds out no hope that this sort of arrangement is, by itself, an adequate answer though it is a necessary stage in one possible way forward.

The first step in the process of making good the deficit in clerical strength is, then, the associating of villages or congregations into the care of one man where there had previously been two or more. The next step is the associating of two or more of these men to work together to serve a number of such communities. This latter association falls into one of two types, a team or a group. Complicated by its legal establishment, the Church of

England has had to be precise in its distinctions between the two. These distinctions do not necessarily hold good for all (121) but, as the Church of England is the majority occupier of the countryside, we may assume its distinctions. The 1968 Pastoral Measure, implementing the Paul and Morley Reports, provided for the establishment of team and group ministries to "share the cure of souls in an area" with either an amalgamation of parishes into one united benefice, having one man technically in charge, a rector, leading a team of vicars, or a group of benefices (parishes), each with its separate incumbent, but united in a common purpose. The former is obviously the tighter in structure and potentially more purposeful because it works as a unit. The latter retains the local autonomies and sees the group as a means of supporting and assisting these. The team's members may be allocated an area for which they have immediate responsibility or they may be asked to exercise a specialist ministry within the whole area or, most usually, they find themselves doing some of each of these things. The group's members act like a medical group practice, each having his own clientele but available to all on abnormal occasions. In view of the small populations involved, either of these associations of clergymen is a more efficient exploitation of the Church's resources. Additionally, in the country where personalities are in sharp focus and clergymen in short supply, there is the further advantage to the populace that it has recourse to more than one clergyman, while the clergyman is offered a wider scope within which to exercise his ministry, together with the availability of a more direct measure of professional support. He may also find greater opportunity to do more of that in which he excels and less of that which he does less well. The communities, meanwhile, have access to a greater range of facilities and activities than they could ever have separately, acquiring a living experience of the reality of the Catholic Church. This is obviously more acute if the group is ecumenical. There could, of course, be a progression from experiencing the advantages of the association of parishes or congregations to the functioning of the area as one unit. Trevor Dorey did some research on behalf of the Oxford Institute for Church and Society. In the introduction to his findings he wrote, "For the past ten years these two models have been seen by many as the main answer to the problems of rural ministry, though the sole clergyman (Church

of England) serving several small parishes remains the most widespread pattern." (122)

Keeping in mind the traditional Methodist circuit pattern of work, the Anglican diocese of Lincoln was the first to pioneer a different rural pattern for itself. It did this by associating hitherto independent places and people. From 12 small parishes it produced in 1952 the South Ormsby group. Norwich followed in 1961 with the formation of the Hilborough group from 10 parishes. Both these groups were of the pattern which pertained to all the early groups, viz., they were all federations of equal sized villages rather than a cluster of villages round a larger market town, though it was only one year later, in 1964, that the latter type of group made its appearance. Such was the enthusiasm for this new approach to rural ministry that by 1975 approximately 25% of the parishes of that diocese and 18% of its clergymen were grouped. The diocese of Bath and Wells aims to have the majority of its clergymen working in some form of group or team by 1981.

Despite its evident appeal, there is another side to the story. "But it must be said that after the early euphoria a reaction set in ... In Lincoln, the home of the first experiment, where the care of ten parishes by a single priest is not unknown, there are now virtually no rural groups or teams. The wheel at South Ormsby itself has turned full circle." (123) South Ormsby now has sixteen separate rural communities in ten parishes led by a single incumbent. If there is no reason given for this it must not be assumed that it is necessarily a failure of the new patterns: the Sheffield Report has left its mark. "In pre-Sheffield days it was possible to have such a clerical staff of three to minister to about 2000 people living in ten small villages spread over forty square miles of Norfolk countryside. The Sheffield Report has changed all that. Such groups can now have only one priest. If there is to be a ministry team it must now consist of lay members with the priest as the team leader." (124) But the major disability associated with these patterns is that they may give rise to hopes that they were never intended or are able to fulfil. There is the obvious, though sometimes overlooked, point that "at a time when the Churches are preparing a variety of interesting plans for shared ministry it is as well to remember that the creation of structures achieves very little on

its own. New wineskins have little use unless we are equally interested in the new wine." (125) An equally radical defect in intention is described by the research and development officer of the Archbishops' Council on Evangelism, J. Hamilton-Brown. He considers the matter in these terms. "Faced with this situation ... people wring their hands in despair and horror. The Church is dying, they say; but continue to expect it to carry on in the same old way, until eventually the situation all but collapses. Even the present schemes in the Church of England, such as the Sheffield scheme for the more effective deployment of clergy, or the auxiliary pastoral ministry, are attempts to keep the old pattern going for as long as possible. It is my opinion that this is a false trail and will only lead to further dissillusionment and cutback, particularly in the rural areas. It will only solve the problem in a makeshift and temporary way." (126) From Hugh Blackburne, the man who was the rector of the Hilborough group from 1961 to 1972, comes comment from personal experience. Referring to the Church of England's Pastoral Measure, his remarks are universally valid. "The parochial system, rigidly preserved and observed, has ceased to be a vehicle for effective ministry in many country areas; it has become a strait-jacket, from which the Church must be freed if it is to fulfil its true ministry in the world. Whatever might be said about the Pastoral Measure and the problems of applying some of its provisions, it does allow the Church an enormous amount of flexibility in adapting its organisation to present-day circumstances. Group ministry is put forward as one of several ways in which this freedom can be achieved, for by its adoption the local Church can be freed from the narrow parochialism which can so easily constrict and paralyse. This freedom is demonstrated in two ways: first, the Church can become 'people centred' and no longer 'building centred'. The Church becomes the community of Christian people in a given area and not the local handful struggling to maintain their outsize building. Second, what John Robinson has called 'the clergy line' gets blurred as ministry is shared between clergy and laity and the fabric of the group is strengthened." (127) If the Church can focus upon people rather than buildings there will be great gain. If the laity becomes involved in the Church's ministry the gain will be greater. Continuing Roman Catholic "insistence upon the

parish as the natural and most effective apostolic community within the life of the Church. Whatever be its size ..." (128) reflects urban rather than rural experience.

Accepting the validity of all these comments, the associating of parishes and clergymen represents one of the new factors to which reference was made (p[illegible]) as necessary if the rural clergyman was not to become extinct. "The Norfolk groups have brought to the countryside two new elements; first, that the rural clergy ... can work together in a shared task, and, second, that the parish itself need not be the only structure in the organisation and operation of the rural Church. By breaking this new ground the way has been opened towards a possible development of the rural Church, so that the Church in the countryside could again be more closely complementary to the society which it seeks to serve." (129)

If a case has been made for partnerships in rural ministry, not simply to compensate for the shortage of numbers of clergymen, but for new, positive forms of ministry, our enquiry now branches into different ways. The association of hitherto independent clergymen within denominations, particularly the Church of England, must surely be but one step towards a complete rationalisation of ecclesiastical ability and responsibility which would involve the formation of ecumenical clerical groups. Here we meet a completely different set of problems which include the legal obligations and restrictions relating to the establishment of the Church of England, patronage, the various sources and amounts of clerical financial incomes, a celibate Roman Catholic clergy, the position of the Free Churches' female ministers and the relationship existing between one non-Church of England clergyman in a group which may include four or five, or even nine or ten, clergymen of the Church of England. On the other hand, ecumenical "team ministries are the inevitable and welcome consequence of ecumenism." (130) How far these have got we shall shortly see. First, we have to examine the other branch of enquiry which involves the partnership between clergymen and laity.

For the Churches of the Reformation the place of the laity has never been in doubt. The priesthood of all believers means what it says. There are differences of office, and therefore of status, but fundamentally the minister and his people are on the

same level of equality. He is an officer of the people, a primus inter pares. Upon this basis the laity has been much involved in the Church's worship and decision-making. It is unlikely, for instance, that Methodism would have existed for two centures, or continue to live today, without the active leadership of its lay people. Apart from the special case of churchwardens, the Church of England's recognition of its laity did not take any definable shape until nearly the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century and then only as a by-product of the attempt to loosen its ties with the State and acquire more control over its own affairs. The Synodical Government Measure, 1969, however, was a genuine attempt to involve the laity more fully in the processes of government. The Roman Catholic Church, also, has been invaded by these democratic trends. After Vatican 11 it became permissible, though not obligatory, for parishes to have lay councils but, unlike the Church of England's Parochial Church Councils, these had no executive authority. What could prove to be a major step forward in this process was the unique National Pastoral Congress held in Liverpool in May, 1980, when there were six lay representatives for every one clerical.

Thus the Church is awakening to a truer appreciation of its own constitution and potential. But the centuries have left their mark. For so long has the Church been dominated by its clergymen that it finds it difficult to envisage any serious use to which lay volunteers may be put other than their transmogrification into clerical or pseudo-clerical roles. This reaction draws impetus from the current shortage of clergymen. Lay leadership is seen as doing for the Church most, if not quite all, of what the clergyman would be doing were he available. If a clergyman is available, the layman is then expected to support him by shouldering such parts of his (the clergyman's) work as he (the layman) can physically and legally do. In a word, the Church's response to its laity is to take away from it what it has, its lay character, and try to turn it into what it is not. Without denying that all clergymen were once laymen and that clergymen have a vital part to play, this attitude successfully negates the exciting prospects opened up by the discovery that almost the entire Church is laity and that, therefore, an incredibly powerful array of talents awaits proper deployment in

the service, not so much of the Church, but of God.

Both clerics and laity have assumed, possibly without thought, that there is no alternative to the traditional pattern. Two factors enhance this assumption. First, there is the apparently unique role of the clergyman. "Without deliberate planning and certainly without any nefarious scheming on the part of the clergy, the congregation has developed a structure that depends entirely on the minister. The life of the congregation has grown up round him and depends on him and it does not matter whether he is called priest or pastor, rector or minister. His central position has determined the organisations and activities of the congregation and the nature of its piety. This is seen as so natural that most people will say that it is only right; that this is why you have ministers at all; that this is their job; for this they are trained. But for all that, this is what is crippling the life of the Church." (131) If the assessment of this final sentence is valid, what precedes it is an accurate factual description, which elicits a complementary attitude from the laity. "Thus, it may be suggested that the notorious passivity of the Church of England laity and their great reluctance to become involved in the Church's task of ministry may be related to the form in which leadership within the Church has traditionally been structured. The presence of a highly trained and competent man whose role is to promote the goals of the organisation encourages those around him to leave matters entirely in his hands. When the leader is also regarded as a professional man, this disposition is powerfully reinforced by the fact that professional roles of all types encourage in their clients attitudes of deference and dependence. In former generations the professional clergyman, particularly in rural areas, with time to devote to the smallest details of church and parish life, created attitudes which have persisted. Today, it may seem that the presence of a professional man inhibits the growth of corporate leadership and shared responsibility." (132) From this basis comes the lack of evangelistic zeal which stems from the clericalising of the Church's lay enthusiasts and the involvement of the laity in inferior domestic ecclesiastical labour. Even Methodism realises the dangers of this. "We also discovered that many of our 'best' laymen had become so clericalised and domesticated inside the Circuit framework that they were unable to give themselves to the rest of 'their' world. The idea

that a full expression of the Church must include 'assembly' and 'dispersion' had not occurred to them. They were eager to maintain the Church as 'assembly point' but bewildered by the thought of 'dispersion'." (133) Not unexpectedly, the Roman Catholic Church has the same experience. "Through the eucharist we become more profoundly the Church and we are sent as the Church to fulfil our mission in and for the world. In our efforts to achieve renewal we have not been conspicuously successful in establishing this truth. We need to discover the link between Mass and mission, between worship and way of life." (134) Leslie Paul explains more fully. "The laity has a ministry as real as that of the ordained ministry: that ministry is to 'the world', because that is where the laity is. Its ministry is only functionally separate from that of the ordained ministries: both together constitute the corporate pastorate of the Body of Christ in the world. Yet it cannot be said that either the laity or the ordained ministry even now look at things quite in this light. Lay service in the Church is for the most part still regarded as service in and to church organisations ... But the more the laity builds itself in and around the clusters of church organisations and functions, the less effective may be its own ministry 'to the world'. Fellowship may be found this way, but not always witness. The laity can become a clericalised laity, shut off from the world by habits of thought and of social usage almost as completely as the ordained ministry is." (135) Gibbs and Morton offer a fascinating explanation. Working from the principle that "there is no one layman's job to balance the parson's job" and that the Church feels that there should be and so continually searches for it, they suggest that "the nearest approach to one lay job is to be found among the women of the Church, who are indeed more than half of the laity. The largest group among them have one job in common - that of caring for their homes. This is the one job that the Church has recognised fully as the job of the laity. This is why it is this group of women - married women or single women spending their time in the running of their homes - who at the moment very largely make up the active laity of the Church. Their job has been recognised. The reason why women in professional and commercial life are not so obvious in church and why so few men are in church at all is that their jobs have not been recognised." (136) The assumption of and search for its one lay job must be abandoned, they say. "If this differentiation is not made and the Church continues

to find some one common job for the layman parallel to the Ministers' this will be expressed, and cannot but be expressed, in terms of the layman's service in the church buildings, and will be inevitably interpreted in terms of assisting the full-time minister. There is a place, and an important place, for the laity in the business of the local church ... (but) ... if this is seen as the one ministry of the laity, there will be fewer and fewer laity in the Church: for there is only a limited number of service jobs waiting to be done in any congregation and those who are unused or unusable will feel that there is nothing for them to do, that they are unwanted, and they will fall away." (137)

How accurate is this judgment by Gibbs and Morton of the decline in active Church membership it is probably impossible to say, but the reasons they suggest for it are undeniable. The forms may vary but the ideal remains: to perpetuate the inherited situation by using lay folk as nearly as possible as if they were ordained, payment excepted. All parts of the Church are engaged in this. The Church of England has a variety of forms of this. One is its Auxiliary Pastoral Ministry. Begun in Southwark and remaining almost entirely, though not necessarily, urban, it trains and actually ordains men who remain in their secular occupations and exercise their ministry there as well as assisting the local clergymen, though it seems possible that their ordination owes as much to the latter purpose as the former. Every Anglican diocese is now geared to A.P.M. training. Interestingly, more than half its members have been Readers. Experimental thinking about local ordained ministry is currently being done in Lincoln, Oxford and St. Albans. In addition to the particular problems such would entail they are also open to the same comments made about the A.P.M. If all these are, or will be, ordained those in the following ministries are not. The Church of England's Readers, while commissioned to exercise a pastoral as well as a liturgical function, work almost exclusively liturgically though, interestingly enough from an ecumenical point of view, their numbers now include some women. These may all lead acts of worship, preach and assist at Holy Communion and many do so regularly and are usually highly valued. Another form of ministry involving women is that which calls them Pastoral Auxiliaries and operates in a handful of dioceses. These women are trained and commissioned as bishop's officers to work in an honorary capacity

under the direction of their incumbents in purely pastoral matters. They are, in effect, an extension of the Vicar's person, ministering as directed within the parish. Similarly, the Salisbury diocese commissioned its first eighteen Lay Pastors in May, 1980, in the Sherborne deanery. They, too, are to be pastorally employed in an area which is expected soon to be reduced to six priests where fifty years ago there were thirty. Both these latter schemes are laudable attempts to grapple with one particular daily problem facing today's Church, urban or rural, but both, though using women in a part-time capacity and on an honorary basis, are still recognisable as ministerial in the traditional usage of the word. They may be outward-looking; they may be evangelistic as well as pastoral; they may be necessary and they certainly do a good job, but they are still opportunities open to few and still perpetuate a particular set of inherited beliefs about the Church's life. They are a part of the answer but only a part. On the other hand, because they remain lay folk they offer great hope to the rural Church in that they avoid the theological deadlock which arises over the non-recognition by some parts of the Church of the ordained ministries of other parts and could provide a basis upon which some ecumenical ministerial activity might be built. Insofar as this ministry would be indigenous it would be doubly welcome; at a stroke, so to say, necessity and availability are matched, together with the not inconsiderable incidental benefit that they might also provide for the Church some fair measure of freedom from clerical domination. Something of this may have lain behind the thinking of the diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Here an expected 30% reduction in the number of clergymen between 1972 and 1982 promoted the study of new forms of ordained ministry. These were all rejected and, instead, there emerged a scheme for lay elders, men and women, whose indigenous ministry would be predominantly pastoral. At the end of 1980 there were 110 such elders serving some 60 parishes.

So, too, in addition to the wide and varied traditional use of its laity, experiments proceed among the Free Churches. In 1972 the Baptists approved rules for the Accreditation of Supplementary Ministers, in 1978 the Methodist Conference finally agreed proposals for non-stipendiary 'Ministers in Local Appointment', a form of ordained ministry comparable to the Anglican A.P.M. This, of course,

is additional to its widespread use of local preachers, who correspond roughly to the Anglican's Readers. Also in 1978 the United Reformed Church began recruiting for its version of an auxiliary ordained ministry, while the Roman Catholic Church is emphasising a permanent diaconate, married or single. The British Council of Churches is also interested in these developments. (138)

Let us summarize. The use of a clericalised laity is already widespread. The prime purpose of this is the perpetuation of Church life as it has been. (139) While gladly accepting the help thus offered, there are difficulties inherent in it. (140) The laity itself is divided about it. There are those who see this as the way forward for the rural Church. "... the laity should chair all committees other than the P.C.C. The laity should run parish events, take part in the services, visit the sick, etc. We are considering the establishment of area wardens, responsible for organising magazine distribution, attendance of sidesmen, church cleaning and flower arranging." (141) Some have had positive experience of its advantages. "The local Church had become far more vigorous by not having a full-time priest. This had encouraged the emergence of local leadership.." (142) Others, and these are likely to be more numerous - and vociferous - in the countryside, take an opposing view. "It is often suggested that the pastoral role could be taken by laity. Undoubtedly there are laity who have social skills, a knowledge of life and sufficient knowledge of the Christian life and message to be acceptable to the clergy as associates. The snag is that while as persons they may be made welcome, neither the people who need spiritual help nor the outsider to church affairs regards them as proper representatives of 'the Church'." (143) These criticisms are not too damaging for spiritual help is not restricted to coming from those who are representatives of the Church, proper or improper, and every assistant clergyman has experience of occasions where he is openly treated as not being the 'real' clergyman. Nevertheless, these are criticisms and Reed is correct in seeing this as a bigger problem for the communal, e.g. village, type Church than for the associational for it would be unusual if no resistance were encountered when a lifelong neighbour in a small community is deputed to a role that mirrors the kind of activity previously done only by

a professional (man) who has come from the outside world.

But this is by no means the only way for the Church to use its laity, although it requires vision and courage to think that lay people have roles of their own. Some, however, have thought this, though starting from different bases. Trevor Dorey starts with baptism and in two concise paragraphs describes the arenas for lay ministry in itself and its clericalised form. (144) Others start from the vocation which follows baptism. "Participation is essential because it springs from the very nature of the Christian vocation and also because a great many fields are quite inaccessible to the Church except through its lay members who live and work in them. Moreover this participation is important because the Church's effective witness depends in very large measure on expertise of the laity in diverse fields, expertise which the clergy do not have, have not had, but too often have presumed to have. However, their participation in the life of the Church is not merely to be seen in terms of their professional expertise. They also have the specific spiritual ministry, which they exercise through all activities including their technical competence. The Church in all its members is ministerial." (145) This is a most valuable corrective to the current thinking about the use of the Church's laity for it underlines the every day value of the lay folk in areas where the clergy have none and crowns it by suggesting that it overflows into spiritual ministry, rather than the other way round. John Macquarrie begins his thinking with the vocation of the whole Church, arguing that the priesthood of all believers leads us to "note that the most important ministry of the laity is a secular, informal ministry, fulfilling itself in daily life. We make a serious mistake if we try to turn the layman's ministry into an imitation of the ministry of the cleric and we detract from the true worth and dignity of the lay ministry." (146)

Such thinking might be called revolutionary. Even if, in 1961, it could hardly have been a generalisation, Leslie Paul believed that "the new role the laity has to play, and is being asked to play by the ordained ministry, constitutes the religious revolution of the twentieth century." (147) Two years later, Pope John Paul 11, as Bishop Wojtyla, attended Vatican 11. Of his work there it has been written, "He was one of the main architects of Lumen Gentium, the document which re-orientated the whole Church ... Lumen Gentium

moves away from the idea of a Church as a monarchical pyramid, a grace-and-favour situation, towards a new concept of the Church as a body in which everyone is responsible for the mission of the Church, but each in his own way. What comes out from Lumen Gentium is that the layman's job is where he actually is - and that is where he must build the Church. It's no longer a question of helping Father in the physical work of the parish, though that is important and somebody has to do it, but of recognising that the layman's primary job is in the world. As one of those responsible for this crucial document, Wojtyla knows that this change of emphasis is the most important thing that happened in the Council. Because of it, the Church moved on to a new track." (148) Should it be considered that revolutionary is too strong a word for this, at least it may be conceded that here we have another new factor, the second, which we said was necessary (p190) if rural ministry was to continue. It is not, however, a matter of asserting or denying differences between the lay and the clerical members of the Church. Of course they are different, if only in function. The crisis lies in the recognition that, in the main, these functions are so different as to be complementary - and both are essential. In general, the clergyman will operate most efficiently within the Christian community, the layman outside it. "As was said in Evanston: 'The real battles of faith today are being fought in factories, shops, offices and farms, in political parties and government agencies, in countless homes, in the press, radio and television, in the relationship of nations. Very often it is said that the Church should go "into these spheres", but the fact is that the Church is already in these spheres in the persons of its laity " ... but it is a truth which has been obscured over many periods of the Church's life." (149) Six years later, in 1960, from the Lausanne Youth Assembly came a similar message. "We go home with the knowledge that mission is not advertisement but service, a real entering into the need of other people, and the struggle with their need in practical help, prayer and witness in daily life. We go home with the knowledge that mission of this kind is perhaps more a concern of lay people than of pastors, because they are closer to the everyday life of their fellow men; and that the fulfilment of mission is thus our concern ... We go home with the urgent question as to whether the mission of the local Church is not best fulfilled by small, flexible, closely-knit communities of people living or working

together..." (150)

This conviction is slowly beginning to spread among the Church's laity. One particular shape it has taken has been the formation of small communities whose members try to exercise their Christian responsibilities in the world through their close association with each other as fellow Church members. Others, unable or unwilling to enter into this deep type of relationship, draw their support from membership of house groups, which are devolved training oases for Church purposes, but by far the greater number of those who are aware of their own Christian role in society undertake this on an individual basis. This could well be the crucial area for the Church, for those with similar, or even identical, employment, income, family, housing and social responsibilities are best placed to proffer their Christian attitude to these things to those who are dissatisfied with the results of their own attitudes. This is the real vocation of the layman and it is one which the clergy can never have; one which the clergyman should always consider is his duty and privilege to support. If this constitutes a reversal of the received relationship between the clergyman and his people, encouragement should be offered to the latter and sympathy to the former. "Today the clergy in the countryside are moving into an unpredictable future. They have to be men of faith, courage and prophetic insight if they are to survive the strain of uncertainty and the repeated call to experiment with new pastoral and evangelistic methods - many of them still untried." (151) So wrote Frank West, Bishop of Taunton, after a lifetime of rural ministry.

No small part of that strain and uncertainty for today's rural clergyman concerns his acceptance that the laity does not belong to him, but he to it; that it is not there to help him in more than a very limited fashion; that his relationship with his lay folk ought to be comparable with that of the Lord and his twelve, whom he called "that they should be with him and that he might send them forth" (152); that his people are his in that he is responsible for them in preparing them for, and sustaining them in, their work in the secular world. Thus voluntarily to encourage his laity to undertake in the wider community that Christian ministry which it alone can render, even at the cost of some domestic Church affairs

being left undone, requires faith and courage, indeed, both for himself, as he feels his way in this new ministry, and to uphold him in the face of the opposition which this will at first provoke from many, perhaps most, of his people. But if there is no such surrender of the Church's laity to the world there is unlikely to be much ecumenism, which embodies the same principle of surrendering what is good for the sake of what is better. The ministry of the rural laity is linked with the progress of rural ecumenism. That ecumenism, insofar as it is the question of the relationship between clergymen of differing communions, is best considered under our next general heading of Local Ecumenical Projects, where these relationships are worked out in practice.

5. Local Ecumenical Projects.

The third new factor (p190) which could, and should, help to ensure a continuing clerical rural ministry is ecumenism. There are still major obstacles about this being universally acceptable, as we saw in the responses to the 'Ten Propositions', but there is now adequate ecclesiastical and legal provision to enable any normal rural community to make some progress towards it. We have already met the Shared Buildings Act (p178), the general acceptance of Proposition 8 (p53) and the production of the Roman Catholic 'Local Covenants' document (p53). We have also noted the call from the High Leigh Consultation of 1970 (p167) to further the Nottingham Conference's 1964 call for the institution of Areas of Ecumenical Experiment where co-operation had reached a high level. The vision was one that embraced ecumenical group ministries, shared buildings and one Christian community in each place, committed to mission. It was not long before the challenge was accepted. In 1965, Desborough, in Northamptonshire, applied for status as an Area of Ecumenical Experiment (A.E.E.), the churches there having issued a declaration of intent to work together. Although this was encouraging, there was no great rush to follow. After ten years there were still only 46 A.E.E.s (though there were also over 100 Sharing Agreements) of which the Anglicans were involved in 44, the Baptists in 10, the Methodists in 44, the Roman Catholics in 3 and the United Reformed Church in 20.

Although the consultation at High Leigh had asked specifically that selected rural areas be considered as Areas of Ecumenical Experiment, the Conference at Nottingham had referred only to new towns and housing areas, so that only one out of the first 46 A.E.E.s was distinctly rural - Pilning (Bristol). Commenting on the possibility of rural communities availing themselves of this originally urban proposal, the Revd. R.M.C. Jeffrey had written of them in 1968, "It certainly seems that communities which are fairly compact and self-contained find it far easier to agree on an ecumenical policy." (153) We have previously touched on a number of reasons why ecclesiastical interest has concentrated on urban areas. Given, in addition, the difficulties that pertain to the rural Church and also a rural share in the natural propensity to try to retain what is known for as long as possible, it is disappointing, though not entirely unexpected, to find that the ensuing years did not see this rural promise develop.

Strangely enough, the expression Area of Ecumenical Experiment was never officially defined and has been loosely used to cover a variety of conditions. In practice, there has emerged differentiation so that an acceptable definition has arisen. This speaks of "defined areas, where, under responsible authority certain denominational traditions are suspended for a period in order that new patterns of worship, mission and ministry can be undertaken." (154) They are, thus, officially recognised ecumenical units and have a wide range of possible activities opened up for them according to the depth of commitment which pertains. From the simple business of two congregations sharing one building it is possible to go as far as having a unified membership and ministry, a unified local executive body and unified finance. In between lies a host of opportunities ranging from the sharing of children's work and adult formation to direct impingement on the local community in evangelistic or other ministerial forms. In many ways these Areas are doing together what the rest of the Church is doing apart. Their strengths include a renewed internal enthusiasm and external impact, which amounts to a profounder Christianity in themselves and a simpler Christianity for others. Needing to be set against these considerable benefits there stand the weaknesses which derive initially from the mixing of traditions, the multiplicity of meetings and the other

demands made upon the time of the keenest. But these weaknesses should be experienced in the initial stages only. It is to be hoped that the same is not true, in practice, of the strengths.

Behind these A.E.E.s stand Sponsoring Bodies, although only one in three have them. These are representative of the Church leaders of the area and act as overseers and guardians, safeguarding both the participants in the experiments and their parent denominations. They offer necessary recognition and support to the experimenters by providing both a buffer and a bridge between them and their denominations and also a substantial body of influence, experience and resource. They act, too, as guarantors to the denominations that all is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the experiment. Many Sponsoring Bodies have responsibility for several Areas. This has obvious advantages, but is by no means necessary or universal. It is probably true to say that behind each flourishing A.E.E. there stands an efficient Sponsoring Body. "It cannot be emphasised too much that the whole basis of 'areas of ecumenical experiment' depends upon the existence of a strong sponsoring body. Without the supervision which this provides, there will be both lack of real support from the denominations and a sense of insecurity among the team." (155)

The value of good Sponsoring Bodies has, if anything, increased as the passage of the years has widened their experience and demonstrated their abilities, but there was soon criticism of the multiplication of A.E.E.s "It would be wrong if there were too many 'areas of ecumenical experiment' - they are by their nature pilot projects and to bring all kinds of different levels of ecumenical co-operation under this category would make it meaningless." (156) Perhaps even more fundamental is the thought that "we should recognise that as long as every significant interdenominational venture is called an experiment, the people involved in them will continue to be regarded as ecclesiastical oddities." (157) Others, notably the Roman Catholic Church, found difficulty with the concept of the suspension of traditions and were unenthusiastic. Commonly used nomenclature opened the way forward. Without implying that every Area was a Project, there grew the habit of referring to at least some A.E.E.s as Local Ecumenical Projects (L.E.P.s).(158) This brought disadvantages. The word experiment implied a time

limit and this was an encouragement to adventure that might not have been forthcoming had the intention been one of permanency. Also implied was constant evaluation, which precluded the simple dropping into a different pattern of somnambulism, while the 'escape clause' stressed that as much could be gained by the failure to prove a point (achieve the objective) as by proving it. There were, of course, advantages. The concept of experiment had brought with it an atmosphere of being a temporary measure and one that did not, therefore, require immediate or, indeed, any commitment. It was also now possible to avoid the feeling of being a specimen under a microscope but, conversely, introduced that of being a pioneer attempting a limited and attainable objective for the sake of the Church as a whole as well as its local manifestation. Above all, it opened the way for the greater involvement of the Roman Catholic Church, for a Project did not appear to offer the same "danger of becoming a cover for rejecting church discipline." (159) There was, in fact, never any intention of cloaking denominational differences. The object was to provide an arena in which the differing traditions could more readily appreciate each other's virtues, co-operate more effectively in their one mission and offer an immediate reception and testing to new ideas. All such areas are now known as Local Ecumenical Projects.

If the years 1965-74 produced only about 50 Areas of Ecumenical Experiment, the next two years saw the total number of Local Ecumenical Projects grow to 289, and while that includes the 100 or so Sharing Agreements it was before the result of the Ten Propositions proposals were known. Not that the change of name weakened the requirements for inclusion on the lists. This would be far from the truth for a L.E.P. was defined as existing only "where there is at the level of the local church a formal, written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life and/or buildings of more than one denomination; and a recognition of that agreement by the appropriate denominational authorities." (160) By 1978 a further 21 L.E.P.s had begun but 12 existing ones had ceased. The latest figures show that by Aug, 1979, there was listed in the "Register of Christians Working together in Groups, Teams and Projects" a total of 325. Future growth is obviously going to be steady rather than sensational. A breakdown of the current Projects is interesting.

Projects involving buildings only:	82 (25.2%)
congregations only:	16 (4.9%)
ministry only:	20 (6.1%)
Projects involving buildings and congregations:	11 (3.4%)
buildings and ministry :	2 (0.6%)
congregations and ministry :	28 (8.6%)
buildings, congregations and ministry:	167 (51.2%)

Thus buildings are involved in 260 Projects - 81%:
congregations are involved in 218 Projects - 66%:
ministries are involved in 216 Projects - 65%

If a quarter are only concerned with sharing buildings, at least they have got so far. On the other hand, the figures for the involvement of congregations and ministries is encouragingly high, while the most encouraging is the total of more than half sufficiently committed to be involved in all three ways.

A denominational breakdown of the same figures is also instructive.

There is Anglican involvement in	218 Projects	- 66%
Baptist involvement in	50	- 15%
Methodist involvement in	251	- 77%
Roman Catholic involvement in	39	- 11%
U.R.C. involvement in	173	- 54%

111 Projects (34%) involve only Anglicans and Methodists.
88 Projects (28%) involve only Methodists and U.R.C.
15 Projects (4%) involve only Anglicans and Baptists.

All other Projects, one in three, are multilateral. This, too, is impressive, as is the involvement of Baptists and the Roman Catholic Church.

Baptists are party to 45 Projects involving ministry and 37 involving all the three forms of commitment.

Roman Catholics are party to 14 Projects involving ministry and 7 involving all the three forms of commitment.

One of the reasons for the remarkable increase in the number of

Projects since 1975 lies in the formation and the work of the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England (C.C.L.E.P.E). This Committee was formed in June, 1973, to

> keep the Churches informed at national level about the development of local ecumenical projects;
> discuss matters of concern remitted to the committee by member Churches or by Bishops, Chairmen, Moderators, etc., and/or sponsoring bodies, or by the committees of local ecumenical projects;
> give as clear guidance as possible on the rules of the various Churches and on the operation of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act and other legislation. etc.;
> bring to the attention of the Churches or their appropriate committees problems in relation to policies, laws, administrative rules and regulations, etc., that will create complications for inter-church projects, and make proposals for possible amendments. (161)

It vigorously took up the problems and opportunities facing it and by 1975 had produced the definitive "Guidelines for Local Ecumenical Projects", to which approval was given by the big five Churches in England, together with the Churches of Christ. It was from then that matters leapt forward, not for mutual support and continuance of existence, but for mission. "The recognition of a local ecumenical project presupposes the existence of a scheme worked out in detail in terms of mission." (162) It is, of course, possible to engage together unofficially either on a temporary, ad hoc, basis or on a longer term one but such arrangements are at the mercy of personalities and need to be self-sufficient. An officially recognised Project guarantees continuity and offers continual guidance and a broader based area of support. Of these advantages, the most critical is that which guarantees continuity. In the country, particularly, personalities are paramount and even longstanding co-operation can come to a halt with the appointment - or just the withdrawal - of one key person. Here is one of the places where Sponsoring Bodies are most valuable. In a recent document (Jan. 1980), the first of its official documents to recognise the existence of L.E.P.s, the Church of England makes the point that when intending to withdraw or appoint personnel to

L.E.P.s "the bishop shall consult with the appropriate authorities of the other Churches involved, through a Sponsoring Body where one exists, as well as the Parochial Church Council." (163) It is, in fact, now customary for the members of the ministerial team themselves to meet with and offer comments about any prospective colleague. While this is unofficial, it is an obvious, simple and vital thing.

When the Churches' Unity Commission was disbanded in 1978, its Propositions 8, 9 and 10 (see above, p53) had been accepted by all the consulting denominations. In order that this verbal agreement should not die with the Commission, responsibility for the practical application of these Propositions, including the further development of Local Ecumenical Projects, was passed to C.C.L.E.P.E.

As we have seen, there are now more than 200 instances of ecumenical teams at work. If there remain the difficulties that depend on mutual recognition of ministries, the advantages of denominational group ministries are enhanced when the groups become ecumenical. Not only are there more men to call on but there comes with them a richness of Christian life that is unlikely to be experienced if the ministry is undertaken unilaterally. At its lowest level, any confession of Christian unity would be suspect if it allowed a duplication of ministry in rural areas where the people are so few and the miles so many. There are, however, new problems. Pity the Free Church minister who is involved in only one ecumenical ministry and who has responsibility for a number of other congregations who are not in L.E.P.s. Pity, too, the Anglican, as it usually is in the country, who lives and spends all his time in the area and who has to avoid appearing to have taken over its entire ecclesiastical life. "Boughton highlights a particular problem in the relationships between 'church' and 'chapel'. The Vicar is resident in the village and is therefore able to be at all the united services: the Methodist minister lives in Faversham and is responsible for six societies other than Boughton - he cannot therefore share in these services as fully as the Vicar, however much he might wish to do so...The incumbent needs to appreciate that the absence of his Methodist colleague from united services does not necessarily imply that the Methodist

minister is not interested and that the Methodist people can well feel a little resentful of the Vicar always being there." (164) Yet, slowly, innovations are being made that may help future patterns develop. The Methodist Conference has passed measures whereby ministers of other denominations can be recognised fully as Methodist ministers - for example, John Simpson, the U.R.C. minister in the Loddon and Bungay area, is now the Methodist Circuit Superintendent there - and some Free Church ministers have been given authority to celebrate Holy Communion in Anglican parish churches not subject to Sharing Agreements. (165) More excitingly, "a new pattern which is emerging in a number of projects is where the minister of one denomination has pastoral charge of the other. Whilst this is fairly common in Methodist/U.R.C. projects, there are now two cases where an Anglican has charge of a Free Church, and one place where a Methodist minister has pastoral oversight of an Anglican church and a U.R.C. church. In some other projects the minister of one denomination has pastoral charge of an ecumenical congregation." (166) History was made on September 2nd, 1977, when the Revd. Patrick Harrower, the Methodist minister to whom reference has just been made, was inducted to the pastoral charge of the U.R.C. congregation of Debden, Essex, and of St. Nicholas' (C/E) of the same place.

The duties of the members of an ecumenical group will vary according to the scope of the Project and this can be infinitely variable. In rural areas the duties will usually consist of doing the ordinary ministerial things, leading worship in one or more buildings and exercising pastoral care, but now for the whole community. There has even been seriously discussed, in Swindon, the possibility of instituting an ecumenical episcope but legalities are in the forefront of the obstacles standing in the way of its realisation at the moment. Nonetheless, it is a natural progression from an ecumenical group ministry and one which will remain a problem until it is affirmatively resolved. It is, strangely, the ordinary Church member who is liable to have more difficulty with the new arrangements, though there is ample evidence that the divisions which worry the clergymen are not those which concern the lay folk. In addition to the need to become familiar with different ways of worship, forms of pastoral caring and methods of decision making, there is the necessity to overcome the major

difference of outlook which is enshrined within the established Church's responsibility for all citizens and the eclectic life of the rest of the Church. Ecumenism, in fact, demands a radical re-appraisal by, and hopefully, renewal in, all participants, for it raises basic issues that are usually unquestioned. It raises, for example, the fundamental question of membership: in what does it consist? what precisely does it mean? into which (part of the) Church is one baptised? can one hold membership of more than one part at a time? The theoretical answers do not always hold good in practice and indicate that current regulations can only be of an interim nature to attend to an interim situation. "The Bristol Handbook for Local Ecumenical Projects", produced by the Bristol Region Sponsoring Body, gives a comprehensive coverage of these and other related matters, with working examples where appropriate. Until there is full mutual recognition of both ministries and membership problems will occur. Point should be given to this if there is any widespread local covenanting. This may renew pressure for further experiments but, if the local situation is the one in which we can look for most progress, that progress has a definite, if retreating, limit, which can only be removed by national ecumenical agreement. The third of the 'Ten Propositions' is realistic when it says "We believe that this search (for unity) requires action both locally and nationally." At the moment neither local rural nor national levels seem to be much in contact. Thus, Dorey's review of rural ministries includes the comments that "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the recent history of the Free Churches and of ecumenism in rural areas has been marked largely by good intention but lost opportunities. There has been an abundance of reportsurging fresh initiatives. All too often their warnings have gone unheeded." He then gives illustrations of this. "The extensive Welsh Border Experiment attempted by the Methodists in 1968 stressed that the need for ecumenical co-operation was urgent if the self-destruction of the rural Church was not to continue at an ever accelerating rate. The warnings were ignored and the experiment abandoned. A 1970 Congregational report recommended 'that an approach be made forthwith to the other Free Churches and to the Church of England to discuss the pooling of our resources in rural areas as a matter of urgency.' ... The Baptist Church made a similar recommendation in 1973. The results in each case

were minimal and the process of rapid decline continued ... Both the British Council of Churches, as overseers of official arrangements for Local Ecumenical Projects and the publication "The State of the Teams", which monitors the experience of groups and teams throughout the country, confirm that formal projects on an ecumenical basis are few and far between in country areas, with rural conservatives often proving a real stumbling block." (167) In fact, there is just no knowledge by anyone of exactly what is going on in terms of rural ecumenism. Projects begin and projects end. These are usually known. Some are called Projects which are of a minimal kind, scarcely worthy of the title; others have been doing many of the things pertaining to a project for years before the title was conceived. It is these latter that are hardest to trace for if they have not bothered to obtain official recognition they will not be recorded anywhere. The impression given is that there are very many of these. On the other hand, some are recorded and still not recognised, as in the case of the secretary of a Sponsoring Body which, at that time, had oversight of 15 L.E.P.s, who wrote to say that all of these were urban while, at the same time, a clergyman from one of them was providing details of his piece of rural ecumenism in a village of 1200.

All in all, it is difficult, if not downright rash, to suggest that out of the total of 325 L.E.P.s in the latest list, there are possibly only four registered, rural ecumenical projects that are more or less in line with the definition of rural adopted by this study. These are in Pilning (Bristol), Saltfleetby (Lincs.), South Lindsey (Lincs.) and Whitton (Humberside). With so very few rural instances upon which to work it is not possible to do more than guess at any patterns that are beginning to be formed. It is notable, however, that congregations are involved in all four rural Projects and ministries, theologically the most difficult, in three, while none has simply a building as its common point. It may be that this will offer some support for our contention that rural life is essentially personal and, indeed, essentially one. It may also suggest that there is more Christian commitment in the countryside. These suggestions are admittedly based upon very little evidence but they merit attracting an awareness that will test them as more evidence becomes available.

The denominational composition of these four rural Projects is simply stated. All are bilateral and all have Anglican and Methodist components. This may accord with our previous findings about the rural presence of the Church of England but appears to dispute our contention about the rural absence of Free Church clergymen. In fact, none of these four Projects has a resident Methodist minister. It does remind us, however, that Methodism remains second to none in its involvement in official ecumenical arrangements. How far bilateral projects are more advantageous than multi-lateral it is impossible to say. Two can usually agree quicker and travel faster than three but there could well be instances where the presence of a third party, from an entirely different Christian tradition, could help to maintain vision and momentum. In general, this is a hypothetical question for the rural Christian, for finding the third party is unlikely. It could become a real question, however, if rural ecumenism becomes more widespread and the new units attach themselves to each other. This has already happened in the case of Loddon (and Raveningham) and Bungay, on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. Although listed as two projects, these are worked by a team whose seventeen members consider themselves to be a unit. Their disparate sections have populations beyond the limits of this study, together totalling 14,000, spread over 500 square miles and with forty-five places of worship. They are mentioned here because they do contain a large number of very small villages and, more importantly, are the most experienced in ecumenism in multiple small rural communities. Matters arising from their experience which would repay wider study include the following :

1. This is an experiment. It has a time limit of seven years, 1976-1983.
2. It has three component Communions, though these are largely separated geographically, with Loddon being mainly Anglican/Methodist and Bungay Methodist/U.R.C. There are no Baptists in the area. The local R.C.s are not involved.
3. There is a combined Methodist/U.R.C. church in Bungay and summer and winter alternative use of Anglican and Methodist churches in Loddon.
4. Anglican and Methodist ministries in Loddon and Raveningham are described as "interchangeable in all respects." (168)

5. In the Loddon section there is one shared bank account dealing with all money.

6. Loddon, too, has a combined governing Council with ten Anglicans and ten Methodists, together with the ordained staff of two. Since 1976 all worship and ministry have been shared.

7. It is thought that the experiment would not have begun had it not been originally agreed to deal with problems, including finance, as they occurred rather than deferring a beginning until all details had been settled.

8. The Anglican laity was more concerned about finance, hymn books, buildings and the like, than about acquiring the locally interchangeable ministry which is the foundation stone of the whole experiment. (This phenomenon is by no means without exception.)

If Loddon and Bungay can be considered areas of success, there are, however, questions for further investigation.

1. The team's opinion that the most likely base from which to initiate ecumenism is where one of two possible partners is weak. This is how Loddon began; with the illness of an incumbent.

2. The preparedness to go forward with many important matters undecided. This may not always work out as well as it appears to have done here.

3. The objective is overtly pastoral; mission is secondary.

4. The problems created by Ecumenism were minor. The major problems were caused by the introduction of change. Prospective initiators of ecumenical projects would be likely to receive advice rather in conflict with each of these points. At the least, this must warn potential planners and policy makers to think again about their basic principles in the light of practical knowledge: at most, it may indicate that each group of people must be allowed to work out its own practice believing that, like the Sabbath, these other things were made for man and not vice versa. Without doubt, the Loddon and Bungay clergy point to what is perhaps the crucial feature of rural, if not other kinds of, ecumenism when they say, "We must be prepared to sacrifice what we are for what we might become. The people of God

are one and should demonstrate the fact." (169) This is not a new belief but neither is it a common one. An ecumenical group in Northamptonshire, the site, we remember of the first Area of Ecumenical Experiment , did some careful thinking about "Planning the Ecumenical Parish". Published in 1967, this had, as early as its third paragraph, "It rapidly became obvious to us that this was not possible unless, for the sake of the experiment, we were all prepared to lay aside some of our more strongly held denominational convictions and accept the validity of each other's claims to be part of the church. This we have done as the only alternative to saying either that the task was impossible, or that it could produce so little by way of positive suggestion as to be valueless." R.M.C. Jeffery takes up this quotation and expands it. "Unless there is a real willingness to surrender things which we think are important very little can happen. Moreover by being willing to surrender them in an experimental situation we shall be able to test whether they are so central to our Christian faith as we thought." (170) Reaching such a position of daring is only possible to those whose vision has been extended beyond their own usage and who are encouraged by their knowledge that their 'separated brethren' are allies in this and not opponents. In fact, the process that leads to registration as an L.E.P. is very long. The British Council of Churches lists four stages of growing together but even this is too precise and represents, rather, stations along the line than the length of line to be travelled. It is a most gradual advance somewhat akin to that which brings strangers, who are, at the same time, of one race and perhaps of one locality, to the married state. There is an increasing friendship and knowledge of each other gained through the pursuit of common interests; a deepening commitment to each other and then a formal acceptance of each other (engagement=declaration of intent=covenant) and eventually a merging of the lives, accepting for the sake of the good whatever is not directly appealing (marriage= L.E.P.=ecumenical parish). This analogy is useful only to indicate the time scale and the process. If pressed in other ways it would require a Muslim rather than a Christian tradition to give the necessary breadth. By the later stages of this time scale there will have been generated that mutual trust, both among the clergy and between them and the laity, without which no ecumenism should

be contemplated.

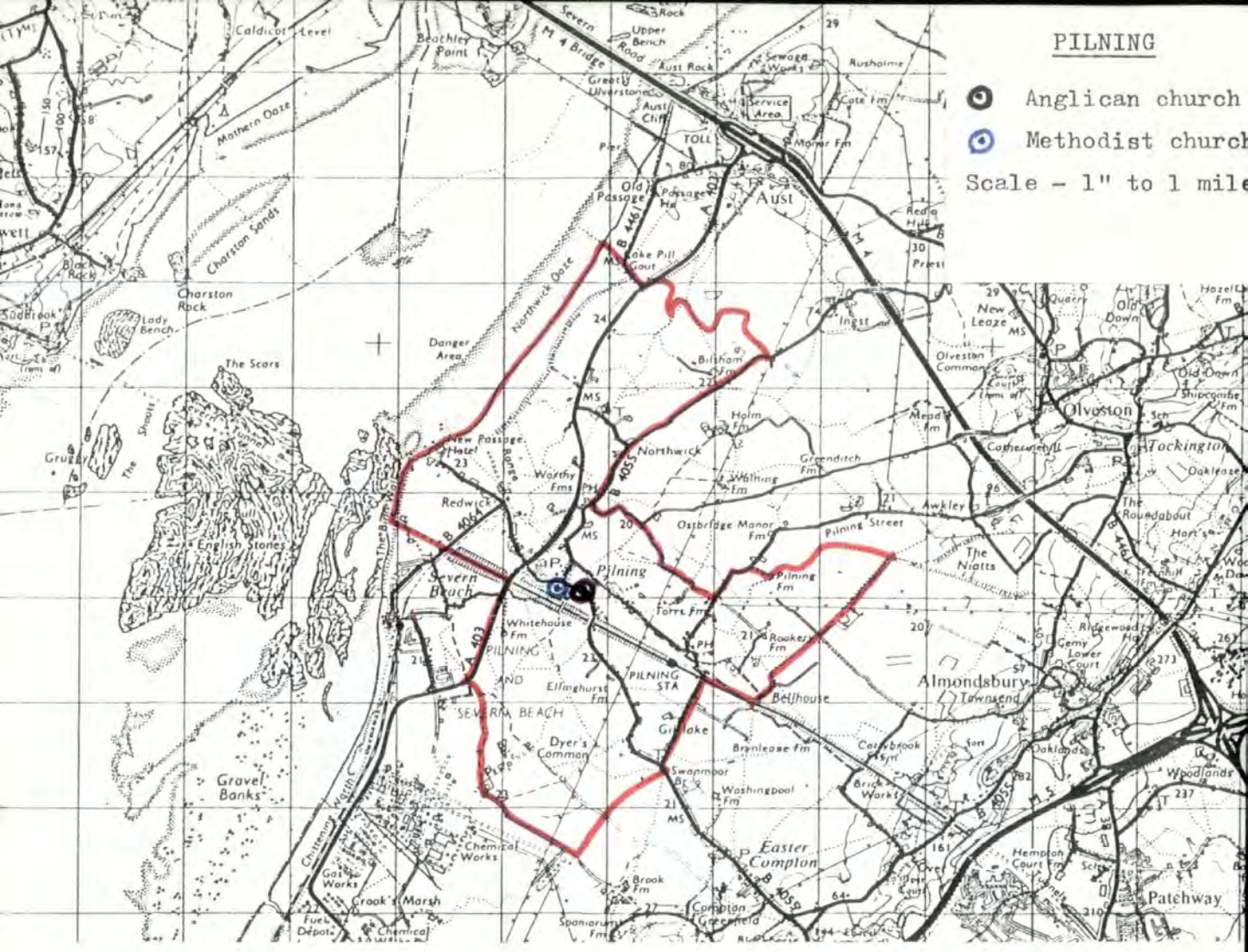
In that we have identified but four areas as falling within the limited scope of this study we can look at each of them in a little detail.

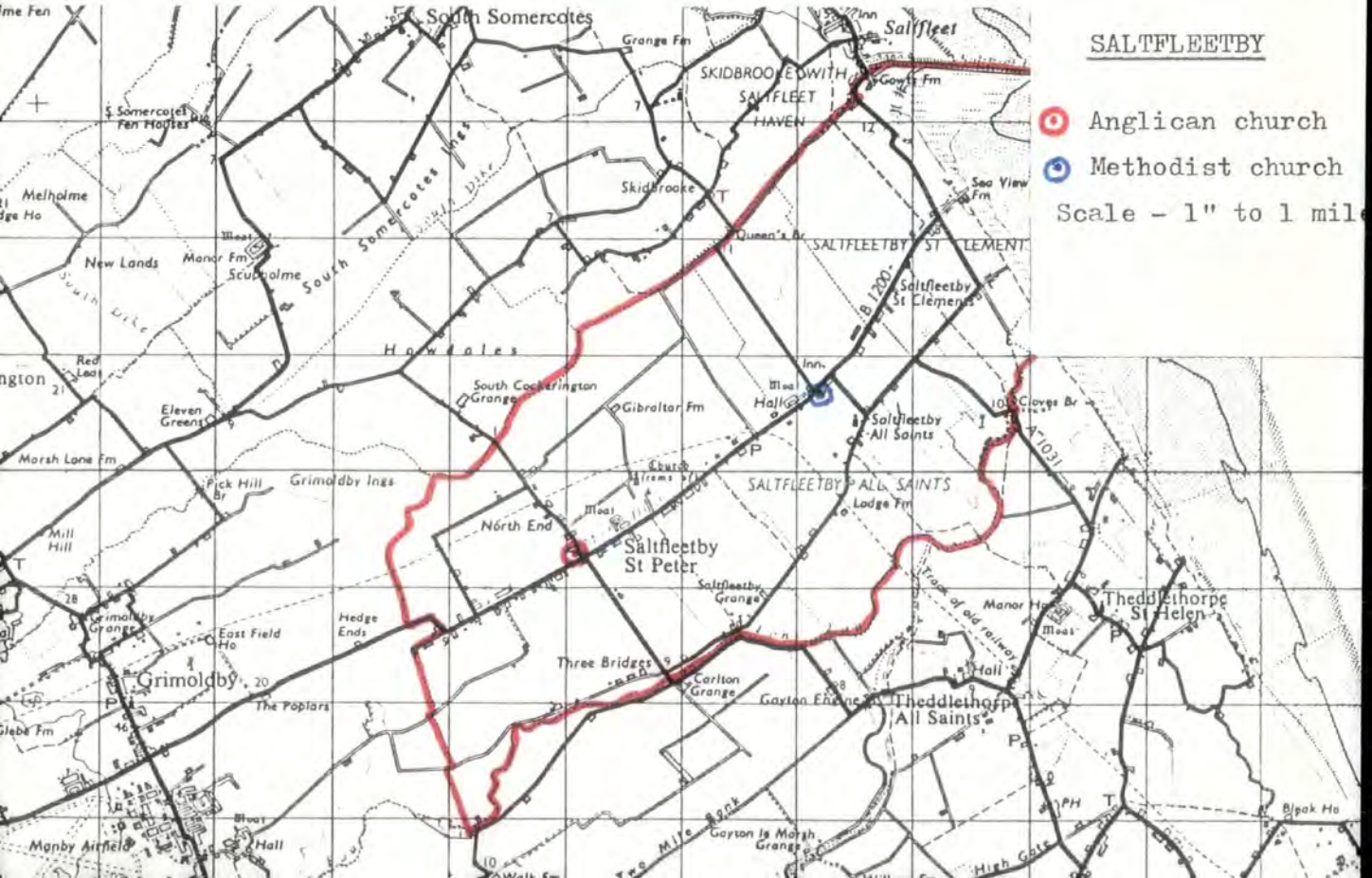
(a) Pilning.

Pilning is a village of 1200 people a few miles north of Bristol and near the Severn Estuary. Its status as an ecumenical parish came about gradually and naturally. It had two churches, St. Peter's (C/E) and Trinity (Methodist). The congregations were friendly and occasional joint services led to a shared family service once a month and the Methodists taking a page in the parish magazine. The Methodists received help with their Sunday school from C/E teachers but the schools were not united because of unsuitable accommodation. At the same time, because it was a village community, members of both Communions were working together as villagers in all social activities. It was only in ecclesiastical matters that they became other than one community.

The Parochial Church Council and the Methodist leaders began meeting in 1969. These meetings became regular as bi-monthly events and by 1972 each congregation agreed to unite for all worship in the parish church, to convert the chapel into a Sunday school and weekday activity centre and to sell the church hall to help finance alterations. Between that vote and the formal designation by the sponsoring body three months later, means were found to share a common purse. One Church Council was to make all decisions.

The present incumbent brings us up to date information about how the parish is working after seven years of ecumenical living. "The main Sunday service is at 11. a.m. and sometimes it follows Methodist, other times Anglican, patterns, but all members go to both and the ministries of myself and the Methodist minister are equally and mutually accepted. We even preside at one another's Eucharists. I have taken a Methodist baptism. We are currently thoroughly integrated and have no intention of moving apart in any way." Other points he makes are that "people are simply baptised into the Christian Church. We use the Methodist or C/E rite as requested. Confirmation is done by the Ecumenical Rite authorised for use in the diocese of Bristol. It is administered by the bishop and the


PILNING
Anglican church
Methodist church
Scale - 1" to 1 mile
Aust
Severn Beach
Pilning
Almondsbury
Olveston
Tockington
Easter Compton
Patchway
Gravel Banks
Charston Rock
Northwick
Redwick
Pilning Street
Bellhouse
Hempton Court Fm
Crook's Marsh
Chemical Works
Gas Works
Fuel Depot
Spaniorum Fm
Brook Fm
Compton Greenfield
Oakleaze
Woodlands
Ridgewood Hill
Gerny Lower Court
The Roundabout
The Niatts
Awkley
Ostbridge Manor Fm
Whitehouse Fm
Elfinghurst Fm
Torrs Fm
Rookes Fm
Brynlease Fm
Cattybrook Fm
Brick Works
Washingpool Fm
Swanmoor
Dyer's Common
Gilbrook
Pilning Fm
Pilning Sta
Worthy Fms
Holm Fm
Greenditch Fm
Withing Fm
Ostbridge Manor Fm
Mead Fm
Ingst
Bilsham Fm
Lake Pill Gout
Old Passage
New Passage Hotel
Passage Hd
Aust Cliff
Aust Rock
Upper Bench
Severn Road Bridge
Beachley Point
Caldicot Level
Mathern Oase
Charston Sands
Black Rock
Lady Bench
Sudbrook
The Scars
The Shoots
English Stones
Danger Area
Northwick Oase
Rushoime
Cote Fm
Manor Fm
Service Area
TOLL
Sewage Works
Greenly Ulverston
Old Down
Shipcombe Fm
Hazel Fm
New Leaze
Olveston Common
Catherwell
Quarry
Sch
Inn
PH
MS
TOLL
Aust
Pilning
Olveston
Tockington
Almondsbury
Easter Compton
Patchway
Severn Beach
Gravel Banks
Aust
Pilning
Olveston
Tockington
Almondsbury
Easter Compton
Patchway
Severn Beach
Gravel Banks


SALTFLEETBY
Anglican church
Methodist church
Scale - 1" to 1 mile
South Somercotes
Saltfleet
Saltfleetby St Peter
Saltfleetby All Saints
Saltfleetby St Clement
Theddlethorpe St Helen
Theddlethorpe All Saints
Grimoldby
Manby Airfield
Skidbrooke
Gibraltar Fm
South Cockerington Grange
Eleven Greens
Grimoldby Ings
Hawdales
New Lands
Scubholme
Melholme
Sea View Fm
Queen's Br
Cloves Br
Lodge Fm
Carlton Grange
Gayton Engine
Gayton le Marsh Grange
Three Bridges
The Poplars
East Field Ho
Hedge Ends
Mill Hill
Pick Hill Br
Marsh Lane Fm
Red Leat
Meat Hall
Moat
Inn
Church
Trace of old railway
Bleak Ho
High Gate
Saltfleetby Grange
Grimoldby Grange
South Somercotes
Saltfleetby St Peter
Saltfleetby All Saints
Saltfleetby St Clement
Theddlethorpe St Helen
Theddlethorpe All Saints
Grimoldby
Manby Airfield

Methodist minister jointly and equally. Candidates are full members of both denominations .... We have separate Methodist membership and C/E Electoral Rolls ... The C/E still owns the church and the Methodists the hall. The church is a 'shared building' .... The Vicar is resident and full time and the minister is non-resident and part time." (171)

This seems to be a well-conceived, well-received and well-run community that could well be cited for an example to others seeking the same ends. Points of special note are:

1. It is bi-lateral, with each party having a building to contribute.
2. It is C/E and Methodist, the two most common participants in rural ecumenical ventures.
3. Its folk were basically one to begin with, being members of a small village community.
4. The union was with unequal partners. The present Vicar believes that the original choice the Methodists had to make was between union or closure. Anglican dominance has been noted throughout.
5. This position is exaggerated with the Vicar being resident and the Methodist minister living somewhere else. The Methodists have been congratulated on not being so defensive that changes were made impossible; the Anglicans on their generosity, not least in terms of finance.
6. With one unit, sharing all buildings, ministry, finance and decision making, it is not easy to disagree with the Vicar when he says "All told, the L.E.P. is a success."

The situation described in the first five of these points must be extremely common. It holds out great hope of the sixth being achieved by many.

(b) Saltfleetby.

Saltfleetby parish is a narrow strip of land stretching for about four miles inland from the sea, some four or five miles north of Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire. The village is practically a single three mile long street with about 500 inhabitants. There is a

Methodist church (East End); St. Peter's (C/E) being at the other end. The Rector was formerly a Methodist minister. The Methodist minister lives outside the parish and has eight other congregations for which he is responsible. The Rector lives in the parish and originally had two other churches. This, he suggests, could have meant that the Anglicans were the weaker partner. In the event, one Methodist and two C/E buildings have been closed, leaving one of each. It is possible that the two C/E buildings would not have been closed but for the ecumenical partnership.

Close relationships existed for at least two years before the official inauguration of the project, with New Delhi's "all in each place" as the prime principle. There is considered to be one congregation although it worships in two churches according to two traditions, denominational membership being retained. C/E Confirmation and Methodist Reception into Membership, as well as baptismal rolls, continue to be recorded separately. There is, however, a Joint Church Council (nine C/E, nine Methodist and the clergymen) charged with administering the devotional, pastoral, missionary and financial affairs of the partnership. Denominational Councils continue to exist to deal with purely denominational requirements, e.g. the election of the Parochial Church Council, from which come the C/E representatives for the Joint Council. There is one general financial fund but separate fabric and Trust funds to look after the buildings.

Points to notice about this parish are that, like Pilning, it is a bilateral arrangement between the C/E and the Methodists, with a Joint Council for its administration and a common purse. The Vicar is resident, the Methodist minister is not. There is a previous record of social activities, a village choir, cubs and scouts and then a folk group. Unlike Pilning, both ecclesiastical partners were weak, having only some thirty committed people between them. As these used five buildings there was a practical impulsion to rationalisation. A mid-week Fellowship was formed to examine each other's practices and the partnership grew from this. The three Anglican parishes became one, one building being sold and the other turned over to the Redundant Churches Commission. One chapel was sold and the two congregations became one. The Vicar believes that the use of the word experiment was vital at the beginning. Of prime importance,

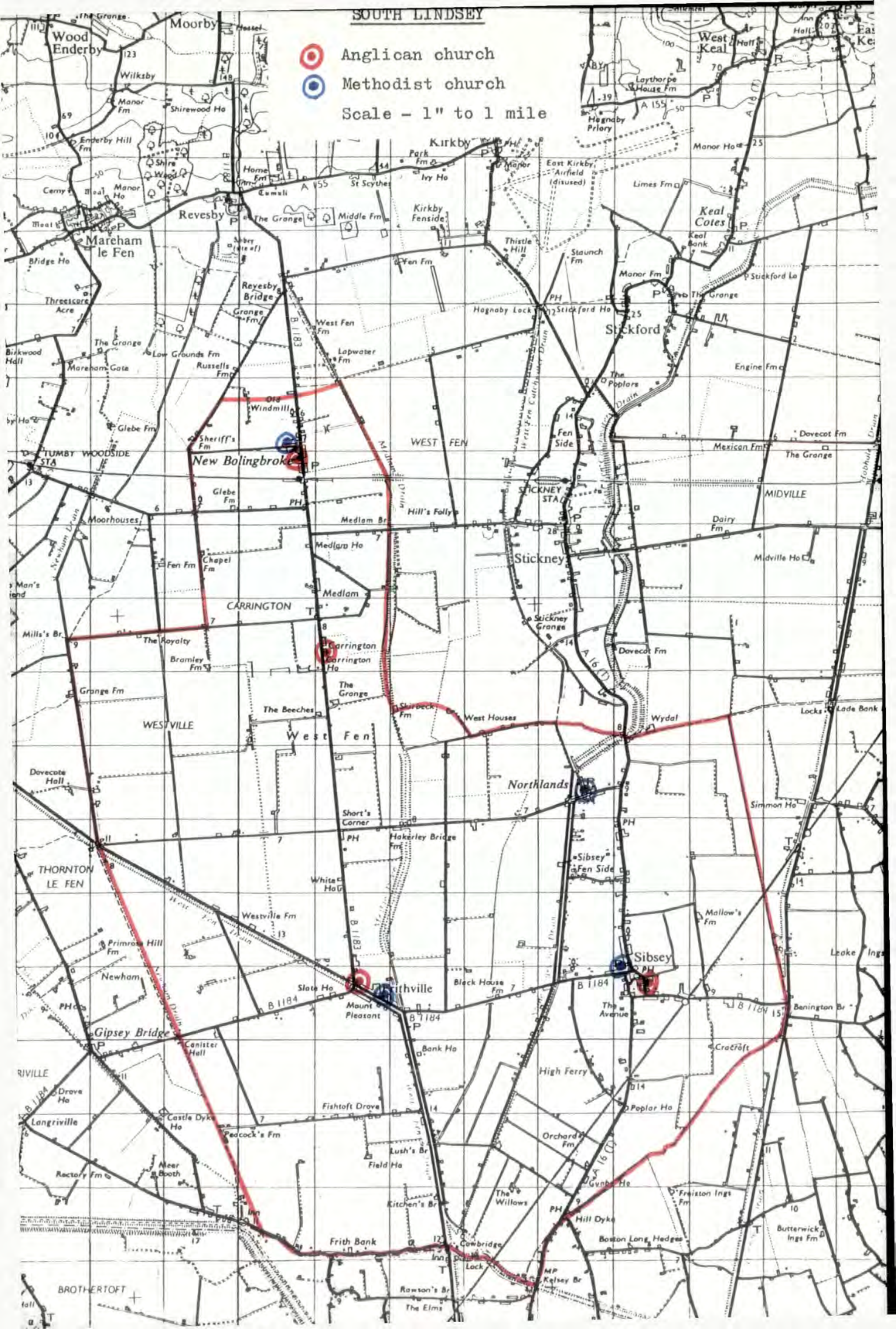
it seems, is that -

1. This was a thoroughly pragmatic, largely non-theological, enterprise;
2. There are still two separate communities, despite the Joint Council and some shared finance;
3. It has some measure of social (village) background;
4. It served to promote denominational as well as ecumenical rationalisation.

The Sponsoring Body reviewed the parish in 1977 after it had existed for three years. The report of this review contained the sentiments that "this is a remarkable example of 'success' in the ecumenical partnership of two churches, now concentrated into colleagueship of ministerial and lay readers, perhaps working for the time when clergy will not be available for such a rural community. I believe the Sponsoring Body could well use this as a Deanery or Circuit model for the church of the future in rural areas. For the disposal of church buildings and reduction of ministerial strength has produced an apparently stronger congregation and a growing leadership among lay persons." Despite the rather unattractive, secular look about the arrangements on paper and that this project is officially called no more than a 'Co-operation', a visit paid to it by the author of this study revealed more of its living ethos and encouraged him to agree rather with the Sponsoring Body's reviewer. A very great deal, however, depended on the personality of the Vicar and while this has been an enormous benefit until now, his departure in late 1979 might reveal it as a weakness. It is possible, though, to imagine many villages with a similarly pragmatic, not to say financial, approach. For them as well as for those wishing to promote ecumenical rural lay leadership, Saltfleetby could well be commended.

(c) South Lindsey.

Here we move outside the limits of this study, strictly speaking, but do so because the communities which comprise this partnership are very small. There were originally ten Anglican parishes and six Methodist congregations. Now there are three main


SOUTH LINDSEY
Anglican church
Methodist church
Scale - 1" to 1 mile
Wood Enderby
Moorby
Wilksby
Shirewood Ho
Enderby Hill Fm
Shire Wood
Revesby
Mareham le Fen
Kirkby
East Kirkby Airfield (disused)
West Keal
Hagnaby Priory
Keal Cotes
Stickford
Hagnaby Lock
Reyesby Bridge
West Fen Fm
Lapwater Fm
The Grange
Low Grounds Fm
Russells Fm
Old Windmill
Sheriff's Fm
New Bolingbroke
WEST FEN
Fen Side
STICKNEY STA
Glebe Fm
Medlam Br
Hill's Folly
MIDVILLE
Moorhouses
Medlam Ho
Stickney
Chapel Fm
Fen Fm
Medlam
CARRINGTON
Mills's Br
The Royalty
Carrington
Carrington Ho
Stickney Grange
Dovecot Fm
Grange Fm
The Beeches
WESTVILLE
West Fen
West Houses
Wydal
Locks
Lade Bank
Dovecote Hall
Northlands
Simmon Ho
Short's Corner
Hakerley Bridge
THORNTON LE FEN
Sibsey Fen Side
White Ho
Westville Fm
Mallow's Fm
Primrose Hill Fm
Newham
Sibsey
Leake
Slate Ho
Frithville
Mount Pleasant
Black House Fm
The Avenue
Benington Br
Gipsey Bridge
Canister Hall
Bank Ho
Cracroft
High Ferry
Drove Ho
Longriville
Castle Dyke Ho
Fishtoft Drove
Poplar Ho
Peacock's Fm
Orchard Fm
Lush's Br
Field Ho
Meer Booth
Rectory Fm
The Willows
Kitchen's Br
Hill Dyke
Friston Ings Fm
Frith Bank
Cowbridge
Boston Long Hedges
Butterwick Ings Fm
Lock
Kelsey Br
BROTHERTOFT
Rowson's Br
The Elms

areas, Sibsey (pop.1000), Frithville (pop.600) and New Bolingbroke (pop.600). Each of these has its own Anglican and Methodist churches. Called Sibsey Northlands, but rather away from any of the others, is another Methodist church, while there is another Anglican church in Carrington, which, denominationally is bracketed with Bolingbroke. The area covered is between 35 and 40 square miles and is centred some six miles north of Boston, Lincs. It is almost entirely devoted to arable farming but there are some cattle.

The Constitution is as that pertaining in Saltfleetby, revealing the hand of the same Sponsoring Body. It provides for the continuance of each of the component congregations, with their separate baptismal and membership/confirmation records. There is allowance for a Joint Council with two elected members from each congregation, together with the clergymen. Provision is also made for the Joint Council to administer a small fund for common activities but the Incumbent says there is no shared finance, although there are some common fund raising events. Each party retains its own buildings and responsibility for them but their underlying unity is expressed in the availability of all worship to all members. Either clergyman is available for whoever is in need, though the resident Anglican (Sibsey) is the more likely to be approached than the Methodist minister, who is also the Circuit Superintendent and lives in Boston.

The partnership was inaugurated in 1976 and does not seem to have had much common ground long before that, although for several years there were twice a month shared services in Frithville. A once a month evening interchange was begun in Sibsey in 1975 and served a purpose but has now ceased through the inability to agree a time suitable for both parties. Methodists in Bolingbroke are few and aged and the Methodist future there is limited by this. Just before the inauguration, joint Sunday schools were begun in Sibsey and Frithville and both still function happily, especially in Sibsey "where", writes the Incumbent, "both teachers and children find it the most natural thing in the world." (172) These have provided the bases for Joint Family Services once a month.

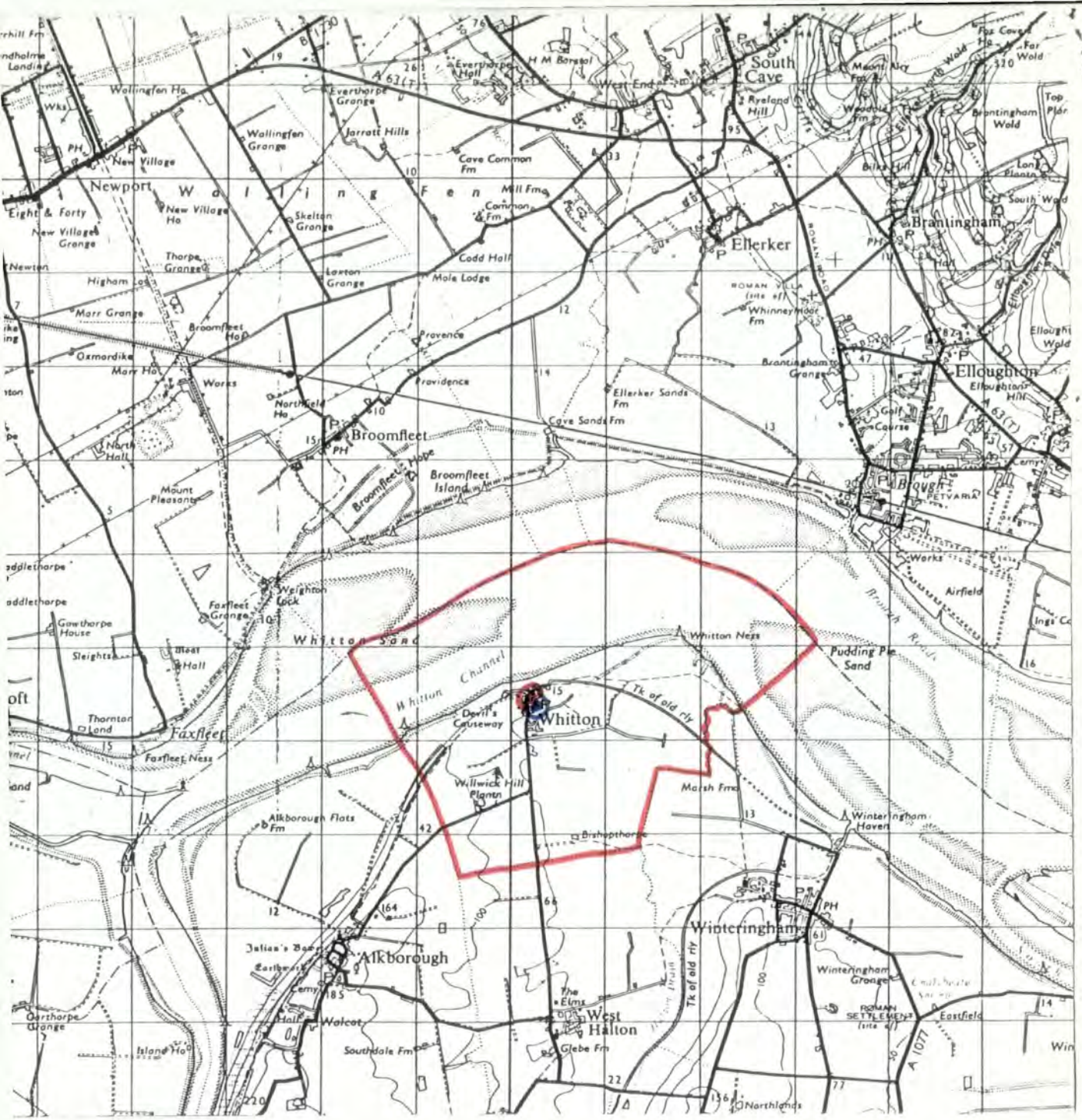
It is intended to have a joint occasion to mark each anniversary of the inauguration and the Joint Council ensures a joint overall policy, but otherwise the accent is on the villages as equal partners. The area is too large to do much together and it

was obviously correct policy to encourage co-operation within the villages rather than between them. This keeps bureaucracy to the lowest level and was illustrated by there being no central act of inauguration. Thus, each village is seen to be important. House groups have been started as a venture in mission, with some success. There is little shared social life and what there is is village inspired and based. There is, however, a developing spirit of friendship. The most encouraging thing, the Vicar continues, is the work with young people, including preparation for a joint Confirmation/Reception. "It does seem that we are preparing ground for a future future, so to speak, for a real unity among today's teenagers and children!" A common factor with the other places we have looked at is stressed by the Vicar. "Our overall numbers are such that we are combining from weakness rather than from strength. That is to say it has helped in persuading people that there is just no sense in two weak set-ups when one stronger one is possible. Moreover, it has helped, in persuading sinful Anglicans, to point out that Methodists are not strong enough to swamp us! "

Points to note from this project will surely include the size, both in area and in number of communities, the retention of denominational identities, rolls, buildings and finance, the work with the youngsters but, perhaps above all, the determination to work on a village basis. We notice that, again, this is a bilateral partnership between Anglicans and Methodists and that weakness of one or both participants was a feature of the union. There is, however, mention of, and action taken for, mission. A visit to the area confirmed the opinion of this writer that there was considerable theological content to this venture. Although few would be satisfied with the ecumenical parallelism that is evident in this scheme, South Lindsey does contain a useful experience in catering ecumenically for a number of small, scattered communities.

(d) Whitton.

In Whitton we meet a different situation. This is by far the smallest of the projects, being a village of only 250 people situated on the south bank of the river Humber, eight miles north



WHITTON

Anglican church

Methodist church

Scale - 1" to 1 mile

of Scunthorpe. Also in contrast with the other two projects administered by the Lincolnshire and South Humberside Sponsoring Body, this is designated a United Congregation and not just a Partnership. The first paragraph of its Agreement says it all:

"1. The intention is to establish an ecumenical project so that the measure of unity already achieved between the Anglican and Methodist Churches in Whitton be strengthened, and to make it possible for all in this small village who acknowledge themselves as belonging to Christ to take their place in the same visible family, so that worship, witness and service may be the more vigorous." (173)

Despite its minute size, Whitton has a mixture of good, new and old, traditional housing which accommodates some young married couples and rather more retired folk. With this mixture of housing and age, it does not have a settled population. Furthermore, it has a church (C/E) and a chapel (Methodist) but no resident clergyman. All these things, suggested the Vicar to this writer, should militate against ecumenism, yet the results indicate that Whitton is, rather, a shining example of good ecumenism.

There is a lengthy record of co-operation in the village going back to meetings held in the 1960's to discuss the proposed Anglican/Methodist reunion scheme. With not a great deal planned, co-operation developed from then until there came the realisation that without some type of formal protection the situation was vulnerable to a change of personnel. Building on an established practice of a shared service each month, a joint Sunday school and an annual fund-raising effort, divided between church, chapel and village hall, the present position was easy to reach. There is now just one congregation which worships in each of the buildings, week by week alternately. All attend the one; no provision is made for worship in the other. The form of worship used is that customary in the particular building. Joint preparation for Confirmation/Reception issues in a rite of Confirmation, ensuring that those confirmed shall thereafter be acceptable as confirmed members of the Anglican, Methodist or other church. Spiritual oversight is provided, without respect for denomination, by the Vicar and the Methodist minister, both of whom have other charges. The Ecumenical Officer for England suggests Whitton's ecumenical success is "because each minister has five or six other

charges! " (174) The properties remain in denominational ownership and this necessitates the continuance of the Anglican Parochial Church Council and the Methodist Church Council for maintenance purposes. These Councils are, however, subject to the advice of the Joint Church Council, which is elected each year officially but, in practice, is an open meeting. This Council is really responsible for everything, having oversight of the village's witness, worship, service and education: it advises on the management of all property and handles all money, incoming and outgoing, including the payment of continuing denominational commitments. It is anticipated that as soon as one building stands in need of major repair it will be surrendered and the congregation settled permanently into the one remaining.

Almost everything about this project is worthy of notice but, selectively, these following points may be highlighted:

1. The population is miniscule.
2. There is no resident clergyman.
3. The Joint Council takes precedence over the denominational Councils.
4. There was weakness in one party, the C/E worshippers being few and aged.
5. It is village based.
6. The first three of the list of responsibilities laid upon the Joint Council are witness, worship and service ... and it works.
7. The recognition of the need for formal protection - and its provision.
8. Current theories about ecumenical possibilities confuted by practice.

The Vicar expanded on points 1 and 5. He indicated that Whitton's progress was sociologically based upon a genuine growth in personal relationships. From this there grew the stable atmosphere of mutual trust out of which came the necessary social structures, including those related to religion, that people needed. The people had priority over the rules. All this makes for the rapid integration of newcomers. In this unity, smallness is seen as assisting, for clearly, everyone is needed. This, in turn, helps augment the family spirit. He speaks of genuine growth, with no targets and so no forcing of the pace. If these things are

reproduceable elsewhere, what might not be is the advantage, as he sees it, of having no resident clergyman to upset the balance, and what almost certainly will not be, is the topographical situation, which has a small community sited next to a river and more than two miles from the nearest village, producing a psychological augmentation of the existing conviction of the necessity for social cohesion.

Not only should the Intention of this Agreement be reproduced and circulated widely but a study of this project should be required reading for all who are concerned for rural ecumenism.

(e) Postscript.

Three of these four projects come under the one Sponsoring Body. Other areas with similarly small rural communities do not have the record of the Lincolnshire and South Humberside Sponsoring Body, But a Sponsoring Body can only reflect Church leadership. In Lincolnshire there was a Service of Commitment between the Anglican and Methodist Churches held in the cathedral in April, 1970, and, undoubtedly, this represents the outlook of those who are ultimately responsible for the authorisation of the Local Ecumenical Projects. The Sponsoring Body itself did not begin until 1973, for it necessitated long prior discussions in order that it should be as fully ecumenical as possible. In the end, it was approved by the Anglicans, the Methodists and the U.R.C.

Of only slightly less importance was the appointment in 1977 of an Executive Officer of the Sponsoring Body, who would also be the Ecumenical Officer for Lincolnshire and South Humberside. This appointment also reveals the ecumenical outlook of the area's Church leadership. David Pink is the Anglican Incumbent of a small community adjacent to Lincoln and his appointment as Ecumenical Officer has been confirmed by Anglicans, Methodists, the U.R.C. and the R.C. Church, on whose behalfs he currently acts. Such appointments should be multiplied if such suitable persons to fill them can be found.

C. IN CONCLUSION

> "The Archbishop (of Canterbury) said people's care for a correct order in the Church and their desire to prevent any possible anomaly in the progress towards unity, meant they sometimes forgot that the supreme anomaly was disunity itself." (175)

The conditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were critical for our nation and its Church. Today's circumstances are no less so. Since 1945 we have experienced an upheaval of accepted values. As challenges to previously unquestioned social ethics have gained successive victories, a growing spirit of independency, sometimes pronouncedly anti-authoritarian, has become a characteristic feature of the times. Usually stopping short of outright anarchy, it tests authority at every point. Very little can now be taken for granted. Many things are responsible for, or contribute towards, this development. With its roots in the second World War, it was aided by a new National Health Service whose efficiency in minimalising infant mortality and maximising length of retirement gave a new degree of independence to many. Correspondingly there was a school leaving age raised to 16 and the proliferation of universities and other places of further education, together with financial grants to enable them to be filled. High living standards, rich in leisure time and ways and means of using it, have augmented the process of liberation. There has, however, been a price to pay for it. Society is beginning to disintegrate. Independence offers the opportunity to make one's own decisions and become superficially self-sufficient, but it can develop, as it has, into a detachment from, even rivalry with, one's neighbours. The arrival of computer-electronics and a high level of inflation have accompanied substantially more unemployment than since the Great Depression, providing a potentially disruptive sense of frustration. Class tensions have re-emerged and a new divisive factor been introduced with a rapidly increasing black population.

The Church, too, has suffered. The spirit of independence has meant emancipation for members who now feel free to choose a way of life for themselves. Many find no place for the Church in a life

that is full of exciting new things. If Bultmann's demythologising provided the immediate background, Bonhoeffer's man come of age and Tillich's portrayal of God as the ground of our being soon led to a 'death of God' theology. Thus many felt confirmed in their belief that Christianity belonged only to days of yore. Numbers dropped remarkably. This brought a shortage of ordained clergymen. But all is not lost. Despite an apparently insuperable temptation to be introspective - even Vatican 11 was called for domestic reasons - there has grown a remarkable concern for the under-privileged of the world, a re-discovery of the full membership of the Church of its laity and a happy acceptance of fellow Christians. As in the previous two centuries, also, there have been revivalist movements, the most notable and widespread being the charismatic. The dissatisfaction with much that is static and perhaps, therefore, moribund within the structures of the Church is accompanied by a general willingness to experiment with new modes of worship, prayer and communication. New translations of the scriptures and a plethora of study material, often for use with house groups, have brought new insights and enthusiasms to many of its remaining members so that the Church is both livelier in itself and also seen in more dynamic terms than hitherto. This is timely for there again presses the need to present the gospel to the many. Now, however, the many are in our own country and if the Nottingham Conference of 1964 cannot be equated with that of Edinburgh, 1910, still less can the formation of the Churches' Unity Commission. Nonetheless, the latter could be a comparable watershed for it brought together the parts of the Church to consider how they could, together, demonstrate their common mission. Central to this is the application of the New Delhi principle as interpreted, for example, by the Dutch Ecumenical Council in its appeal to the Churches of Holland "to regard themselves in future wherever possible as 'churches in the process of becoming united' and to act accordingly. The churches in one place should regard themselves (and each other) as the Church of that place and thus gradually develop a common life." (176)

All this has brought its own type of polarisation between those who are too easily called conservatives and radicals. It has also revealed a tension between the professional ministries, which have for so long governed the Church, and the laity, whose

presence has at last been recognised but whose wealth of abilities has not. Excessive inflation has produced yet another disintegrating factor in contemporary Church life. Costs of ministry, maintenance and mission are now so high that only the more committed will accept their reasonable share of them so that already our smaller congregations are beginning to be composed of office holders and their relatives while the occasional worshipper becomes even rarer. It is not unknown in the rural Church for there to be more worshippers in the choir than in the congregation. Although Edwards concludes that "the truth is that the Church of England as the Folk Church is largely dead" (177) it can still happen that "with the disappearance of so many traditional symbols and landmarks, the Church often becomes the sole focus of village identity ... (so that there)... can be an inclination to assume proprietory rights ... and it can lead on occasions to the virtual imprisonment of the Church by the village." (178) (Though cf. H. Blackburne in A.J.Russell, "Groups & Teams in the Countryside", p111).

The Church, therefore, has to proceed with its ministry under considerable difficulties and with a slimmer membership, but it may be the healthier body because of this. On the other hand it is increasingly out of touch with those to whom it is sent, many of whom fail to see the point of its existence without necessarily ceasing to try to live their own version of the godly life. Low membership, low popular esteem and high costs set against a background where independence continually questions all authority, provide the Church with sufficient empirical motivation to overcome its own divisions and to gather its united talents for use with a population which is increasingly elderly and leisured, informed and divided. Schemes of union, based on introspective and static traditions will be productive either of nothing or of more disintegration as each parent body sheds its minorities. In either case, the impact on the population will be minimal even if measureable. Maximum effective impact will be endemic in any serious attempt to witness in the name of Jesus. It is then that ecclesiastical differences will become minimal and there will be the start of the re-integration, not just of those parts of God's family which are called the Christian Church, but of the family as

a whole. Nowhere will this be more evident and welcome than where the rural Church is.

This situation calls for responsible policy. If flexible is an over-worked word, it is nonetheless apposite. What we are considering is a living phenomenon composed of a myriad of constantly changing components. To attempt to discover one plan would be to declare our ignorance of the situation; it would be to revert to the static, where the Church and its well-being are the objectives; it would guarantee failure. What is needed, once the spirit of the times has been accepted, is to learn not to treat it as some alien threat to the life of the Church but to baptise it into the service of its Lord that it may be useful in the saving of the Church as well as being redeemed itself. Speed and mobility are two of the marks of this generation. So, too, is built-in obsolescence. Things move so fast that one must sit lightly. If a plan is good for one place but not good for another because of local variations, so the plan, good for one place today may not be good for the same place tomorrow. Each local community must be allowed, indeed encouraged, to find its own way forward in the light of its own responsibilities and opportunities. Those who have campaigned on behalf of Call to the North and, more recently, the Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism, can bear testimony to the resistance of local communities in anything decreed from a metropolitan source. The rural Church shares this experience in an acute form; not only is the central, metropolitan source external, it is urban. The four Local Ecumenical Projects at which we have just had a brief look, certainly counsel caution for all aspiring policy makers for rural areas and underline our contention that, with the briefest and broadest of guidance, each community should be encouraged now to produce its own version of the Church militant today. Some mistakes will be made but that is better than one comprehensive one, not only because the local ones will be smaller, but also because they will nearly always be rapidly retrievable, the situation being closely circumscribed and the participants personally known or knowable. In practice it is surprising how few mistakes are made by those who are prepared to tread gently and patiently, for in small communities results of proposals are often readily assessable, even before they happen.

What is needed, then, is what might be called a set of principles of response, which would be generally applicable to an ever changing scene. The first of these - or, rather, the pre-requisite of any of them - is the necessity for a continual and critical examination of what is actually happening, both in society and the Church, coupled with a realistic view of the resources of both groups. Objective accuracy is essential. Here the formation of an ecumenical equivalent of the Methodist 'Church in Rural Life Committee' would undoubtedly be useful. Additionally, the appointment, perhaps jointly by the Church and the County, of a Countryside Officer could be helpful. Lincolnshire is one area which already has one; Kent and Worcester have chaplains to agriculture, the latter chaplain being a member of the Worcester Industrial Mission team. If attention must be paid to the local social conditions, which are a large part of the raw material of Church life, it is as important to take into account the relevant social and religious geographies. Given an informed awareness in these fields, one may more safely begin to consider the circumstances of the solitary (village) community. The first principle is enunciated by the U.R.C. "The finance, leadership and service of the Christian community in rural areas is best served by one Christian fellowship in one building and this is the norm to which the U.R.C. should work through its local churches, District Councils and Synods, rather than create groups of scattered U.R.C. churches with peripatetic ministers." (179) The U.R.C. believes that "this policy ... involves arranging that, as far as possible, at least one minister or clergyman lives in each village so that each village feels it has some personal pastoral oversight." (180) If ecumenism has any meaning it must be agreed that there should be one, but only one, minister in each village but experience is beginning to show that the minister concerned need not be ordained in order to fulfil that function. Ordained or not, such a person should be in every village and serve every person in it. Nor should the choice of him or her be hampered by denominational restrictions if the village is treated as a sociological unit where the residents are villagers first and church or chapel people second. Villages, however, are not self-sufficient; they form part of a larger sociological unit and this will be focussed on the nearest larger settlement, usually the market town,

or nowadays it may be a designated key settlement. So it is that a market town (or key settlement) and its ring of satellite villages should be such a unit, though two adjacent villages as a pair may not amount to another. In each locality a special investigation is necessary if the Church is really to relate to its community. (This is true whether there is under consideration an ecclesiastical equivalent of a rural area structure plan or simply the circumstances of one village.) Generally the best prospects will give due weight to the village but go beyond it. Caution should be exercised, however, over local government designations such as key settlements. These designations should not automatically be accepted as the best possible. Similarly it should not be assumed that centring Church life on key villages or market towns will automatically be the correct thing to envisage. Methodist experience suggests otherwise; villagers need their own base. A study of market towns and their possible use as key features for rural ecumenical progress seems to be a pressing requirement as also does a study parallel to Boulard's "An Introduction to Religious Sociology", for it is not simply a case of trying to build round a series of groups of people who live close together. It is far more subtle than this. Some of the 1974 local government boundaries were later seen to be nonsense because, although they grouped neighbouring communities, the communities looked to different sociological nuclei. Where the sociological grouping was accurate relatively long distances were willingly undertaken within it. Here comes the possibility of immense enrichment of rural Church life as relations are created with the other sub-units having different emphases. Especially if the market town is involved, a much wider range of ecclesiastical involvement is inevitable. It is, however, important not to impose unity for simple administrative or economic convenience: the data, accurately discovered, must be used rather than abused.

Given the facts on the ground, so to speak, we need corresponding awareness of God, his presence, purpose and power. We need to be sure of his concern and capacity to cope and of his lordship over all humanity, not just that part of it which we call the Church. We need to be renewed in the knowledge that he is also Lord of the Church and have enough trust in him to follow his directions even if they take us beyond those current beliefs and practices of the Church which, with the best of intentions and most honourable of

histories, may now be inapplicable, or worse. We must be prepared to walk towards our Good Friday, if need be, confident that Easter will follow, for ecumenical advance can only happen when there is a prior willingness for denominational decrease. This is not simply a theological truth - it is an extremely practical necessity and encompasses two of ecumenism's biggest stumbling blocks. In the first place, most active Christians are already fully committed in the use of their time. To add ecumenical activity as something else immediately makes it impossible. The same applies to the use of financial resources: unless the ecumenical appetite is satisfied first it will go hungry as the denominations consume all that is available. Secondly, it is all too easy, in practice, for the Church to give top priority to itself instead of remembering that it is a servant of God. Ecclesiocentricity must give way to theocentricity.

Such sensitivity to the celestial and terrestrial forces at work should elicit from us an enlarged capacity to react adventurously, as in Local Ecumenical Projects, concerned more to attend to the data than to what we look like or want. Much of that by which the Church has learned to live will be found utterly appropriate; some will not and will need to be replaced, sometimes by what appears to be a revolutionary development. If common prayer is an example of the former, clerical oligarchy may be an example of the latter. The Church is a serving agency on behalf of God and man and its approach should represent, as adequately as possible, its alertness to the requirements of both rather than try to enlist the support of the former in its endeavours to enlarge its own membership. Its membership may indeed be increased by such a policy, but the acceptance that this is not the criterion of its success, or even its primary ambition, is typical of the revolutionary demands made upon the Church today, which offer it either freedom and hope and new strength as it builds on secure faith or disintegration as the gap between what was and what is steadily increases. What we are looking for, therefore, is not a blue-print, which will be inapplicable in more instances than it will be applicable, but broad guidelines within which local movement may be expected to occur. Hope is engendered by the use of that word in the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England's agreed "Guidelines for Local Ecumenical Projects", the Roman Catholic document "Local Covenants" and, to some extent, by the title of the Church of

England's House of Bishops' document "Ecumenical Relations - a Code of Practice: 1980". Furthermore, these guidelines should be people-centred; that is to say, they should not be aimed at bureaucratic tidiness so much as the emancipation and augmentation of the life-enriching gifts God has distributed among the totality of his people and the harnessing of them in the service of Christ. Developments flowing from these two principles will often cause pain, sometimes be unexpected and always be untidy. But so it is with all growth.

Here the argument for ecumenism becomes pragmatically impressive, for if every part of the Church is experiencing the same social phenomena and if every part acknowledges the same Lord; if at least some parts reach, more or less, the same conclusions when the needs of the Lord and society are put together, then there is everything to be said for much closer consultation. This is not a call for a super blue-print but for provision for combined strategy and planning in every place. This is a revolutionary call, for it means flying in the face of centuries which have successfully conditioned even our presuppositions. The Rubicon which ecumenists must continue to strive to persuade Church people to cross is that of thinking ecumenically; of accepting that ecumenism is not a separate subject, attracting a greater or lesser degree of support from peculiar enthusiasts, but a factor in every subject. There are three levels of ecclesiastical life, the hierarchy, the local clergy and the laity. There should be the same three levels of ecumenical strategy yet, too often, each is concerned to demonstrate to the others its loyalty to its denomination. At the same time, none seems particularly aware of the problems of the others, though in matters ecumenical the results are strangely similar. All three levels are needed - the hierarchy to lead the Church, the laity to personify the Church and the local clergy to connect and service the two. For the moment, "the reluctance of the relatively powerful to relinquish power is also seen in the life of the churches, most notably in the token power allocated to the majority of ecumenical bodies. The central questions of the deployment of manpower and physical resources are still firmly under denominational control." (181) This is true for both local commitment to Councils of Churches and for County ecclesiastical policy. At the latter level, cupboards that look bare when inspected denominationally can offer

surprising bounty when examined ecumenically - a person from here, a house from there, some money from elsewhere. But it requires a relaxation not just of denominational rules but of denominational thinking, springing from a firmer grasp of the wideness of God's concern and the extent of his ability. It demands a strong and impassioned championship, beginning with the Church leaders, who must learn to share their executive authority and resources, clerical and lay, buildings and finance, and at the same time offer as much opportunity as possible for decisions to be made by the people and in the places where they will be effective. Shortages of finance and leadership will be mitigated at local level, too, as resources of both will be more forthcoming when the local Church makes its own decisions and bears its own responsibility for carrying them out. This is truly vital for the rural Church where resources are most limited.

Even without an immediate prospect of unity, much can be done now, given the encouragement. Governors and staff of village schools, as well as the pupils, could be ecumenical, as could the Church choir, Sunday School and other youth and adult work. Common membership in the local Church could issue in common responsibility for social action, supported by a community magazine. All these are good in themselves, where they apply, and when the time comes for advance, either to the status of an ecumenical parish or in response to a national unity agreement,will prove valuable bases of experience. Rural conditions await ecclesiastical recognition and exploitation and could hardly provide a better base for ecumenical progress. Some specific changes would be helpful in securing this objective.

Firstly, it is regrettable that there is no obligation at any level laid upon any to work with the others. Denominational briefs remain denominational despite Lund and New Delhi. Any local community which asks to be allowed to test an area of ecumenical co-operation should have the right to an affirmative answer, at least for a stated period and under supervision. No such rights exist at the moment.

Secondly, it is no use waiting until congregations get too weak. Ecumenical action, like stewardship, may prosper with a degree of weakness, however much the purists regret it, but to join two dying congregations will not produce a live one; it will produce

only one dying one.

Thirdly, it is going to demand a superhuman effort on the part of Church leaders, for the way ecumenism will indicate as necessary will, on occasion, be the opposite of what they currently represent, asking of them a very different type of leadership exercised in a real day to day partnership with their local clergy. They must think big but act small, being known by all. There will need to be more of them to do this. Even when so multiplied, they will be asked to slacken the reins by which they now control and allow others to take decisions they themselves would wish not to be taken and to permit disorder where now all is regulated and regular. How much this is abhorred is illustrated by the Church of England's General Synod's "Evidence of Ecumenism" (GS.Misc.76, March,1978). There we learn of informal agreements that "their existence poses an additional problem for the Church if growing local confusion is to be avoided." (p23) Time must also be found for the leaders to meet together frequently, not simply to glean denominational details but to grow in mutual esteem and trust, seeing each other as equally committed to the work of the same Lord. Prayer should be a permanent feature of their meetings and for each other at other times. Unless the leaders give a lead, clear and unmistakable, there will be no progress or there will be anarchy. More people will either cease to practice as Christians or, here and there, small groups will find that the only way they can practice effectively is to separate themselves from the Church, as is already happening with some house churches. Either way the Church is weakened.

Church leaders cannot do everything personally, nor would it be good for them to do so if they could. Certainly they will need to meet together regularly but the continuing work of ecumenism should be delegated to a County Ecumenical Committee which would, among other things, provide the expert personnel for any Sponsoring Body and itself be serviced by an ecumenically appointed ecumenical officer. Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, together with Lincolnshire and South Humberside are two places where this is currently happening in predominantly rural areas. It will be these committees and their officers who will try to initiate ecumenical thinking and action where it is absent and be responsible for upholding and advancing it where it exists, informing the Church leaders of the progress of

events and guiding the local action according to the leaders' fiats. No small part of the work of the County Committee would be the gathering and disseminating of names of clergymen who were anxious to engage in ecumenical work - as well as those who were not. This should help the staffing of ecumenical areas proceed smoothly. They could also be responsible for the in-service training of the rural clergy and the provision of such extra-parochial forms of instruction for the laity as was possible. As important would be their initial training of the clergy before the latter were allowed into the country and their cultivated relationships with the relevant County authorities so that such rural thinking and planning as could best be done together was so done.

Fourthly, the rural clergyman needs all the support he can get to sustain him in his unique and crucial situation. For the first time in history it is becoming evident that the rural cleric needs special training, partly because Church and State are now so urban dominated and partly because of the upheaval that the times are witnessing in the lives of country dwellers. There needs to be a rural equivalent of the Urban Ministry Project, begun in 1969 in Ripon Hall theological college, Oxford, to encourage and sustain them. Bishop Grosseteste college, Lincoln, now offers a two week course and some areas have initiated shorter courses for their rural clergymen. It almost seems as if there is needed a new breed of clergyman who will be trained to take into account the outdated feudal system which grips much of the countryside and its majority Anglican Church, a general lack of commitment among lay members of the Church and a corresponding disrespect for authority. His special training should include an introduction to what is required by a ministry shared with other clergymen of his own and other denominations, and by lay men and women. He should also be taught that he will be expected to train and lead rural lay folk to think and act as the Church in a partnership of parity, being himself constantly briefed by them. At the same time he should fulfil, for the hierarchy, a service parallel to that offered to him by the lay folk. Such constant two-way passage of information and leadership will produce a lively and integrated Church, more fully at grips with the realities of modern life, working freely and responsibly in its own local circumstances, and as completely serviced for its

work as it can be.

If the rural clergyman is to turn his back on his traditional role as autocrat of the local Christian community and, at the same time, cease to do many of the things that are by now associated with his office by the rural inhabitant in order to become the trainer and servicer of that community in the manner which modern life demands, he could find a consideration of the following points helpful.

First and foremost he is the spiritual leader. This role remains and is not in conflict with his resignation as autocrat for the duty of the spiritual leader is primarily that of service. (Lk 22:26/7) Whatever else he does, this must come first, for in this he is the specialist and it is for this that his flock look to him for leadership in that which gives their life its Christian content and ambition. Both he and they need priorities, with God heading their lists. It is as they are drawn closer to God that they are drawn closer to each other and can draw other people with them. In this role as spiritual leader he is the local Christian trainer and teacher. His work here will fall into two categories, one with the bulk of the laity and the other with the minority who are called to exercise some ecclesiastical lay ministry. In this he may have help from a member of the Mission for Christ, which provides ecumenically thinking lay workers who are both evangelistically and pastorally trained and who are willing to work over a wide area. This Mission is especially geared to rural evangelism. Generally, however, it is expected that an indigenous lay ministry will be preferred, for its members will be well acquainted with local conditions and personnel and will also be well known by the latter. "In the fourteen most rural dioceses there were in 1977 two authorised church workers for every three full-time diocesan clergymen. Some ninety per cent of those workers were Licensed Readers ..." (182) However welcome these Readers are, the call is as much, if not more, for weekday ministry of the type offered by Pastoral Auxiliaries and Lay Elders.

The number of lay folk involved in offices such as these just mentioned will always be few. The majority will need help in knowing and applying Christian principles to their everyday lives in rapidly changing times. Their active role is one of the valuable

outcomes of contemporary understanding of ministry which has been brought to the surface by ecumenical conversations and should be a matter of great consolation to the Church, for those who know their countrymen will gladly testify to their general shrewdness, ability and realism. The discovery that the Church is people - the Church is what you have left when the building has burnt down - not only sets free almost limitless talent but corresponds to what the rural inhabitant recognises as society. What the urban Church has to strive for, the rural Church is given.

Not that all is plain sailing. Training is largely, if not completely, a mental exercise, supported though it may be from a spiritual base and offering various physical outlets. If there are those lay folk who hold positions of considerable responsibility in their secular life and who are adequately equipped to shoulder parallel ecclesiastical posts, 60% of today's adult population left school before the leaving age was raised to fifteen. This situation may call for the abdication of the cleric as trainer and put the onus upon suitably qualified lay folk when it comes to translating the faith into the terms relevant to the daily working life of the majority. This will involve a high degree of genuine consultation. Each must know what the other is doing and why. Part of the answer will be pastoral though, for the majority, this will have little, if any, ecclesiastical significance. Villagers exercise common caring as a matter of course; lay or clerical ministers would attend to anything more specific. The bulk of the emphasis will be evangelistic, concerned with the uncovering and recognition of the divine within each human being. New insight into the membership and mission of the Church puts this firmly in lay hands. It is not only Charles de Foucauld who has realised that "the great mass of humanity can best be touched from within, in factory and field, not from without by the traditional missionary techniques of institutional churches." (183) This is one of the major methods whereby the gap between the Church and the world can be bridged; a method which will put meaning back into the Church and into the world. On the personal basis which is typical of rural life, contemporary independence may be the vehicle through which this active Christianity may be regained.

This is all in stark contrast with the current rural situation. Laity, if urged to evangelise, have to contend with insufficient knowledge and so lack courage to do it. These shortcomings are easily exaggerated in the face of the traditional idea that all in the village are equally Christian in their living, though the majority are only extremely occasional worshippers and a sizeable percentage do not worship at all. It is, rather, the clergy who have had thrust upon them - or have taken upon themselves - the prime task of encouraging the community's membership to worship, yet, of all the inhabitants there, they are least fitted to do this. This situation is usually concealed by a concentration on pastoral concern. Generally speaking, the rural layman, of Church or world, is more concerned with practicalities than theories, hymn tunes and good neighbourliness than theology and the niceties of valid or invalid ordinations. There must be many who genuinely want to see a living Christianity and who would embrace it if it appeared. Such were personified as "the third man - the Christian who sincerely believes, or wants to believe, but who is no longer interested in ecclesiastical issues." (184) Such can be found as practising Church members or as lapsed. Indeed, it is extremely difficult quite often to make any realistic classification of villagers in Christian terms. Not only is there still a heavy layer of folk religion but the controversy arising from John Robinson's "Honest to God" was said to have shown that "there was undeniable evidence that the world was not divided neatly into believers and unbelievers, members of the Church and non-members, but the lines were blurred. A significant number of people felt themselves to be neither in one camp nor the other." (185) Of nowhere is this more true than the country Church. Here the house-group is useful.

From the beginning we need to be aware of two distinct functions for house groups. One will be specifically for the committed Christian and will offer him a companionship of prayer and study and training. The clergyman will have a large role in this, though it should be essentially life centred and not church centred, aimed at helping people to make more Christian their daily lives rather than take on extra Church activities. It should emphasise the basic Christian vocation of lay people which is lived

out in the realities of everyday life, rather than try to recruit for specialist ministries. Groups such as these are already appreciated and greatly beneficial to the Church as denominationally divided Christians discover that what binds them together is often as strong as what keeps them apart. Just one such group in each community would be helpful. In practice even the smallest of communities can accommodate a number of them for short periods. These groups, however, should be seen as a way of building up the Church rather than providing an alternative to it. Rural small numbers should again be seen as an advantage. Groups ought to be split up if they grow too large so that this advantage is not lost. Groups should be split periodically anyway to prevent them becoming introverted. At the very least, they may be useful alternative meeting places should the cost of the church building become prohibitive. The Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales speak enthusiastically about the work of small parochial groups (186) while a recent writer on the Church of England goes so far as to call "the ever increasing use of discussion groups ...the most effective means of communicating the Christian faith." (187)

The second type of house group will offer occasion for the committed Christian, the 'third man' and those with little interest in Christianity but a lively interest in humanity. The clergyman will rarely be encountered in this group for it will be lay people talking to other lay people about lay problems. Again, rural smallness of population is a distinct advantage for there will be no need for introductions; all will be known as neighbours if not as relatives. Homes that are similar to those in which the members live engender a relaxed atmosphere, are productive of much goodwill and, in any case, comfortable seating in a cosy room is preferable to much church accommodation. It is not necessary always to use the large rooms possessed by most farm houses; cottage accommodation is as adequate as it is usually delightful. All who meet thus are at once on common ground. Here meet neighbours with common problems, worshippers and non-worshippers alike, speaking the same language and able to differ, when necessary, with understanding. Because their's is the agenda, the meeting place, the method and the participants, they will be satisfying meetings. Local problems, when tackled, are immediately relevant, limited and often attainable.

They are one in their endeavour to make a better place of their world. Christian divisions are utterly irrelevant. Latent leadership abilities can be revealed in hosts and hostesses. This in itself makes the meetings worthwhile, for leadership in the country is not over plentiful. Here is one of the more direct ways in which the Church can serve the community, by calling such groups into being and watching the new life that springs from them.

Commendable though house groups have proved themselves to be in recent years, particularly for ecumenical progress, they do not offer a panacea, partly because they cannot attempt everything and partly because they make no appeal to a large portion of the population. For some, this may be a matter of temperament; for others, it may be a desire for something more active. Whatever its limitations, however, the house group is one of the more hopeful growing points for today's rural Church in its ecumenical mission.

A Council of Churches can serve the same purpose on a slightly wider, but still local, scale. It can produce an informed strategy for its own area and, provided the local congregations are committed to it, can suggest a corresponding deployment of its combined resources. The Ribble Valley Church Council (sic), in Lancashire, began to explore one such way forward without being sufficiently convinced to continue it. It asked each of its member Churches, in the market town of Clitheroe and its surrounding villages, to identify their strengths and weaknesses and ally themselves with others having the same interests. The good things were thus to be strengthened and more widely shared while the poor things would be alleviated. Each item nominated would have been identified locally and would, therefore, have direct local appeal. Congregations would have mingled equally with each other and nowhere would denominational disciplines have been infringed. The past was thus safeguarded but the future opened up. Perhaps the Council's components are not yet sufficient weak.

But to attempt anything of a continuing nature which directly affects the local congregations brings problems and necessitates an immensely higher degree of support than is usually offered if success is to be won and the Council to become "the effective working unit of the whole Church in the locality." (188) The

problem for the rural Church lies largely in its inability to be convinced that it is as much an evangelistic agency as it is anything else, so that there will be found few to agree that "if ever there was a case for the separate existence of denominations in the rural community that day has long since passed. We need each other and the sooner we admit this...the sooner will we be able to get down to some intelligent mission." (189) To this basic reluctance to afford an outward looking Council much importance there is the difficulty of finding an adequate response to its requests, for scarcity of rural Church resources, personnel and finance, mean that there is said to be none of either to spare for matters that are of interest but are judged to be of peripheral importance. "In many places the local Council is the only ecumenical body in existence. In every place it would probably be true to say that Councils have a unique role to play in Church life. It would certainly be true to say that they have a vital role in that action. All too often, however, the work of a Council is inhibited because it has to co-exist with denominational concerns. Even if the Councils are not ignored because of this, there can develop a competition for the resources that each party most needs. Always losing this contest, Councils are sometimes reduced to mere shells by it. Occasionally they go out of existence altogether. It is not difficult for a Council to become dis-spirited as it tries to survive on the minimal support of a few enthusiasts, with no real prospect that its prayers and plans will be taken up and augmented by its member Churches." (190) Behind this attitude John Huxtable discerns a deeper cause of non-commitment to local Councils. Addressing a clergy conference in Liverpool in 1979 he said, "Despite all the prayer for the unity of the Church there are many who would turn pale and look likely to expire if they should happen to hear on the news tomorrow morning that all objections to a united Church had been overcome and that the way to what we prayed for was now open and that business could start next Sunday." (191) Yet to be thus unconcerned about rural ecumenism is surely short-sighted even in non-theological terms. At the moment, each small community still retaining any lively sense of the Church, no doubt under the influence of its clergyman who will almost certainly have moved into his rural post from an urban one, feels itself under an obligation to provide as comprehensive a range of services to all its population as does its urban counterpart.

Rarely can this be done alone but very much more can be done in union with others. What has been second or third rate can be improved through those with the necessary qualities now brought in with the wider catchment area; what had not been at all can perhaps begin.

A critical feature for this working out of rural ecumenism is the size of the area. It needs to be wide enough to provide as large a range of opportunity as possible, yet small enough to remain personal. Deaneries and circuits are too big. A market town or key settlement, and its satellites, usually offers a suitable size but, as we have noted, care should be taken that it is sociologically significant. That is more important than the coincidence of ecclesiastical boundaries.

These will be areas where the Church can confidently concentrate its resources without abandoning other places. It should be made clear that each of the local communities within it should have an equal voice in its running and should remain as autonomous as possible. Town and country should be equal and complementary in the one ministry, each offering of its best in the service of all, in a loose but coherent partnership. To this end, the clergymen should not all be based in the town or key settlement, but the majority of them should live in the villages. Until a national ecumenical agreement is realised, they will almost all be Anglican but the Council's lay staff would be of any denomination, the choice depending rather upon the capacity of the individual to do the work. Current indications are that there will soon not even be many Anglican priests. The local lay representatives then will need authorisation to lead the village in its worship as well as attending to its pastoral needs. Such ministry could, perhaps be supported by a mobile 'vestry' which toured and waited regularly in selected spots after the manner of the mobile library, shop and council office van. It is not necessary, of course, for such an arrangement to be called a Council of Churches. Some Roman Catholics are still shy of joining such. But there currently exists no more suitable grouping for the advancement of rural ecumenism. Indeed, there exists no other suitable grouping at all. The discovery of its potential is an urgent need for the rural Church.

The kind of commitment we are now envisaging goes far beyond the bounds of normal Councils of Churches activity, yet from some Councils have come greater things. These are they which have recognised that "it is at the level of the local church that the spirit of ecumenism must find a concrete expression." (192) If it is not to be found there it will be found nowhere. For Councils of Churches and Local Ecumenical Projects really to do their work properly national support is needed, if only in the provision of the minimal requirement of the means of joint decision making, without which even national agreements will be hollow. (193) Yet with the Roman Catholic Church not being party to the current ecumenical Proposals and insofar as the clergy of the Church of England's General Synod were so divided when asked in July, 1980, simply to take note of the Proposals, substantial national progress cannot be assumed. Action may continue to be restricted to local level. So it is with the small local groupings, a Council or some two or three of its constituent congregations, that there is most scope for progress towards a more profound degree of co-operation and on a continuing basis. This is not entirely dependent upon national agreements, however helpful they would be, for "ecumenism on the local level is a primary element of the ecumenical situation as a whole. It is not secondary nor merely derivative. It faces specific needs and has its own resources. It has an initiative of its own and its task is a wider one than merely implementing world-wide ecumenical directives on a small scale." (194) At this point two things need to be mentioned. In a close knit community of the type a village is, the introduction of anything from outside is a matter demanding such skill and sensitivity and always begins by being alien to it. Unless ecumenism emerges out of the village's own life it will come into this category of something which threatens the community's stability by containing the possibility of one part of it having intimate ties with others beyond the community's boundaries. It can, of course, be done and while there is no set pattern for this, it is hardly possible to improve on our Lord's way of making necessary change, which he describes, not as a process of denial but of fulfilment, (Mt.5:17) of bringing to a more mature state the potential that had, until then, simply been embryonic. There is, however, a more subtle danger. In an established area, as pertains in the country,

any extra-parochial ecumenical proposition is liable to be Church centred rather than having anything directly to do with the community as a whole. Not only will it still, therefore, be extraneous in the eyes of some, but it will exaggerate any latent tendencies that may already exist for the village to feel tension within itself between its worshipping and non-worshipping parts. This is the opposite of what happens where there are new towns, for there Church and society grow up together ex nihilo. Good may come from this inner tension but it is probably better to avoid it.

The other problem lies in the fact that often there is but one clergyman, one church and one congregation in a rural community. What are the prospects for ecumenical activity then? This is easier to resolve. There can be no argument about which building is to be used and which to close, which clergyman to become redundant or which hymn book to use. If the community is this small, any who are likely to want to use the Church's ministry will already be doing so, even if only on the rarest of occasions, not least because rural inhabitants expect a solitary resident clergyman to visit and care for them all. From the Nonconforming minority, of whatever denomination, there will be a welcome to what gives them an official status on a par with that of their neighbours. Smallness is a positive advantage also, in that that which will be is already known. This does not imply any particular pattern of Church unity in the countryside, nor yet widespread alteration, but as wide a variety of Church life as already exists, for much of it will continue as before, outwardly at least. Top level ecumenical approval will be needed to allow all the inhabitants to be served by the same ministry, lay or ordained, and there will need to be an honest following to its conclusion of the implication of the theoretically accepted baptismal means of entry into the Church, as distinct from any part of it. Only by this shall we be saved from unnecessary arguments about dual or multiple membership. If there are any local inhabitants who politely decline to accept the implication, no doubt they could be embraced but afforded a continuing minority identity.

The entire set of difficulties relating to ecumenism in rural communities which have only one ecclesiastical presence, is, in

fact, utterly eliminated when once one ceases to think in ecclesiastical terms. If it is seen as a step towards realising the complete unity of the community, what was a difficulty becomes an asset and almost certainly will be assured of general local support. It will, perhaps, later be seen that the Church's extra-parochial relations now have positive value, too, rather than posing a threat, for they can be used to relate two or more communities which have already achieved their own substantiated unity.

The transition from membership of a Council of Churches to something of greater unity need not be formal although the further one progresses the more the need for formality grows, not just because it puts an official seal on a local project, but because it gives to the project a higher level of gravity and guarantees, as far as possible, its continuity. (If a local clergyman can block ecumenism, so also can a hierarchical.) The most likely such formal act will be that of compounding a covenant. While not themselves initiating schemes of unity, covenants sanction a changed relationship in which the partners live more closely together. Even without a national covenant, local covenants are useful in encouraging a deeper commitment, releasing fresh energies, uncovering new talents and generally firing local enthusiasm. They do need careful prior consideration of the local data by both congregations and clergymen and usually require a fairly prolonged period of close co-operation out of which to grow. Once an agreed plan of ecumenical action has been reached, a covenant committing the parties to it may be entertained. Each covenant will, therefore, be unique to a certain extent.

The term 'ecumenical parish' is beginning to be used to describe situations where covenants have been made. Thus Sherborne Ecumenical Parish grew out of the Council of Churches which it replaced. Anxious to maintain its gains regardless of the possible change of clerical personnel, any one of which could cripple if not destroy it, a covenant was signed on Palm Sunday, 1977. This was one of the first of a slowly growing number of such covenants. It read:

"WE:- the Abbey Church of St. Mary the Virgin,
the Church of St. Mary Magdalen, Castleton,
the Church of St. Paul,

The Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart and St. Aldhelm,
the Sherborne Methodist Church,
the Sherborne United Reformed Church,

BELIEVING THAT GOD IS ONE, and that there is one Lord, one Faith, and Baptism; that He calls us to be one in Jesus Christ by the power which His Holy Spirit gives; that we are called to hold together the rich variety of our heritage and of our ways of worship within the one Body; that we are called to venture together in work and witness for Christ, and to commit ourselves to each other to serve Church and town,

COVENANT TOGETHER for an initial period of five years to do together all that we can, and not to do apart what we should do together, and to continue to work and pray for the reconciliation and unity of the whole Church in our land and throughout the world.

WE DECLARE that this Covenant in no way weakens our ties and responsibilities to our individual denominations." (195)

There is no sufficient reason why covenants similar to this should not be commonplace in rural areas. There may be only one clergyman and one church building but it is highly improbable that all the inhabitants of even one village will be of one denomination. The majority of villages will consist mainly of Anglicans and Methodists, with a sprinkling of Roman Catholics and United Reformed people. Unless they have lapsed, all of these are related to a church congregation, clergyman, building somewhere. A covenant would enable them all to be on an equal basis, with rights and duties in the local Christian community. Complete integration is not yet possible. The Roman Catholics, for example, would be partially inhibited. National agreements will, to this extent, always be necessary. Yet such rural covenants would be sociologically justified in that the Christian family would become co-terminous with the civil family, as far as the latter wished it to be so. Such a change for Nonconformists from being part of an associational Church to a communal one, would perhaps not be easy. "We have asked ordinary parishioners of several hundred churches whether they would feel responsible for a person in distress who lived in their parish or district but who was not necessarily linked to their, or any, church. Their response was extremely illuminating. Most groups from Church of England parishes immediately accepted responsibility and the remainder did not need much discussion before they did likewise. When it came to the other

churches it was a different matter. The Free Churches usually only accepted responsibility if the person was a member of their denomination, as did the Roman Catholic groups; some were even more exclusive and required the person to be a member of their own congregation. Very few had the same attitude as the Anglicans. The parish system has many antagonists but here is evidence of some functional religious behaviour." (196) It would not be easy, but it would be well worthwhile for the Church would be back again within the community it has been sent to serve.

That rural ecumenism will happen if encouraged, need not be doubted, made easier by the fact that most rural communities will now contain immigrants of initiative and an increasing number of retired people who are still mentally and physically active and concerned with the mission of the Church. This will be a new factor in the rural situation which could give a new lease of life to the Church. Unlike the community's shop or school or transport services, which wait for customers to come and which disappear when demand for them decreases below a certain level, the Church should be outward looking and outward going, needed the more the less it is used. There is potentially a wide range of ecumenical possibilities open to the Church in the countryside but the more these are seen and taken the more it becomes necessary for there to be a national agreement to underpin them and to use them as centres of growth rather than treat them as pockets of peculiarity.

If we look backwards through this study and forwards into what has still to be done, it seems that the key is the acceptance that, under God, the Church is for the world rather than for itself; that it is an apostolic society. In the working out of this it has a double role. Under the guidance of the Lord the Spirit, it has to try to understand the world and also to support its people in the world. It does the latter through its spiritual ministrations and pastoral care. The outward looking Christian, receiving this support, has himself a two-fold responsibility - to his Church and to his world. Each of these is again subdivided into two parts. His responsibility to the Church involves his own spiritual growth and the support of other members. His responsibility to the world involved his own example of the way he conducts himself in his work

and leisure time and the priorities his actions demonstrate in his domestic life. He is also called to give direct and explicit witness to Jesus. This may take him and his Church into areas with which they have no recent acquaintance. The way forward may appear to mean trekking through a wilderness but, as once before, it will be discovered that even there "every valley will be lifted up, every mountain and hill brought down; rugged places shall be made smooth and mountain ranges become a plain." (197) An indication that this is already being experienced comes from a letter written to the author of this study by the Roman Catholic parish priest of Dulverton, Somerset, in February, 1979. Writing of ecumenism, he said, "Looking back on my forty-two years of priesthood - and you can realise that I was used to bi-lateral bigotry - I am really amazed at the steady progress the movement has made." In this new pilgrimage we need to hold together a comprehensive vision of the united Church, the fragments of it and the people and places where the process can best be advanced. The rural Church is surely one locus for the latter, for despite the problems it presents, it has immense advantages. "But in the village is found among other things that supreme human virtue which is merely called neighbourliness, that subtle combination of love, care, tolerance, support, sacrifice and respect for the individual, which we would want to call the love and openness of mature human beings towards each other. This is a powerful combination of deeply Christian virtues which alone can make a community human in the fullest ramification of that word. Now this is not to deny that these virtues occur in abundance elsewhere, or to suggest that they may be sought in every village, but merely to say that villages in social terms, like monasteries in religious terms, are the repository of values that are of importance to the wider society." (198) If this is a little romantic and perhaps not quite as specifically Christian as is suggested, it is not an inaccurate summary of one part of society that other parts could beneficially emulate. It is our responsibility now to take advantage of whatever is offered by village life to the rural Church by using it as a natural stepping stone to a supernatural goal. What was written specifically for Roman Catholics applies to us all who "must plan not in terms of present disunity, but of the future unity which the Holy Spirit has in store for us." (199)

D. APOLOGIA

That is what it looks like through the eyes of an ecumenist. It is multi-faceted because its ramifications are everywhere. Some lines of thought are started but left because they leave the heart of the matter and take us towards the periphery. Other lines are left because they become interwoven with neighbours and are lost in the process, hidden or assimilated. Still others are left because they reach an impasse, either finding themselves in a cul de sac engineered by contemporary legislation or, simply, because the vision of the author has failed to penetrate further. It is all very untidy and unsatisfactory if it is considered as a solution to anything and could well illustrate David Jenkins' dictum that "it often seems that the Church of England, along with many other churches, is in favour of change as long as it makes no difference." (200) Its intention, however, is different. It has tried to record what there is and some of the reasons why it is, including the use by the Lord, once again, of economic and other mundane pressures to promote intrinsically desirable theological change. It has not tried very hard to see what might be (our four examples indicate how many and various the shapes will be) but it has tried to show what will need to happen if it is to become anything at all. It wants, mainly, to help keep the subject in the minds of those who can influence its future, confident that as an immaculately ordered universe is said to have grown once out of primeval chaos, so the process can be repeated in this by him who performed the former miracle and whose will it is that the latter should happen.

This study is probably more hopeful than many would deem the data to warrant. But if you have lost hope, what is left?

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