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Relating Faith to Work: Is the Church part of the solution, or part of the problem?

Many lay people find it hard to relate their faith to their work, and feel unsupported by the churches of which they are a part. Seeking to explain why this is so, Andy Jolley presents the results of interviews with fifteen of Britain's leading 'experts' and practitioners in the faith and work field, who between them identify seven broad causal categories. He assesses the potential impact of commonly proposed remedies on these perceived causes, and finding some to be inadequately addressed, suggests what might be done about them.

Introduction

The symptoms of the difficulties many Christians experience in relating faith to work are well acknowledged and documented.¹ Many churches' responses to the world of work amount to a form of oppression or exclusion of working people, albeit unwitting and unintended.² Bosch, referring to exclusion and oppression in churches, claims that oppressors' most potent weapon is the mind of the oppressed which, once 'colonised', effectively enslaves them by their own thinking and attitudes.³ Many Christians, as they listen to preaching in churches, effectively allow their work to be excluded from their daily discipleship. Very little affirmation is heard of their daily work,⁴ even when the passages preached from are set in daily life! Instead their time in the world of work is seen as a second class activity, excluding it (and them) from useful Christian activities. Moreover, the predominant model of Christian Sunday teaching, with the preacher in control and the audience

1 e.g. Church of England Board of Education, *Called to New Life: The World of Lay Discipleship*, CHP, London, 1999; David Clark, *A Survey of Christians at Work and its Implications for the Churches*, Westhill College, Birmingham 1993, p 4; Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland (CCBI), *Unemployment and the Future of Work*, CCBI, London 1997, p 190; Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, SPCK, London, 1991, p 49f; Christian Schumacher, *To Live and Work*, Marc Europe, Bromley 1987, p 9.

2 Letty M. Russell (*Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective – A Theology*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1974, pp 70, 155) illustrates oppression by churches more generally

3 David J. Bosch, 'South African Black Theology' in Geyraud S. Wilmore & James H. Cone (eds), *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*, Orbis, New York 1979, p 230.

4 see e.g. Mark Greene, 'Making it God's Business' in *Third Way*, September 1997, p 21ff.

passive, fits most of Freire's ten characteristics of oppressive 'banking' approaches to education.⁵

The location and organisation of most churches also lead to structural exclusion of work and working people. The dispersed and isolated nature of Christians in their workplaces, with little mutual contact and support, fits Freire's identification of how oppressed peoples are divided and ruled.⁶ It leaves them having to '*sing the songs of Zion*' alone. With most churches operating where people live, the Church as an institution is an accomplice, again albeit unwittingly, to this unorganised scattering of Christians in their workplaces and their related experiences of exclusion and oppression.

Several potential approaches and solutions to ameliorate these symptoms have been suggested (though their successfulness, as with cold remedies, may be debatable). However, much less documented are the perceived underlying causes of the disease and explanations for its existence. Why do so many people find it hard to relate faith to work? Why, after countless books and church reports, does so little progress seem to have been made? Are there more intractable causes which are not being addressed? To answer these questions, I asked some of the leading people trying to make progress in this area for their thoughts, to find out how the solutions many of them are suggesting fit with what they think are the causes.

Method

Between February 1998 and February 1999, I interviewed fifteen of Britain's faith and work 'experts'.⁷ These were men and women who are leading practitioners, speakers or writers on the subject, who have given considerable thought to the issues involved. Clearly it was not going to be possible to include all of Britain's potential faith and work experts, but within the fifteen there was a good range of churchmanship and denominations. Five of the experts are lay people, ten are ordained, of whom five are, or have been, industrial chaplains, and one is a bishop. All those approached agreed to be interviewed. After an initial wave of six interviews, subsequent participants were selected on the basis of gaps in the first participants' backgrounds and experience with respect to the range of occupations found in Britain today. Some were suggested by the first participants. Others were those thought likely to confirm or deny important opinions given by the first participants.

The interviews focused on the historic and contemporary factors behind the separation of faith and work. They aimed to draw from experts' experiences, their deeper knowledge of the area and their more considered thoughts on both causes and potential solutions. The method, using qualitative research techniques for data generation and analysis, was designed to surface *explanations* rather than establish actual causes.⁸ It was hoped, however, to uncover the most important causal factors by comparing and contrasting the different experts' explanations, even if direct causal links could not be fully proven. Minimally structured interviews were used because of their ability to elicit softer information, such as the experts' wider

5 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Middlesex 1972, p 46f.

6 Freire, *Pedagogy*, p 111.

7 Many of them modestly rejected the epithet, but we retain the term to describe them.

8 see David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, Sage, London 1993, p 114.

experience and perceptions, and to follow up ideas which their responses suggested. They can also generate additional data and higher quality information through the interviewer-interviewee interaction, with the experts being able to reflect more deeply on their own experience, and so potentially to develop their own understanding and practice.⁹ To minimise the risks of totally unrelated data arising from the different interviews, and of any skew to the analysis from any preferred explanatory frameworks,¹⁰ each expert was sent a short paper before the interview outlining the research's purpose and the key questions it was hoped to cover.

The perceived causes

Analysis of the experts' opinions from the interviews reveals seven broad categories of explanations perceived to contribute to the separation of faith and work. Most of them have theological and institutional dimensions, and some roots can be seen in sociological changes stemming from the industrial revolution.

(1) Thirteen experts suggested that many Christians operate with an effective misconception about the character of the kingdom of God. This cause may be both theological and institutional in nature. Whether intentionally, because of theological understanding, or through learned behaviour, they thought many Christians and many churches *act* as if the Church is the 'be all and end all' of the kingdom of God. Twelve of them, including all the lay experts, identified the viewing of church-based ministry as the only truly valid form of ministry as a factor. One expert talked about '*being sucked into the institution*'.¹¹ A second noted an implicit hierarchy of worthy ministries and professions. A third referred to the Church as '*the most self-centred institution in Britain*'.¹² Another highlighted the problem of 'successful' churches he has known:

The more success we saw, the more the life of the church became its own life, and people who bought into it bought into the life of the church and it became more and more ecclesiastically circumscribed.¹³

While the struggle for survival in many smaller churches can consume all the available energy, there was a plea for the legitimisation and encouragement of workplace ministry, and an expectation that this may actually bring great encouragement back into the life of churches, if there is a willingness to listen. In particular they thought that helping people to find their 'ministry' must look beyond church-based ministries.

Relatedly, seven of these thirteen experts also mentioned a failure to distinguish between the Church and the kingdom of God, and mission and church growth. One example was an emphasis on church-based, leisure-time evangelism, which draws ministry back into the domestic and church arenas away from the workplace and other aspects of people's lives. One expert particularly noted a focus on the Church rather than the kingdom in clergy training.

9 Herbert J. Rubin & Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data*, Sage, London 1995, p 1.

10 Ray Pawson, 'Theorizing the Interview', in *The British Journal of Sociology* 47(2) (1996), p 298.

11 Interview with former industrial chaplain, 13/2/98.

12 Interview with industrial chaplain, 10/3/98.

13 Interview with former vicar, 28/4/98.

(2) A second, mainly theological, category of perceived cause relates to people's understanding of the extent of God's interest in their life and the world, and hence the overall scope of salvation. Thirteen experts identified this factor in some way. Nine of them, including four of the industrial chaplains, mentioned a lack of recognition that God is interested in the whole of life, effectively accepting a sacred/secular division. Some identified this as using Sunday church attendance as an escape from the world ('*Thank God it's Sunday*'), others as liturgy and worship which ignored the world of work. Others, in more theological language, spoke of a false theology of creation ('*the Spirit matters and the body doesn't*¹⁴), a false pneumatology ('*the Holy Spirit doesn't turn up to work, he only turns up to the prayer meeting*¹⁵) and a failure to grasp God's immanence as well as transcendence in practice as well as theory.¹⁶ To be able to '*sing the songs of Zion*' in the strange land of the workplace is important, otherwise these compartmentalised assumptions, thinking and behaviour, which see God and the world as unrelated, risk become self-perpetuating.¹⁷

Eight experts, again including four of the industrial chaplains, identified in some form churches' conception of the gospel and salvation as a factor. One described it as understanding salvation as '*the saving of the individual soul for a life beyond this one*',¹⁸ rather than '*the kingdom of God redeeming the whole of creation*'.¹⁹ The former was seen to risk leading to a dualistic condemnation of wealth creation and thus business in general, while the latter was perceived to affirm struggles with social ethics which bring God's justice and peace in working practices and workplaces. One expert thought that the Decade of Evangelism had helped confine people's understanding of faith and work issues to witnessing in the workplace, to the exclusion of other considerations. Relatedly, three experts mentioned difficulties in overcoming a postwar schism in the Church seen in the stress of liberals on a social gospel and evangelicals on personal salvation. They felt that the difficulty in moving beyond such a dichotomous view has left many evangelicals ill-equipped to engage with the world of work and social questions generally.

Surprisingly, only two experts went back to sociological developments at the Renaissance or Enlightenment where they saw the roots of individualism and the privatisation of previously communal matters such as faith. A third however thought that the Church's lack of confidence in having anything to say about work was a factor, and this may also relate to the privatisation of faith.

(3) Nine experts identified a dearth of teaching on work and vocation in churches, seeing this cause as primarily institutional (acting as if work and vocation are unimportant issues), rather than theological (wrong teaching). As one expert put

14 Interview with lay person, 12/5/98 (this is frequently traced back to Augustine – e.g. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, SCM, London 1985, p 239; Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1940, p 37; Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, OUP, Oxford 1991, p 70).

15 Interview with lay person, 12/5/98.

16 Interestingly, no expert referred to the incarnation as demonstrating God's interest in all of life.

17 see e.g. Alistair McFadyen, *Christians in Public Life: The Theological Challenge (CIPL Position Paper B19)*, Westhill College, Birmingham 1996, p 1; Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, p 49.

18 Interview with former vicar – 8/5/98.

19 Same interview.

it, '[Work] is not on the leadership's agenda, so it's not on your agenda. You're not encouraged and you won't talk about it because no one's told you it's important.'²⁰ Another called for preaching to 'read scripture from the workplace, not the Holy Place (i.e. church)',²¹ contextualising the gospel message as people working cross-culturally have to do. Where sermon illustrations are drawn mainly from 'Christian work', they reinforce the impression that the only real ministry is church-based ministry. Other experts lamented the lack of teaching about the purpose of work, both in churches and in theological education.

Five experts noted (particularly evangelical) churches' concentration on personal ethics, especially relating to family life, to the detriment of workplace issues or wider social ethical questions. One thought there might be an unconscious conspiracy whereby laity won't bother clergy with work issues if clergy don't bring them up. Two others highlighted an unwillingness or inability of church leaders to help those with complex ethical questions. They felt that teaching which presented a prevailing 'black and white' assumption about ethical matters was likely to divide the faith and the work of people who have to live with 'grey' ethical compromises at work.²² The resulting projected or inferred feelings of guilt would inhibit honesty and openness about the realities of work.

(4) Eight experts, including all the lay experts, highlighted 'clericalism' as a key problem. Their explanations, which had mainly institutional, but some theological, aspects, included:

Ordained people dominating, de-skilling and domesticating lay people;

A failure of clergy to enable lay people in their own ministry;

Maintaining control by not delegating;

Lay readers and preachers excluding the world of work from worship by mimicking clergy and not 'being themselves' when leading worship or preaching;

Continuing a model of clerical ministry which includes visiting schools and old people's homes, but excludes workplaces;

Learned behaviour of passive submission by lay people to work being excluded from worship, and their acceptance of hierarchical models of ministry;

Approaching teaching with the assumption that clergy are experts and people are empty vessels waiting to be filled, rather than building on their experience and knowledge from the working lives;

A theology of ministry which views lay people as volunteers in the clergy's ministry.

While intention may be debated, it is the outcome which matters. Lay ministry in the world is all too readily domesticated within the Church, and frequently involves imitating the clergy at some level. Indeed, it can be argued that creating a separate group of 'full-time' Christian leaders and ministers inevitably undermines the

20 Interview with lay person – 12/5/99.

21 Interview with former vicar – 28/4/98.

22 *Called to New Life* (1999, p 26) suggests that this is truer of conservative churches.

principle that all Christians are ministers of Christ in the world.²³ Lockhart's view of the relationship between oppressed and oppressors seems to fit:

The oppressed are trapped by necessity into serving (and even imitating) their oppressors.... The oppressors, likewise, are trapped by their need to retain power, where their identity is found in their possessions or authority.... Both are dehumanized.²⁴

(5) Another institutional factor identified by five experts, was many clergy's lack of experience of work outside the Church. This probably relates to clericalism, and explains to some extent both difficulties with dealing with complex ethical questions and a lack of teaching about work and vocation. Especially when combined with a model of ministering from strength to weakness, the resulting silence about the world of work in church life was thought to stem from clergy lacking confidence of having anything useful to say.²⁵ As more clergy are ordained with experience of other work before ordination, this factor's importance may diminish. However, rapid changes in many modern workplaces may render their experiences quickly outdated.

(6) The sixth category again mainly concerns the Church as an institution and its response to sociological changes. Nine experts identified the parish system or, in new and non-conformist churches, a parish-like mentality as a key factor effectively separating work life from home and church life. Locked in '*a parish or neighbourhood mentality*',²⁶ the Church was criticised for only knowing how to be a '*community of place*',²⁷ operating only in the domestic arena and ignoring those networks people belong to which focus around work and leisure life. One expert likened his experience of parochial ministry to the tide going out as people left their homes to work elsewhere, so leaving him '*ministering to the shipwrecked*'.²⁸ Being tied to people's domestic rather than public agenda, he saw his ministry thus focused on people in their '*weakness and localness, not in their strengths and cosmopolitanness*'.²⁹

For those people whose daily lives are in only one context, the 'community of place' approach may work. However, by limiting itself effectively to where people sleep, the Church is remote from many people's work lives. Business has long since recognised the sub-optimisation which results from such 'functional' thinking. In the parable of the soils, the sower sows the seed on all the different soils.³⁰ By overfocusing on where people's homes are, the Church leaves many parts of the harvest field overgrown and neglected.

An associated factor identified by four of these nine experts was what one termed 'congregationalism', with church members only engaging with each other at a 'Sunday' level, and having little idea about the rest of each others' lives. Together with the issue of the focus on where people sleep, this leads to the wider

23 Stephen Green, *Serving God? Serving Mammon?*, Marshall Pickering, London 1996, p 113.

24 John Lockhart, *After Freire: A Continuing Pedagogy?*, William Temple Foundation, Manchester 1997, p 17.

25 see also *Called to New Life*, 1999, p 13.

26 Interview with lay person – 12/5/98.

27 Interview with minister – 19/2/98.

28 Same interview.

29 Same interview.

30 Matthew 13:3-8, Mark 4:3-8, Luke 8:5-8.

problem of Christians being dispersed and unorganised in workplaces and the public world, often unaware of the presence of other Christians with whom they could cooperate in mission and ministry. Christians are called to work for the reign of God to be evident wherever they are. Where they are dispersed in the workplace, and not praying, worshipping and working with others there, then the Church's mission there must be handicapped. Jesus sent out the twelve and the seventy (or seventy-two) out in pairs,³¹ and commissioned the disciples to go into all the world.³² Yet people rarely feel sent out into their workplaces, and when they do, the Church effectively sends them there alone.

(7) Historic sociological changes in the nature of work, especially at the Industrial Revolution, and the Church's slow response to them as an institution, was noted by ten experts. Indeed, the limited response to these changes may explain why churches primarily operate as communities of place today. Seven experts noted changed *places* of work (towns rather than villages), and the Church's slow response in establishing new places of worship and clergy where workers resettled as they left the land. While the extent to which the Church commanded the loyalty of working people before the Industrial Revolution is debatable, historians concur that it was much reduced when they moved from the countryside to the towns.³³ Changes in the location of work facilitated the fragmentation of life, with different rationalities developing for the public and private worlds.³⁴ Hence it is concerning that the Church is also responding slowly to the increased fragmentation of people's lives today. One expert was especially concerned that clergy training had not changed to reflect recent sociological developments such as increased mobility.

Four experts highlighted the changed *type* of work with the move from the land to factories, believing it is harder to relate modern work to Biblical material than agriculture. This may help explain the paucity of worship materials referring to work. One expert noted that continued developments in work, with many people no longer making a tangible product, have made it even harder for many people to see a divine purpose for their work or how it relates to 'the common good'. Another noted that effect of more recent changes in the *timing* of work. With growing numbers of Christians having to work on Sundays, the lack of real alternatives to the traditional pattern of Sunday corporate worship was leaving such people with feelings of guilt and isolation.

The potential impact of proposed remedies

Five types of solution are commonly proposed to relate faith and work better. The first is teaching on vocation and the place of work in God's creation,³⁵ possibly

31 Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1.

32 Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8.

33 see e.g. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part 1*, 1971, p 325ff; Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, Collins, London 1986, p 33.

34 Andre Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, Verso, London 1989, p 36; Krishan Kumar, 'The Social Culture of Work' in *New Universities Quarterly*, 34(1) (1979), p 14ff.

35 see e.g. Richard Higginson, *Called to Account*, Eagle, Guildford 1993, pp 27ff, 250f; Steve Walton, *A Call to Live*, Triangle, London 1994, p 110f.

using some of the growing range of study books.³⁶ This obviously addresses the perceived lack of teaching in this area when done well. Secondly, there is church worship and liturgy which includes prayers and sermon illustrations with relevance to the world of work, and possibly even 'work services'.³⁷ These two types of solution can address the mistaken view that God is not interested in all of life, mitigate the effect of clergy not understanding the world of work, help relate biblical material to new forms of work, and even suggest that real ministry can happen outside the Church. However, if the actions of churches and their hierarchies don't match the words used in teaching and worship, the institutional aspects of the perceived causes remain unaddressed and little is changed.

A third solution is, in some way, to discover the presence of God in the workplace and worship him there.³⁸ This can help people develop their belief that God is interested in all of life, and help them to discover what ministry they might have in their workplaces. This is also true for the fourth typical solution, which is the development of peer support groups, either church-based or workplace-based.³⁹ The latter can have the positive effects of the third solution, and where they work well, can reduce the effects of dispersal in the workplace which are inherent in churches being primarily communities of place and responding inadequately to changes in the nature of work. The main drawback is such groups' low status compared with 'real church', such that energy often reverts back into church-based ministry and activities.

The fifth type of solution includes pastoral approaches such as 'work shadowing' by clergy, personal support and the some forms of industrial chaplaincy.⁴⁰ While they all have the potential to undermine clericalism to some extent, show God's interest in all of life and validate ministry in the workplace, their main problem is that they happen all too infrequently. Without dwelling on the failure of industrial mission to act as a focus for the ministry of lay people in the workplace,⁴¹ energy

36 see e.g. Dow, *A Christian Understanding of Daily Work*, Grove, Cambridge, 1997; Richard Higginson, *Mind the Gap*, CPAS, Warwick 1997; John Lovatt, *The Word and the Work*, Lichfield Diocese, Wolverhampton 1997; Diocese of Peterborough, *People and Work Programme*, 1991.

37 see e.g. Cameron Butland, *Work and Worship*, Hodder & Stoughton, Sevenoaks 1985, p 16; Gill College, *The Local Church at Work (CIPL Resource Sheet R4)*, Westhill College, Birmingham, 1992; Dow, *A Christian Understanding*, p 20f; Richard Higginson, 'Business People and the Local Church' in *Anvil* 10(2) (1993), p 127; Andrew Stokes, *Working with God*, Mowbray, London 1992, p 88f.

38 see e.g. Dow, *A Christian Understanding*, p 20f; Lovatt, *The Word and the Work*, p 32.

39 see e.g. Denis Claringbull, *Front Line Mission*, Canterbury Press, Norwich 1994, p 71; Garth Norman, *Faith and Work Consultations in the Diocese of Rochester (CIPL Resource Sheet R13)*, Westhill College, Birmingham 1994; Olwen Smith, 'Christians at Work' Groups – Lichfield Diocese (CIPL Resource Sheet R2), Westhill College, Birmingham 1992.

40 see e.g. Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, *Church and Economy: Effective Industrial Mission for the 1990s*, CHP, 1989, p 21; Claringbull, *Front Line Mission*, p 70f, p 148; Dow, *A Christian Understanding*, p 24.

41 see e.g. Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, *Industrial Mission: An Appraisal*, CHP, London 1988, p 9; Diocese of Peterborough 1990, p 3; Shigeo Masumoto, *A Critique of British Industrial Mission as a Response of the Church to Modern Industrial Society*, Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, London 1987, pp 1, 28.

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often ends up being drawn back into maintaining the Church. Parish clergy visit parishioners at home and not at their workplace, and resources are directed away from industrial mission to parishes.

These five approaches therefore primarily address the first three perceived causes. Additionally, if the trend for older ordinands continues, and experiences from their first careers are not dismissed in their training, then the 'inexperienced' clergy issue may diminish. However, the other identified causes, and particularly their institutional aspects, are not adequately addressed by these solutions. Specifically, clericalism, with the associated message that 'real' ministry is located in the Church, and the emphasis on churches as communities of place, stand out as issues needing much greater attention. Equally, unless the Church can grasp the ways in which the world is now changing with the information revolution, then it risks repeating the problems inherited from the poor response to the social changes of the industrial revolution.

Implications

So how can these other causes be addressed? One possible suggestion is for churches in the workplace. For example, Wilkie suggested twenty years ago:

The local congregation... is not the only place where the Church must exist today. As so many of the activities of men (sic) have moved out of the residential parish, the Church must go with them. Otherwise it will limp along in a truncated form because it is no longer in touch with a major part of their lives.... The life of the home-based congregation... needs to be supplemented by a Church presence nearer the places where people work.⁴²

The Church, through Christians being there, is already in the workplace. God, present in all his creation, is also there. The issue is how Christians can 'be church' in their working lives and worship God there. Effective ministry and mission in workplaces requires that Christians there do not remain scattered, but work together. As Freire suggests, the liberation of the oppressed requires great efforts for unity amongst them.⁴³

Can ways be found to 'be church' where people work as well as where they live? Society's fragmentation into multiple and overlapping communities and networks suggests we need a fragmented church and an incarnational ecclesiology where something of the fragmented nature of modern British life is reflected in church structures. As people's lives divide into separate work, home and leisure compartments, we cannot persist with forms of church which only address the home fragment. Neither can we accept approaches which acknowledge people's fragmented lives to some extent by valuing workplace groups and fellowships, but don't value them as highly as 'real church' which happens on Sundays. Instead we must develop ways to 'be church' in all the fragments of people's lives which are not dualist, or semi-dualist, by undervaluing one or another fragment. If, as

42 George Wilkie, *Christian Thinking about Industrial Life*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1980, p 18f; see also Matthew Fox, *Religion USA: Religion and Culture by Way of TIME*

Magazine, Listening Press, Illinois, 1971, p 146; Richard Taylor, *Christians in an Industrial Society*, SCM, London 1961, p 66ff, p 77f.

43 Freire, *Pedagogy*, p 140.

Christians believe, the Church is the body of Christ, then we must expect it to experience something of the tensions Christ himself experiences in 'holding all things together'.⁴⁴ This cannot mean holding on to some aspects of life and letting go of others.

However, this does not mean accepting fragmented lives as the ideal way of being human. A Church for a fragmented world, 'holding all things together', needs to help people towards a whole humanity. For the Church to be authentic, it must seek to hold all the fragments of life together corporately and not leave individuals coping with this alone. Holding the fragments together, and helping people towards a whole humanity is not easy. Such an experience must be painful for the Church, and especially for those most involved in holding the different fragments together (as the French worker-priests found for example⁴⁵). As the world experiences pain, difficulty and tension from fragmentation, surely the Church cannot stand aloof from this pain, but must, like its Lord, share that pain with the world? To represent authentically its Lord, for whom 'holding all things together' meant reconciling all things to God on the cross, it too must be cruciform, living with the pain and difficulty of holding its fragmented life together. Indeed, it might mean that, like its Lord, 'Church' as we know it must die and be raised again to new life.

Four practical implications of this more radical understanding of being church particularly stand out. Firstly, it must be accepted that people can belong to, and be committed to, more than one expression of the Church. Indeed, they should be encouraged to belong to as many expressions of Church as are relevant for their lives, family situations, and the roles they can play in God's kingdom. Belonging to '*one holy, catholic and apostolic Church*' need not limit people to belonging to only one expression of that Church. Plurality of membership may offer a more relevant approach. For many students and, for example, those members of my own congregation who migrate back to the Caribbean for the winter, plurality of church membership is already a reality. They participate in two different churches at different times of year but are involved with, and committed to, the mission and ministry of both. Similarly many clergy have responsibility for more than one church. Can this understanding be countenanced for other Christians too? While for many people 'home church' would continue as their primary spiritual focus, plurality of membership has most relevance for those who live, work and leisure in different places and with different people. This is not to encourage 'pick 'n' mix' consumerism, opting into those forms of church which people want, and to the extent that they want. Rather it is the recognition of a requirement to live and work with those other Christians whom God puts us with in every aspect of our lives.

Secondly, plurality of membership must be accompanied by an understanding of belonging to the universal Church. If people belong to multiple expressions of the Church, it is important to recognise that they are also a part of a wider whole, so they expect a unity in their diverse experience. This is essential to overcome the fragmentation in their own lives, and the parochialism, congregationalism and denominationalism which all too often divide the Church. In my experience many lay people find this less difficult than their clergy.

44 Colossians 1:17.

45 see Gregor Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, Darton Longmann & Todd, London 1964, p 155.

A third implication is the mutual recognition of these different expressions of church. In particular, to 'be church' authentically and realistically in people's home, work (and potentially leisure and other) communities must not exclude any of the perceived essentials of 'being church', including the sacraments. Otherwise the view that 'real church' is back at home on Sundays will prevail. This must include mutual recognition and accreditation of leaders in each expression of church. This might involve ordaining workplace leaders, akin to Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs), who combine their paid work with a Christian leadership role, and specifically charging them with acting as a focus for, and enabler of, the Church's mission and ministry in their particular workplaces or networks. As most current MSEs are professional workers, and especially teachers and lecturers, the range of persons for whom being an MSE is an attractive possibility would need broadening considerably.

People might therefore receive pastoral care and oversight from leaders at both 'home church' and 'work church'. While it must be ensured that people are ministered to as whole persons, this is not necessarily problematic. Indeed, in their working lives many people are used to such complex relationships, often having more than one boss or client. What is required are cooperative and collaborative relationships between the leaders of the different expressions of church in which people are involved. Alternatively individuals can continue trying to handle the dividedness of their home and work lives by themselves.

The fourth implication is for those churches in the domestic arena currently benefiting disproportionately from people's time, money and energy, especially in their maintenance as institutions. Engaging more with all the networks to which people belong means they must expect some Christians to be less active in their meetings and organisations. However, they may find such painful adjustment and pruning fruitful, opening opportunities for others to become more involved, and raising questions against activities which perhaps should be closed down. The potential for insights gained in the workplace to be fed back into 'home' church, and vice versa, also offers the potential of a more integrated spirituality and united Church.

This is not a simple or easy solution, but the problem of so many Christians finding it hard to live out their faith in the public arena of the workplace is far from trivial. The radical understanding of being church proposed here addresses the three perceived causes least addressed by the solutions currently being tried. It takes the Church beyond just being a 'community of place' to reach into all the aspects and networks of people's lives. It also offers a response to the changing nature of work by addressing emerging places of work and forms of work community. Finally it offers the potential for liberating lay people from the clericalism which negates so much of their working lives, releasing them into all the forms and places of ministry to which God may be calling them, and so liberating the Church to pursue its God-given mission in the world more effectively.

Can this vision for the Church become reality? Will farsighted bishops, dioceses or clergy encourage different approaches to 'being church' to come about? Will lay people become 'conscientised' and participate in their liberation by explaining

to their church leaders the ways in which the Church oppresses them. If so, will these leaders give up their power and learn from their congregations, enabling them to express their concerns and ask for effective ways of equipping them for their public lives?⁴⁶ Also as clergy become learners and are seen to be imperfect (at least in some regards!), they offer others the freedom to admit their imperfections and learn too. If this can happen, we can hope for new forms of Church in which clergy and laity exist in mutuality of relationship.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the perceived causes of the poor relationship between people's faith and their work has revealed that there are some key causes which are not addressed by the solutions currently being offered. Whether the causes are correctly perceived is in some senses unimportant. What matters is that solutions are not being developed to all the causes the experts *think* are important.

Specifically it is the institutional factors which are left unaddressed. As the Church as an institution can be perceived as oppressive in the area of Christians' everyday work, this is especially serious. This oppression arises particularly through ignoring, or dismissing the relevance of, people's ministry in their workplace, the persistence of clericalism which values one form of ministry over all other forms, and a parish system which values domestic, private faith over faith in public life.

Two hundred years ago the Church in Britain failed to respond adequately as people flooded from fields to factories at the height of the industrial revolution. The resources for its geographically-based mission and ministry were focused where people used to live. Where they now lived, there was little organised institutional presence or authorised leadership. Today, as the information revolution progresses, the Church needs again to recognise and respond to the different networks of home, work and leisure which make up people's modern fragmented lifestyles. In this context, a geographic, or parish-based, approach for mission and ministry very much appears a 'one-club' strategy.

The solutions which are being tried to relate faith and work better are most likely to help individuals and groups within individual communities of faith. What is missing in the unaddressed institutional causes are solutions which can work at a more *transformational* level. It is these that will really unlock the potential for individuals and churches to have a much wider experience of liberation in the relationship between faith and work. Institutional solutions are urgently needed. Possibly groups of lay Christians may take the initiative themselves, refuse to accept their oppression any longer, and develop alternative forms of 'being church' for themselves. I hope and pray though for church leaders with the vision to create and affirm new liberating and equally valid forms of 'being church' in workplaces and other places, so that the Church as an institution is not just part of the problem, but part of the solution.

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46 As Lockhart suggests (*After Freire*, p 17); see also Lois Green, *The Two Cultures (CIPL*

Position Paper B1), Westhill College, Birmingham 1992, p 2.