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The Fraternal

September, 1972

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EDITORIAL

Since the last issue of our journal we have lost a colleague who rendered devoted service to the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship. We refer to F. C. Bryan. He served us well as Chairman for several years, and then took on the heaviest part of the editorial responsibilities. In a moving address at the Thanksgiving Service for Frank Bryan's life and ministry, Dr. Payne referred to him as "one of the choicest, most gifted and most loved Baptist Ministers of his generation". We too thank God for his rich ministry and its wide influence.

This particular issue of **The Fraternal** is devoted entirely to the subject of Christian Worship. It is a theme which dominated F. C. Bryan's interest throughout his entire life. We think it fitting that we listen to what he had to say about the importance of these spiritual priorities:

"In every soul there are hidden springs, and the Christian wayfarer needs the refreshment they afford. Not everyone gives himself the time or exercises the patience required to find out these springs. They have to be dug for and it is a laborious task . . . It is specially necessary for those whose religion runs out most naturally into good works to have access to these springs. For as Dr. Oldham has said, 'Our powers become rapidly exhausted in our work, and if we occupy ourselves exclusively with the outer world, even for the purpose of serving it, we become worldly, superficial, unreal and ineffective'. It is not necessarily, therefore, self-indulgence or lack of love or a waste of precious time, as is sometimes suggested, when a busy person with many claims upon him withdraws for an hour's solitude and prayer, or goes to worship in church, in order that he may drink at the secret springs. For the very work's sake, if not for his own, he has need to make time for the development of his inner life, giving it a high place in his list of priorities. Whatever else he neglects, it will surely be to the detriment of those dependent upon him for guidance and inspiration, if he neglects the irrigation and fertilization of the roots of his personal life from this living water. It is all too easy to slip into a love of action for action's sake, and to think that we are not serving God unless we are being incessantly on the go . . .

"Now all is not well with us in this matter. One gets the impression sometimes that people engaged in the work of God are more interested in the work than in God. God to them is less the object of heart's desire than He is errand boy for their schemes. They betray more anxiety that a particular project with which they are identified shall not fail than that what is right in God's sight shall be done. There is little searching of heart for deliverance from such ignorance, obstinacy or prejudice as may be hindering His work; and above all, little, if any, sense that God has "stopped to ask of us the love of our poor hearts" as well as the service of our hands and feet, or that He is one to be loved and enjoyed for His own sake, for the splendour of His glory, and for the greatness of His love". (**Concerning the Way**, London, 1946, pp 62-3, 66).

RECENT TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

It may not always be realized that there is no organization, ecumenical or international, no elected council or co-ordinating committee, defining the aims and objectives or directing and influencing the development of the Liturgical Movement. In the various traditions and situations the desire and attempt to renew the worship of the Church manifests itself in different ways. It is, however, possible to observe and describe certain recent tendencies and developments which are widespread. In discussing these developments, some reference may also be made to their bearing upon the worship of our Baptist Churches in Britain.

I begin with the controversial and still unresolved question of language. There has certainly been a general and accelerating trend away from traditional to contemporary language in preparing liturgical material. In the English-speaking world it is apparent that those who were or are striving to retain the language of Cranmer or the Authorized Version, or some other form of church or archaic diction, are fighting a losing battle. The ever-rolling stream of time is sweeping away such forms as thee, thy, shalt, wilt, dost, hast, art, etc. with the beseechings and vouchsafings and all the rest. As recently as 1966 it was a startling innovation when, in **The Book of Common Worship**, the Presbyterian Churches in the U.S.A., alongside the services in traditional language, provided alternative services in contemporary language. The corresponding change in the language of Anglican liturgies may be seen by looking at Rite 1 (traditional) and Rite 2 (contemporary) of the new eucharistic rites of the American Episcopal Church. The same change may be observed by comparing the language of Series 2 with that of Series 3 in the 'Alternative Services' of the Church of England. 'Series 3 is now offered as a rite for those who desire to worship in a language closer to their own. This desire has made itself felt in all parts of the world, and the general trend in the new liturgies of all Churches is for modern language'.¹

This trend creates problems for English-speaking Christians, of which two may be mentioned. What kind of language should be used, whether in preaching and free prayer or in preparing liturgical material? This question is not really answered by the assertion that worship should be in contemporary language. What kind of contemporary language? It is, unfortunately, possible to use language that is clearly understood, but hardly worth understanding—a language devoid of beauty and richness of association, of metaphor and image, a language that is flat and colourless and makes no impact. The English version of the Latin Mass, and the proposed new Prayer Book services have been criticized (the latter unjustly, in my view) on these grounds. The Church of England has been accused of preparing 'to scrap her own most glorious heritage of poetic, evocative language in favour of a piece of thin, flat impoverished prose'.² The Church of England Liturgical Commission spotlights the

problem. 'Good modern English is not necessarily **conversational** English; still less is it weak, unrhythmic cliché; and the vocabulary of worship should not be the language of daily chitchat. Vocabulary tests have shown that all classes of people understand a far wider range of words than they themselves use; and any good spoken or written discourse can be shown to have rather different characteristics when compared with those of ordinary talk'.³

Another problem inevitably arises. If we do use contemporary language in some form, then what is to be done with the old traditional material—e.g. the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Te Deum, the Magnificat, the Collects? In many of our own Churches at this present time, two languages are in use. The language of the sermon and the prayers is (with many exceptions!) contemporary; the language of the Lord's Prayer, the canticles and the hymns is archaic. The version of the Bible may be old or new. (I say nothing of the minister, by no means rare, who in the same prayer wobbles between **thou** and **you** forms!) An attempt is being made to get agreed modern versions of the main traditional texts for use throughout the English-speaking world. For it is obviously highly undesirable to have in circulation and use a number of different English versions of e.g. the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed. The difficulty of reaching agreed versions for the whole English-speaking world can be imagined. How, for example, do you render 'hallowed be thy name' or 'lead us not into temptation', or 'he descended into hell'? The translation work done by various groups and Liturgical Commissions has been and is being collected and revised by an international and ecumenical body known as ICET—the International Consultation on English Texts. It has published a set of these agreed texts.⁴ A related but even more difficult task is that of putting the ancient collects into contemporary language. Again I quote the Church of England Liturgical Commission—'It has proved impossible simply to "translate" old material into twentieth-century English. We found ourselves left with bare bones, stripped of imagery, lightened of ideas, with the beauty and emotive power of admittedly outdated rhetorical structures and effects quite lost, and yet with nothing to put in their place'.⁵ It is being recognized that perhaps the only solution to this problem is the composition of new collects. Some good work has already been done in this area by Anglicans in South Africa. It is clear that changing the language of worship is not a simple and straightforward issue, and it is important that those who preside at worship should be fully aware of the problems.

Attention may be drawn to another trend which also has to do with language, and which is exemplified in a number of recent liturgies. For there is not only the question of **what** words are to be used, but also **how many**. There is a marked tendency to reduce the number! Marshall McLuhan maintains that with the invention of the printing press in 1454, western civilization entered upon a period of over-emphasis upon verbal communication, resulting also in an over-intellectualization of the faith. Today we are pulling out of the 'Gutenberg Galaxy',

and with the advent of television are learning to appreciate and use other non-verbal means of communication. There is a greater sensitivity to symbols, drama, meaningful ceremonial, to the visible, the enacted, and the embodied word. This does not mean that the spoken word of praise, prayer, reading, and preaching is being devalued. If spoken words are to be effective, we need less of them. The oracles of the prophets, the parables and the prayers of Jesus were power-laden—and concise. Why use twenty words to say what can be said in ten? The ancient collects are a fine example of a conciseness which was subsequently lost. There is a tendency to recover it. 'The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by any useless repetitions'.⁶ The new Mass has chipped off many of the verbal barnacles that had fastened on to the liturgy down the ages, and the General Confession for the new **Book of Common Prayer** has been reduced from 132 to 47 words. This trend may be warmly commended to Baptist ministers!

We turn now from language to the ordering of the Word of God in worship. A great deal of work has been done in recent years, and is still continuing, on the revision of the Calendar and the Lectionary. Some, but not all of this work, is being co-ordinated. The Calendar and Lectionary prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group in this country, is being substantially adopted by the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Congregational Church in England and Wales and by a number of Churches overseas. I have no evidence to show how far it is actually being used by our Baptist and other Free Churches in England. Its recommendations are certainly being taken into account by Liturgical Commissions engaged on the same task. Here, the traditional observance of the Christian Year is simplified, all the Sundays leading up to and from the three great festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. A two-year cycle of readings is provided, with Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel for each Sunday. This ordering of the Word should enable the congregation to hear the Bible as a whole, the preacher to declare the whole counsel of God, and the church to celebrate all his saving deeds in Christ. The ordering of the Word in this, or in some other way, has not yet been reconciled in our Baptist churches with the adoption of 'Family Church' on Sunday mornings. There are signs of increasing awareness of and tension about this problem. Is the preaching and teaching to be based on the Calendar and Lectionary of the Church or on the syllabus of the British Lessons Council, the Scripture Union, or some other such course? Are we to use both? Does it not matter if children hear one set of lections in church, and then have a totally unrelated lesson afterwards? Some Churches are allowing the tail to wag the dog, even to the extent of imposing the Sunday School lesson on the congregation. On this view the Church is a school for instruction of which the children are the centre. If, on the other hand, the Church is seen as a worshipping community assembled on the Lord's Day of resurrection to cele-

brate the saving deeds of God in Christ, either the children will stay in church throughout, or at least what they hear when they leave will be related to the worship of the Church. The former practice is far more widespread than Baptists are prepared, as yet, to recognize. The initial enthusiasm for 'Family Church' ignored these problems, which, I suspect, will have to be faced by us in the coming decade.

We must now attempt to describe a significant change of **tone**. The observance of the Christian Year rests upon the conviction that the Gospel is not a philosophy but a story. On the Lord's Day we meet to celebrate what God has done and is doing, with emphasis now on this, now on that facet of his many-sided wisdom and grace. The recovery of this conviction that worship is celebration is beginning, here and there, to influence the whole tone and atmosphere, the spirit and the content of the christian service. In short, there is a growing realization that worship ought to be joyous and triumphant. Two illustrations may be given to this tendency—the first having reference to the content of the eucharistic rite, especially the prayer of thanksgiving, and the second to praise and music. The theology and worship of the Middle Ages was focussed upon the **death** of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice, and was obsessed with the idea of sin and damnation. The Mass was the **anamnesis**, and certainly in popular thought, was a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ—a sacrifice which was interpreted almost exclusively in terms of his death on the cross. The biblical insight that the death of the victim was not the completion of the sacrifice, but the necessary means to the release and offering of its life, was ignored, obscured, or lost. Sacrifice was death—not death-and-resurrection. The post-Reformation liturgies retain this tone. They are draped in black, not white. They tend to stop short at the cross, and to be heavily penitential and sin obsessed. The Communion service of the 1662 **Book of Common Prayer** may be taken as an example. Apart from a sentence in the Nicene Creed, there is no reference to the resurrection. Here is a prayer of thanksgiving without a word of thanks. The glad songs and shouts of thanksgiving have been silenced. The multitude is no longer keeping festival.

The festal character of the eucharist is now being widely restored. There has been a recovery of the conviction that it is thanksgiving that consecrates, and that, as in the Psalter, thanksgiving is the recital with gratitude of the mighty and saving deeds of God. There has also been a tendency to expand this recital backwards and forwards from the centre, the paschal mystery. It includes not only the saving death and mighty resurrection of Christ, but also those acts which precede and follow—the creation of the world, the making of man, the preparation for the gospel in the life of Israel, the incarnation and the ministry of word and deed, the death and the resurrection, the ascension, priesthood, and reign of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the advent in glory, eternal life. The six eucharistic prayers recently published by the worship committee of the Congregational Church

in England and Wales are fine examples of what is here described.⁹

The distinctive tone of christian worship, as a triumphant celebration, involves more than the verbal content of liturgies, or of the use of the right words in our free or extempore prayers. The redemption of Israel at the Sea of Reeds was celebrated with song, with music, and with dancing.⁹ We all know from experience that the whole atmosphere and tone of a service can be profoundly affected by what and how we sing, and by the music to which it is set. It would take an essay to begin to describe the various experiments which are being made in this sphere, especially in the U.S.A.—some of them bizarre, cacophonous, horrific, and—mercifully—short-lived. They are not confined to any one tradition, and may be heard in Roman and Lutheran as well as in Methodist and Pentecostal churches. The re-writing of traditional liturgical material in contemporary language is both an opportunity and a challenge to composers, since the new words and sentences can no longer be sung to the old musical settings. The monopoly of the organ is being challenged. It is being recognized that wind, percussion, and stringed instruments—especially the last—can make a valuable contribution to the communication and the celebration of the Gospel. They can also be accompanied by the movements of the body.

There is some evidence of a growing dissatisfaction with the words and the tunes of many of our familiar hymns. This is certainly due in part to the content of some of the old hymns—not the really ancient, but the recent ancient! 'What makes so much hymn-writing useless and demoralizing is its complete divorcement from the real stuff of common life. There is something so desperately safe about it that it cannot bear any resemblance to life as the Christian knows it must be lived'.¹⁰ More often the dissatisfaction is with the rather dreary, dirge-like character of the tunes. It would be interesting to know how many of our churches have supplemented or even replaced the Baptist Hymn Book at their morning or evening services. Perhaps the most popular of these supplements is **Youth Praise 1 and 2** in our churches, and **100 Hymns for Today** in Anglican churches. It is unfortunate that some of the words in the former, as in some of the older books to which evangelical Churches revert, are so old-fashioned, individualistic, and pietistic, and are no match for its lively and joyous tunes. What is beyond question is that congregations in various places are seeking for a more adequate means of expressing the joy, the enthusiasm and the vitality of the redeemed.

There is also a tendency, born of the realization that we meet in a secular age, to make our worship more worldly—in the good sense of that word. Christians are becoming more aware of the perils of escapism. 'The great danger is that liturgy creates a world of things over against the secular, instead of a vision of the sacredness of the secular'.¹¹ Pietism is out of favour. The sentiment expressed in the Sankey hymn 'Here from the world we turn, Jesus to seek', is giving way to the conviction that 'Christian public worship is the assemblage

of a part of the world to attend to the world in the light of the Word of God.²² The Song of Moses celebrates a worldly occasion; it is about wind and tide, horses and chariot wheels. We too meet to celebrate God's work as we see it in the life and events of the world. For God is not a clergyman but the Lord of all life. The influence of this growing awareness may be seen both in the externals and in the content of worship. It is being preferred that the church building should be like the other recent buildings of the neighbourhood, and be multi-purpose rather than 'sacred space'. Clerical dress and vestments are being simplified, and by many, abandoned. The plain table is replacing the ornate altar, and an ordinary loaf and ordinary wine the special ecclesiastical wafer and wine. In some places at some times, the eucharist is being put back into the context of a meal. There is a healthy prejudice against the 'churchy' and the religious in favour of the ordinary and the common.

Much more important than these externals is the impact of a theology of the secular on the whole content of praise, prayer, and preaching. Here the emphasis is upon the contemporary—preaching that interprets God's presence and activity in the world today, hymns that celebrate God's acts going on all around us today, prayers which bring to God the common life of today. The titles of some recent books of worship material are indicative of this emphasis—The Contemporary Hymn Book, Contemporary Themes for Worship, Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship. To use the over-worked and magic word, there is a veritable passion to make things relevant to the life-situation of the worshippers. Churches without a fixed and prescribed liturgy are in a much better position to make their services worldly and contemporary, although at the risk of minimizing or sacrificing 'the traditioned' in Christian worship.

One of the main, original, and continuing aims of the Liturgical Movement, has been to encourage and make possible the active participation of all God's people in the worship of the Church. 'This full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else . . . with zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of their people, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life and standard of religious culture'.²³ This aim has undoubtedly influenced the architecture and interior design of many church buildings in the last few decades. The appearance of circular, octagonal, and square worship rooms, or if rectangular, with table and pulpit on the long side of the rectangle, together with the disappearance of chancels, the use of terraced and elliptical seating, of movable chairs instead of fixed pews, has created more favourable external conditions for congregational involvement. What is more important, Churches which have a written and prescribed liturgy have almost all moved, in making their new liturgies, in the direction of taking parts of the service out of the mouth of the president, and putting them into the mouths of the people. This tendency may be illustrated from the new eucharistic rites, whether of the Roman, Lutheran, Anglican, or

Reformed Churches. The intercession and the thanksgiving, for example, are no longer a long clerical monologue; parts of the prayer are said 'with one voice' by all the people. There has also been a tendency to involve more people, as in the ante-Nicene Church, in the leadership of the service—by concelebration, by the ministry of elders, deacons, and readers, by the greater use of singers and instrumentalists. One has the impression that our Baptist congregations are now much more active in responsive readings, though the paucity of material available should be a cause for concern.

At the other extreme is the contribution of the Charismatic Movement to congregational involvement. Pentecostalism is no longer confined to Churches bearing that designation, and it is evident that the worship of some of our churches, as of churches in other denominations (including some of those with a prescribed liturgy) has been stimulated, modified, and in some cases transformed by this movement. The practice of having 'open' periods during the service when the people are free and are encouraged to contribute praise, prayer, testimony, or ministry, is probably on the increase. There is an observable connection between the Charismatic Movement and mission. It has been truly said of the worship of the primitive Churches that 'regular participation in that worship made of the faithful fully formed Christians and missionaries'.²⁴ It is being discovered that the two aspects of our priesthood, worship and witness, go together—passivity in the one means passivity in the other; involvement in the one means involvement in the other. No doubt, to many of our people the terms liturgical and charismatic stand for opposite and irreconcilable elements in worship. It may be, however, that they are both moving and working to the same end—the full and active participation of all the people in the worship of God.

STEPHEN F. WINWARD

NOTES

1. Church of England Liturgical Commission. *A Commentary on Holy Communion*. Series 3. S.P.C.K.
2. The Very Rev. A. C. Bridge, Dean of Guildford, speaking at the General Synod of the Church of England.
3. *A Commentary on Holy Communion*. Series 3.
4. *Prayers we have in Common*. Geoffrey Chapman.
5. *A Commentary on Holy Communion*. Series 3.
6. Liturgical Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, 34.
7. I Timothy 4: 5, 6.
8. *An Order of Public Worship*.
9. Exodus 15: 20, 21.
10. *Hymns Today and Tomorrow*. Erik Routley.
11. *The Roots of Liturgy*. Eric James.
12. *Public Worship in a Secular Age*. Article by Charles R. Andrews.
13. Liturgical Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, 14 and 19.
14. *Worship: The Life of the Missions*. Johannes Hofinger.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP— IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

An exciting venture in today's Church is a widespread experimentation which seeks to make corporate worship more meaningful. The Liturgical Movement has had this as its goal for nearly a century and a half. As a result the Roman liturgy is now said in the language of the people; and the Roman priest faces his congregation from behind a table. Revised Anglican liturgies—Series I and II—indicate a similar result. In a day when the descendants of the painter Millet's peasants are more familiar with telephone bells than the "Angelus", the Church, through liturgical renewal, is making many people sensitive to God's presence, and helping them to respond authentically to Him.

Dr. Ronald C. D. Jasper, in his introduction to **The Renewal of Worship**, suggests that one of the blessings of the ecumenical movement is the 'rediscovery' of Christian worship. Conversely, A. Schlemmer writing in 1947, said, "It is necessary for all liturgical reform to lead to ecumenicity." (*En Esprit et en Verité: le Culte dans l'Eglise reformée*).

The Church's experiments are genuine attempts to make what was meaningful for their fathers, meaningful for their children. Revisions in the historic liturgies have evolved as people have tried to "order" their response to God. It has been deemed that certain responses are meet and right.

The worship of the Free Churches clearly reflects the influence of the Liturgical Movement. A growing number of congregations regard the Lord's Supper as the central act of worship. Only rarely does one find a "communion service" which is held as an addendum to the "preaching service". Few Baptists would disagree with Ernest Payne and Stephen Winward that "It is a departure from apostolic worship to celebrate the Lord's Supper infrequently, or to regard it as an appendage following another service." (**Orders and Prayers for Church Worship**, 1960).

Contemporary Worship demands Explanation, Understanding, and Clarity

A real problem with most of the liturgies of the Church is that while they are rich in meaning, symbol, and intent, only a small fraction of a congregation may be aware of that richness. The time is long past due when ministers ought to share with their people the meaning and purpose of their liturgy. Invariably when discussion takes place regarding "Why we worship as we do", the participants will say "We have never heard these things before." Worship is a subject about which people are eager to talk, because their understanding of it is vague.

Some helpful books for discussion groups are: Dr. Horton Davies' **Christian Worship—Its Making and Meaning** (R.E.P., 1946); **The Renewal of Worship** edited by Ronald C. D. Jasper, containing a series of essays by members of the Joint Liturgical Group in Britain (Oxford, 1965); **Worship For Today**, edited by Richard Jones (Epworth, 1968); **Ventures in Worship** edited

by David James Randolph (Abingdon Press, 1969). Discussion based on such writings reveals what the liturgies of various branches of the Church are all about, and how they continue to develop.

It is not enough for a congregation to understand its own liturgy. Through twenty centuries people have responded to the good news of God in Christ. It is vital for Christians today to have an understanding of those responses. The roots of contemporary worship, for example, go back to man's earliest consciousness of his Creator. Much is owed by Christians to the Jews for the earliest forms of Christian liturgy. Among the Jews God was real and their processions, songs, dances, prayers, sacrifices, and festivals were responses to the Divine who confronted them.

Early Christians, renewed in their awareness of God's reality because of Jesus' resurrection, centred their worship on their Lord's instruction to remember Him in the breaking and eating of bread and drinking from a cup of wine. Doing these things they expressed their gratitude and devotion to God.

C. F. D. Moule, **Worship in the New Testament** (Lutterworth Press, 1961) suggests that the early Christians met together periodically to enjoy the companionship of a meal. Each brought his contribution: slaves might bring remnants from feasts at which they had served, free men brought produce from their larders, yet others purchased it. This was a meal for the satisfaction of hunger. In the course of it, however, the President of the congregation took a loaf of bread and, holding it, praised God for Jesus Christ. The loaf was broken and shared. Following the meal, thanks were said over a cup of wine and the narrative of the Upper Room was recited. The President then took a sip from the cup and it was passed to each to partake. The point to note is that as the early Church participated in the supper, its members were clearly aware of the meaning of the acts of worship.

The contemporary need for explanation is reflected in the frankness and clarity to which creators of current liturgies aspire. In place of the words of the general thanksgiving, one hears God thanked for "the friendly aroma of coffee". Instead of praying vaguely for "all sorts and conditions of men", one prays for people designated by proper names. It goes without saying that the modern desire to tell it like it is has been greatly assisted by the use of modern translations of the Scriptures.

Contemporary Worship demands Participation and Involvement

Examining the liturgies of the early Eastern and Western churches one is impressed by the amount of participation by the worshippers. Christian initiation, for instance, was a part of a "pageant" in the Eastern Church. Through the drama the catechumens and the congregation presented the glories of the Gospel.

Some modern churches involve their members in the planning of worship, and here are three examples:

(1) The New Liturgy Committee of a community church has described its task as:

To find ways in which the symbols and tradition of our faith may speak with fresh meaning and cogency to our life as we are living it in the present.

To find ways to enable more personal participation in the service—to make real in the worship aspect of the congregation the Protestant notion of the priesthood of all believers.

To find ways of utilizing the form of our sanctuary more effectively.

One result of the last goal is reflected in this statement:

“We have changed our worship setting to a circular one. The centered Table with the people gathered round it, facing each other with level eyes, symbolizes the priesthood of all believers, the mutual ministry of all members. God is the ‘beyond that is in our midst’ and Christ stands symbolically among us, breaking anew the Bread of Life. We are members of one another and made a common body, brought into a new covenant, through the outpoured life and love of Jesus Christ, which the Table represents. We are related to the world through responsibilities that extend infinitely outward, like the circles that radiate out from the Table at the centre”. (Edgewood United Church, East Lansing, Michigan).

(2) A group of about a dozen Canadian Baptists, including a young minister, decided that God had called them to minister to a new community near a University campus. They wrestled for some time with problems of structure and worship. Their church building, as a result, is a large farm house, and their liturgies are often their own versions of the traditional. While appreciating classical church music, the guitar is used more often than an organ. Many hymns are their own compositions. Some people who drop in to visit on a Sunday find it difficult to relate to what transpires, but for the original dozen people and several more dozens who have joined them (many of whom had given up the Church) the worship has deep meaning.

(3) An unforgettable communion service—the result of group planning—took place in Hall Green Baptist Church, Birmingham, three years ago. We Baptists have real difficulty in explaining to ourselves and others the place of children in the Church. The sermon in Hall Green was based on the boy who brought his fish and loaves of bread to Jesus. The service reached its climax when the church’s children served the bread and wine to the congregation. That day that congregation clearly saw itself as a family in Christ—everybody had been involved in worship.

Contemporary Worship emphasizes “Celebration”

The glum or vacant faces of some people at worship make one wonder why their owners have bothered to attend. Surely Christ brought good news; surely the mighty acts of God in history and today are cause for confidence and joy. The word “Celebration” is meet and right to describe the attitude of Christians when they worship.

In December of 1969, I attended a carol service in Salisbury Cathedral, sponsored by the Wiltshire Association of Youth



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Clubs. It turned out to be a genuine celebration of the glad tidings of Advent. Present was a folk band, a wind ensemble, two groups of folk dancers, readers, soloists, and a youthful preacher who could say it briefly, frankly, and clearly. The service began with words from Martin Luther King's writings, the carols were the old and familiar, plus W. H. Auden's "The Temptation of Joseph", Sidney Carter's "House Full", and "Lord of the Dance". The packed cathedral resounded to the carols. An act of God was being recalled which moved people to joy and singing and dancing. When the celebration concluded the order of worship suggested:

"The service has now ended. It is common practice to sit or kneel quietly for a minute or two in private prayer before leaving your place. Would you remember at this point those who will suffer hardship this Christmas—the sick, the infirm, the lonely, the old, the homeless, the parentless, those in trouble of any kind—and to remember as well those who have committed themselves to helping such people—offering at the same time your own help in your community when it is most needed."

Contemporary Worship strives for understanding, participation, and the spirit of celebration. R. Aled Davies in his contribution to **The Renewal of Worship** concludes "Years and years of liturgical starvation have often been the lot of too many of our people and yet, offered the full order of service, they perceive that there is a richness here which, though at the moment they cannot fully apprehend it, is an opening out of new vistas of Christian understanding which, bit by bit, they begin to make their own."

IVAN C. MORGAN

THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Public worship, let us begin by saying, is what happens when a company of people (which may be only nodally a company of Christian believers, but which must be at least that) meets to set forth and celebrate together the power and mercy of God, above all as he has revealed them in Jesus. It is a ritual and formal act, occupying time with a known and expected pattern of ideas, if not of particular words. Although the corporateness of public worship is partly expressed in unspoken action—the coming to one building at one time, standing up and sitting down together, putting money into a common plate, sharing bread and wine—it relies to a great extent upon words. That is to say that time spent in public worship is to a great extent time spent by people communicating with each other. This is true even when there is no thought of introducing into the worship-time periods for conversation or for discussion (though recognition of this fact ought to give pause to those who hold that conversation and discussion are out of place in a service of worship).

For the most part the words in an act of worship are uttered (and in Free Churches chosen also) by a leader or leaders.

Communication takes place to the extent to which the members of the congregation hear the words, understand them, react to them with feelings of joy, penitence, etc., give mental assent to them, wish to reply in agreement or disagreement, or decide as a result of them to take certain actions.

So much could be said of many public meetings. Where, then, does God come in? God comes in because a moiety of the words uttered by the leader is uttered not on his own behalf but on God's. Hearing what the leader says and reacting to that, the congregation is at the same time receiving communication as from God himself, and reacting to that. This is felt to be the case most obviously when words are being quoted by the leader from the Bible, but it remains the case when he is preaching the message of the Bible in his own words. Now to receive words on two levels at once, as the words of a man (the preacher) and as the words of God, requires in fact the possession of quite sophisticated unscrambling techniques on the part of the hearers—techniques which are none the less such because they are possessed and exercised quite unconsciously by most worshippers. The hearers must not accept what the man is saying uncritically, for he is one of them and they must apply their minds to his words as fully as they would to anyone else's. At the same time their critical appraisal is modified (not lessened) by the fact that they are listening for the words of God, which they believe may come to them even through the man's stumblings and mistakes, and as much through reactions of disagreement with what he is saying as through concurrence. Either way, the hearer is brought to, or reminded of, convictions about what is so—for example, that God is great, man is a sinner, God is forgiving, man must forgive, and so on. These are at the same time his personal convictions and also convictions he shares to a greater or lesser degree with the other people present. The other half of the words used in worship consists, in fact, of recitals and expressions of common conviction, or audible exploration of the implications of such conviction, made either by the members of the congregation themselves, or on their behalf by the leader.

As with the receiving of the first lot of words, the uttering of this second lot of words takes place at two levels: and once again the ability to use words in this way without confusion is an acquired skill. In this case, however, a measure of awareness of what is happening, at least on the part of the leader, is necessary if the words are to perform their task effectively. The recitals and explorations which represent the congregation's response to what it has heard as from God, and which, broadly, make up the hymns, psalms, canticles and prayers in a service, are addressed as to God. Their form is generally vocative to him. But at the same time they are addressed to the rest of the people present. The fact that they are uttered aloud shows that their function is by no means simply that of communication with God. They are there to make contact, and to express contact, between the people present. They are the chief instrument whereby the congregation celebrates its corporateness. This is most obvious when the words are sung or spoken by all

together: but it is none the less true when one person sings or speaks for all. The worshipper hears the words of a fellow-worshipper: and thus far he is in like case with these as he is with the first lot of words. But now, in this second category, he uses a quite different standpoint for appraisal. Instead of attempting to discern, in what he hears, the voice of God (which is what he does with the first category of words), he is trying to see how far the voice he hears is his own voice, how far he can say 'Yes' or 'No' to the consensus of conviction and reaction which presses upon him from all sides.

This complexity is of course further complicated by the fact that the two categories themselves overlap to some extent. To join in the singing of a hymn may be, for a given worshipper, an experience as much of listening to God as of speaking to him. The stereophony of the worship-conversation is liable to switch channels or to mix them without warning, so that one cannot reliably tell who is speaking to whom merely by reference to which loudspeaker the voice is coming from.

But although the leader does well to be aware that such switching or mixing may be taking place for any of his people at any moment, he does them a disservice if he does not keep the two channels—declaration and response—distinct in his own intention and preparation, both in the actual structure of the service (assuming that he has any liberty here) and also in the kind of thing that he chooses to say at a particular moment, and the way in which he puts it. For example, a piece of information about some local or national or international problem may properly find a place in a sermon or in a prayer (or perhaps in both). The fact that it is a piece of information does not automatically disqualify it for inclusion in a prayer. That God knows it already is not the point; for we have seen that the address of the prayer is as much to the congregation as to God: and the piece of information may be thoroughly relevant to the congregation's response to God, thoroughly relevant to the exploring of the implications of conviction. Nevertheless there may well be a choice of methods of presenting this piece of information. In a sermon, because the people's hearing is chiefly geared then to the first kind of appraisal, it may well be right to present it combatively, or so as to give the greatest possible shock, or discursively, interspersed with the speaker's own comment and opinion as a minister of God. But in a prayer, because the people's hearing is chiefly geared then to the second kind of appraisal, such a combative or discursive presentation is more likely to be out of place—though it is not necessarily so on every occasion.

Does the element of response to God need to be expressed at all within the service itself? Is it not enough to concentrate on the declaration, and leave the response to be worked out in the life and decision of the fellowship and its individuals during the rest of the week?

It is certainly of the greatest importance to the health and balance of a Christian community that its specific acts of worship shall take place, and shall as far as possible be felt by all the participants to take place, within the context of a rich and varied communal life of social involvement and inter-

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personal relationships, all of which, in its turn, is shaped and regulated by the acts of worship at its heart. Too often liturgy is allowed to become a sacred cyst. Around it is life, but there is no organic connexion. The two may look as if they communicate—may indeed purport to do so: but there is a perspex wall around the pane, and pegs by the door on which to leave one's everyday thinking-cap as one enters.

That this is so is due largely to the rise and progress among Christians of a false view of what spirituality is. We shall return to this subject below. On the way there, however, we should note that although liturgy and life belong together, and ought to be organically related, liturgy is designedly a focus. In the whole of the congregation's experience of life-in-God and God-in-life is to be ritually celebrated. Therefore if it is right to distinguish elements of declaration and response in the experience, it is right that both should be represented in the liturgy. While people continue to think of Sunday's activities largely in terms of 're-charging their batteries for the week', as if the church building and what goes on inside it were a sort of celestial power-point available only at certain times like the off-peak supply for night-storage heaters, they are unlikely to attach much importance to the prayers. The service will be judged by the sermon, and the sermon by whether it was 'helpful' or not. As to the sacrament, those who feel that the bread and wine reinforce the bringing home to their hearts of the word of grace will await the distribution itself largely unmoved by and uninvolved in the eucharistic prayer which precedes it. Is this not why the thanksgiving shrivelled almost to nothing among Free Churchmen earlier in this century? The Liturgical Movement has reinstated it formally: but while 'power-point' notions prevail it remains something to be waited patiently through for the sake of what follows. Only a recovered sense of worship as celebration, as focussed joy, as the pointing up of the Church's prophetic presence in the world, can restore the living flesh of the liturgy and not merely the pattern of its bones.

But let us be careful that in emphasising liturgy as a focus we do not in the process give credence to the idea that prayer is where the buck stops—in other words, that the problems to which the people have found no solution in their meeting of hearts and minds during the week can somehow safely be left to solve themselves once they have been 'taken to the Lord in prayer'. At a time when Vigils for this and Days of Prayer for that are increasingly called for, it cannot be too much stressed that prayer is not a substitute for the agony of decision and action and the sheer grind of mastering facts and learning the tactics of pressure. To wait until interpersonal address has broken down or been found wanting and then, in panic, have a day of prayer, in which God is addressed instead, is to place upon a ritual technique (that is, the addressing of words 'towards' a God conceived of as a super-person 'out there', separated from the thinking and speaking and doing of men, until we involve him in them) a weight which it is unfitted to bear, and indeed cannot bear without distorting our religion and twisting it back into the old pagan magic out of which

Abraham and Moses first brought it. By treating prayer (as Days and Vigils do, and as most Sunday intercessions implicitly do also) as something to be engaged in when things have got too bad to cope with, we help to ensure that another lot of things will get too bad to cope with. The righting of social injustice today is our task, not the preparing to pray tomorrow for the victims of the terrorism that will undoubtedly follow if injustice is not righted. Prayer, within the focus-activity of public worship, needs therefore to include what one may call the element of homework—a summary and reminder of information gleaned and action proposed in particular fields, and perhaps some group discussion of these there and then.

People will probably object to this on the ground that it is not 'spiritual' enough to be a proper component of worship. Our forefathers, rightly, took a different view. They held their Church Meetings on Sundays within the context of Word and Sacrament, and found nothing incongruous in so doing: quite the contrary. Today there are churches which have tried to restore this wholeness, to 'de-encyst' the service by bringing back into it the element of people informing themselves and working towards decision and action on specific issues; but some have found that the people do not like this and wish to return Church Meeting to its weeknight and keep Sunday for 'spiritual' things.

But what are spiritual things? Here once again the Jewish and Christian understanding of such an expression is very different from the pagan, yet Christians easily come to overlook this and relapse into an outlook which is at odds with the gospel. In our common parlance, which reflects our common thinking, the opposite of 'spiritual' is 'material'. From that first assumption there follows a whole attitude which equates being religious with turning away from the secular and leaving behind political and economic concerns in order to devote oneself to 'higher' things. But in the New Testament to be spiritually minded connotes not turning away from material things but looking at them and dealing with them in a particular way—the way in which Christ looked at them and dealt with them.

A. E. Harvey, in his *Companion to the New Testament (New English Bible)*, puts the point very clearly. Discussing the Letter to the Romans, chapters 7 and 8, he writes of "a distinction . . . which was widely accepted among Jews: the distinction between 'flesh' (here translated 'my unspiritual nature' or 'our lower nature') and 'spirit'. This distinction was not a way of dividing up man into his component parts (like body and soul), but of defining the kind of motives, conduct and ambitions of which he is capable. 'Flesh' covers the whole range of human conduct which is governed by merely selfish motives. Its propensities may be grossly sensual (such as fornication) or subtly emotional and intellectual (such as idolatry and party-intrigues: see the list in Galatians 5.19-21). It is man's 'lower nature' in so far as it covers all that is purely human and that is in no way open to the influence of God. But its opposite is not a 'higher (unselfish, altruistic) nature'. Its opposite is 'spirit', which is the name of everything in man

which responds to the Spirit of God. *Spirit can be physical, or emotional, or intellectual.* To be 'spiritual' is simply to leave room in one's life for a response to the commands and initiatives of God."*

It is already clear in the Decalogue, and the truth is deepened and confirmed by the teaching of Jesus, that God's commands and initiatives cover the whole of life. There is no sacred precinct. If Church Meeting, or at least a summary representation of Church Meeting, cannot (for reasons of congruity rather than of time) take place in the course of worship, something has gone wrong with worship. By the same token, if prayer is thought of as an activity in which a man can address God without at the same time in some sense addressing the neighbour in whose service God is served, something has gone wrong with prayer. The true worshipper worships in spirit, and "spirit can be physical, or emotional, or intellectual". It cannot be anything else while we remain housed in bodies and built into societies. This is its world.

CARYL MICKLEM

*op. cit., O.U.P. and C.U.P., 1970, p.521 : my italics.

YOUTH IN WORSHIP

Before describing how we had lots of young people attending our services, and spilling out ideas as to 'how it's done', I want to get "Youth in Worship" into its context. The context is the whole Youth work of the Church. The fact that we had a lot of young people attending services was partly due to the fact that we had a thorough-going youth-work set-up which was generally alive and successful. The fact that it was alive and successful was partly due to the fact that it was rooted in lively Christian faith and worship. In other words, the whole thing was bound up together.

But there is a wider context still within which the Youth Work should be considered, namely the whole Christian community, with all its variety of ages, types and sections. Successful Youth work may be done without that context, but it would be somehow lop-sided and incomplete. 'Youth in Worship' could not be considered without the setting of the larger, all-age Christian community worshipping together. I have often thought how easy it would be, by using certain methods, to fill a church with young people whilst emptying it of older people and neglecting children, which would be totally wrong.

Within these contexts we can see worship as the climax of the Church's activity, the most crucial point where all different groups, ages, sexes, intelligence-levels, experience-levels come together and are one. How sad it is that often so much time and effort are spent in running different clubs and departments and comparatively little in the preparation of worship, which is so easily 'left to the Minister', and which involves the rest of the community in one or two hours of blissful (?) inactivity once a week. On the other hand, it would be my conviction that

whatever we do we should do with equal commitment and effort—brilliantly conceived acts of worship will not cut much ice if we are running poor Clubs, second-rate organisations, badly-run socials and inadequate communications. The whole life of the Christian community is bound up together and reflects the seriousness of our convictions and commitment. From the first words of this article you noticed that I am talking about a particular situation. I refuse to generalise about Youth Work or Worship because all such generalisations are inaccurate and unfair. I prefer to share experiences, and if there is anything to learn, well and good.

The situation I knew best was a Church community about a thousand strong, including members, families, children, young people in many different sections and adherents and friends. As 'Assistant Minister' I was mainly responsible for youth work, though responsibilities, fortunately, were shared rather than precisely defined. We had the usual range of Youth Work—uninformed organisations, Junior Church and open Clubs, most meeting at Central, down-town premises, others in an inner-town Mission and others in a nearby village. Being there for over 5 years in partnership with a Senior Minister meant that we had time to see ideas and work come to some fruition (a recommendation there regarding future Assistantships). Apart from the weekly activities of the various sections, all Youth Work was under the umbrella of a Youth Council and joint activities included Holidays, Holiday Clubs, Weekends and so on, apart from Sunday worship which focussed particularly on the Monthly Parade Service and Monthly Youth Service.

These two services were my particular responsibility and were deliberately designed to give the opportunity to experiment so that they should be alive and meaningful for the young people present. It was always easier to experiment in Parade Services in that the congregation found it easier to accept visuals etc. in the presence of children and young people and always enjoyed seeing members of organisations taking part. It was not so readily accepted in the Youth Services because of the nature of experiments designed to appeal to teenagers and also because many evening services tend to include many people who prefer a traditional service (often the only one they come to), and we were a very traditional church anyway. At times I would have preferred to drop the title 'Youth Service' and use methods of presentation suited to the subject whenever it required it. Naming certain services 'Youth Services' did give people advance warning of when to have a night indoors if they wanted it! However, the majority of the Church supported the move and having a regular 'slot' meant that experiments were expected and not hap-hazardly. Perhaps the most significant thing was that the number of young people attending services (which increased steadily over the years from 30 to 150) was no different on 'Youth Service' Sunday to any other ordinary Sunday. Young people seemed to have greater tolerance of styles of worship not quite their 'own' than did some of their elders.

By way of comparison, I have recently moved to a new situation, similarly 'down town' and with a fair history, but now

as the only Minister, in a Church community about half the size. We have started monthly all-age Family Services (like Parade Services) and we usually call one service a month a 'Youth Service', but this is more an aid to inviting new families and young people to a specific service than to suggest the particular contents of the service. 'Experiments' are no longer confined to these two services a month; if something other than, or in addition to hymn-prayer-reading-sermon will help the congregation to worship, pray or learn then I have no hesitation in using it. Some 'experiments' are deliberately designed to help older members of the congregation rather than younger. But now I am beginning to talk about reaction and results, which must wait till later.

NEW WAYS OF WORSHIP Participation

If worship is seen as the climax of the Christian community's activities, it makes more sense for more people to take part in it. The sheer monotony of one voice is a technique abandoned even by party-political broadcasts nowadays. Nobody listens to one person speaking for an hour, except perhaps in some of our Universities. So, at the simplest level, we use people of all ages to take part in readings, prayers and so on. With a modicum of preparation (how often I 'borrowed' a few B.B. or Girl Guide Members on Friday evenings and prepared something for Sunday!) and a large measure of confidence in others (dozens of people took part in our services who 'never thought they could') and an adequate public address system so that even the quietest child is heard, and everyone is waiting to see 'who will get up next'.

Of course, this means preparing 'scripts' in advance, but often this is very simple, and the groundwork has been done in the 'sermon preparation' itself. The New Testament itself is often the script and only requires allocating to several voices. Suppose a traditional sermon has the occasional biblical quote in it—those quotations will come to life if someone other than the preacher reads them. Or if it has three parts (like a good many sermons!) and perhaps it would be a good thing for the congregation to pause-for-thought between parts, ask the organist to play a few bars of suitable music or have some music on the tape-recorder ready to switch on. Many sermons ask lots of questions (or set out to answer questions the preacher believes people ask)—why not write it for two or more voices, so that the preacher really can be asked the questions. It's not so far to move on to the next stage—a 24-hours-type discussion of a matter of faith or living, as long as the public address system can cope with it.

Larger numbers of people can be gathered, and again prepared in a short time, to read 'choral readings', though with young people we called them 'shouts', which was not always accurate, but aided co-operation. Our "freedom shout" was done by about 24 young people, included biblical and present day material, and set the whole scene for one service. Scripted interviews and sketches that presented a situation or asked a question were also useful, never over-rehearsed (!) and made no

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Samuel Johnson

Wide reading has always seemed to me to be an essential not only in terms of the need to become as skilful as one can in the basic necessity to earn a living, but also in the wider enjoyment of life.

Of course a danger lurks in reading on so broad a front that one remains in the shallows and never achieves any depth. Nevertheless too much depth in terra firma may create a rut of alarming proportions.

It is, therefore, necessary I think to acknowledge the fundamental wisdom of Samuel Johnson's dictum. It is here that width in reading is so important for how else can one know outside one's immediate subject where to find the sources of information on other subjects.

But knowledge is not an end in itself. Dr. Bronowski once said "Knowledge is the raw material of judgments" and in informed judgments lies the value of width.

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C. J. L. COLVIN
General Manager

apology for carrying the script—yet it was always easier to ‘preach’ for five minutes afterwards and often really to ‘come across’.

Prayers are notoriously hard for people to follow for long or to feel that they are really involved with. Apart from using other people to read or offer prayers, it is possible to supply cards and pens to members of the congregation to write down their suggestions on entry to the Church or during the offering.

The ‘Home-Brew’ Method.

It always seemed to me that worship came alive when it was offered by members of the congregation and not by special people imported for the purpose. This is especially true with music. Easy to import a ‘group’ for a special occasion, harder to know what they will say or do, to control their style or volume(!) or to expect the same number of young people in the congregation the following Sunday when the group are not there. Importing special people tends to encourage criticism of standards rather than appreciation of what is being said or sung.

Much better to ‘get down to it’ yourselves. The ‘best’ youth services we did were ones where a group of committed young people prepared a whole service from scratch, by themselves but with leadership, and carried it through. In several particular cases, on weekend courses, we began preparation mid-day on the Sunday and conducted worship at 6.30 in the evening, which weeks of rehearsal would not have improved.

AVA

I deliberately put participation first. Audio-Visual aids are a great help, but are no substitute for the genuine contribution of someone ‘live’. We live in an Audio-Visual world, and church services are so far behind the times that you might despair of catching up and preach 30 minute sermons to dwindling congregations to your dying day. Were it not that there is something far more important than technique and method in this.

The Gospel is not word, but flesh.

The uniqueness of Jesus lies not in his sayings but in his doings, that in His life words became reality, and so in the lives of his followers. Verbal worship is not untrue to the teaching of Jesus (the Sermon on the Mount) but it does not sum it all up. The only direction Jesus gave his followers that might be construed as worship were not in terms of words but actions—“take, bless, break, eat, pour, drink, DO.” The bread and wine are the supreme ‘Visual Aid’, the ‘last resort’ of Jesus when he could no longer find words to explain his imminent death. But they are more than an ‘aid’—they are an embodiment of the Gospel, the Gospel is contained in the actions of which they speak, broken body and shed blood. You do not ‘verbalise’ the Lord’s Supper and say the actions are no longer necessary because we can ‘say it all’. Similarly in baptism; we have retained total immersion not only because it is the only utterly satisfying visual picture of cleansing and commitment,

but because the Gospel of forgiveness and faith is embodied in the act. I cannot think it a coincidence that the services best attended by young people in our church were baptismal services, because they could understand by seeing the actions rather than by grappling with words.

Nor should the preaching of Jesus be confined to two special visual acts. His preaching was about things that could be grasped and people who were real; taking hold of a Roman coin, pointing to flowers and birds, grasping a withered arm, standing a child in the midst, telling stories of real people—constantly using the visual as well as the verbal.

So why are we afraid of it? Because we start from the wrong end. We think of AVA as a gimmick to attract a bit of attention instead of an instrument for expressing worship or Gospel. Television News doesn’t use the pictures just to provide a change from a man’s voice or to add a touch of variety—it is in the pictures that the news is communicated and the newscaster only identifies and interprets—as Jesus did with birds and flowers. The visual is **there**—the world is there, the pictures are there, the people, the newspaper, the music, the radio programme—instead of using what is already provided as the vehicle of truth, we verbalise it and, for most people, kill it in the process (try describing a film you have seen to someone who hasn’t seen it!)

Alternatively, as we receive the ‘word’ to preach, if we are open to receive help, we shall be given the ‘flesh’ in which to clothe it. We shall not ‘pop in’ a visual aid to brighten up a dull sermon, but we shall find we are using things, pictures and music which are already available. Our sermons will come out of the melting pot accompanied by the diagrams, recordings, pictures and illustrations which make them real to us, and then they may well mean much more to others.

You will understand, therefore, that I would not want to supply you with a list of ready-made material or suggestions that would automatically be ‘successful’, for the word and the flesh are bound up together. I can only mention some of the things that have come out of our ‘melting pot’, but what will happen next Sunday is another matter.

The simplest and most useful visuals are words or diagrams on blackboards, softboards or, I hope soon, by back-projection, simply because they give people an aid to understanding and memory. Practical problems of size and clarity can be overcome (our building was one of the biggest in the denomination). A sermon is now just as likely to ‘come’ to me complete with diagram or visual as it is to come in words alone.

More can often be said in pictures than words. The best of your own transparencies may be just the right accompaniment for Psalms or prayers or praise and thanks. Lots of your congregation have good pictures at home. A group of our younger teenagers spent two hours one morning taking photographs typical of their town—these were later turned into a Visual Prayer for Our Town, lasted 10 minutes and held attention all through. Some of the most useful movie films are very short ones, 10 minutes or so, especially the Parable films. Concord Films (Nacton, Ipswich, Suffolk) is my main source.

This means that a film becomes part of a service and its message is interpreted in the light of the rest of the service. Visuals from B.M.S. and H.M.F. are used within the context of ordinary services, rather than on week nights when only the faithful (who usually know about it anyway) attend.

Tape-recordings are useful in small doses, and it is essential that the technical problems be overcome. Mine is permanently plugged in to the P.A. system. If we are using recorded songs, duplicated copies of the words are given to the congregation (Church Choirs could do the same!). Sometimes an odd snatch of recording is used in the middle of a sermon, to illustrate a point; sometimes the 'News' is recorded as a prelude to prayer; sometimes a radio or television interview (The James Fox programme) is recorded and used. These can become living sermon illustrations. Sometimes a whole service can be based on one song or record, like "That's the Way God planned it"; "2,000 Years", or "Remembrance" by Judy MacKenzie can become the basis of a sermon, taking a verse at a time. Sometimes music and pictures can be put together, like a 'Passion' drawn from Stainer's Crucifixion, Bach's 'St. Matthew Passion', Oberammergau Passion Play and 'Jesus Christ, Superstar', illustrated with pictures from Oberammergau, and Gospel readings. But by next Sunday, something quite new might be given to us.

Non-intellectual

I want to emphasise one aspect of our experimental worship; that I did not aim at the particularly intelligent. How often our churches bemoan their young people going off to College and leaving the youth work weakened. It goes to show that our worship has been too intelligent, and in particular, too verbal. If what we say and do can't come across to ordinary Secondary Modern teenagers it is not the Gospel, for that is 'Good News to all men.' Many modern 'experiments' fight shy of the 'common', 'ordinary', 'popular' and their music, poetry and pictures, come over well with students, but leave the rest of their generation unmoved.

REACTIONS AND RESULTS

If you think I have lost sight of 'Youth' in worship, you may be right. Certainly many young people are tired of the dullness of worship, or gave it up many years ago; certainly many of them respond keenly to a lot more life and meaning in it. But the age-divisions are deceptive. If an old-fashioned sermon comes across to young people, they appreciate it; if a new-fangled experiment doesn't, they say so. Young people are just as critical, and usually are more prepared to say so. On the other hand, I have found many, many older people, brought up to worship in traditional forms, excited by and alive to new possibilities. There is nothing I like to hear more than older people saying that they are **learning** something from new approaches instead of just 'enjoying the sermon'.

A disinterested statistical survey would show that congregations increased during these years of experiment, particularly, though not only, among young people. That some

THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

"We decided that God had called us to
preach the good news to the people there."

(Acts 16:10)

The Baptist Missionary Society is planning to
locate a missionary couple in the Amazonas Region
of Brazil.

It is hoped that other missionaries will be prepared
to follow.

Ministers who wish to know more about this new
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Write now to:—

**Rev. A. S. Clement,
Baptist Missionary Society,
93 Gloucester Place,
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older friends were absent from some 'Youth' Services, but none, to my knowledge, stopped attending the church. That young people not only 'came to church' in large numbers, but that many came to personal commitment to Christ, about half from 'non-Church' homes. That many young people (noticeably not 'college-type') became actively involved in the real life of the Church in the deepest way, and from their new commitment challenged older members to renew their own commitment. Now I am back again in the wider contexts of the Church's Youth Work and the whole Community of the Church. "Youth in Worship" had a vital part to play in this development.

DAVID BUTCHER

WORSHIP IN COUNTY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

What is worship? There are those who say that corporate worship is strictly the act of a believing community (as in the eucharist), and is therefore not proper in a county school. Yet the 1944 (Butler) Education Act prescribed a single act of worship at the beginning of each day for all county schools (unless school premises made it impracticable). Collective worship was not to be "distinctive of any particular religious denomination", and a child could be excused attendance at the parent's request. Schools still operate under the 1944 Act.

We are now in the 1970s. The quarter-century that has elapsed has seen many changes in schools, in Churches, and in society, which have out-moded the religious terms of the 1944 Act. For instance, the move towards ecumenism has eased denominational tensions which necessitated the kind of compromise then made. But more important has been the growth of secularism and the changes in the intellectual climate, created largely by the media, in which children grow. This, together with the encouragement of questioning attitudes in schools and the empiricism fostered by science, make old-time approaches to religious education counter-productive. Outside schools there is uncertainty and indifference masquerading as tolerance alongside strong group loyalties nurtured by esoteric doctrines, in fact, a pluralist society.

In these circumstances children in county schools are certainly not a believing community, nor are they, in general, from believing homes. They bring with them the various presuppositions of their family backgrounds, the easy assumptions of materialism, a suspicion of anything that smacks of indoctrination, and a latent anti-clericalism. In adolescence, and especially at the Sixth Form stage, these negative attitudes become more marked and the 'morning imposition' (of worship) is increasingly resented as a waste of time and an irrelevance.

Many teachers, too, share their views. The teaching profession has its full complement of Christians, but there is no religious test, either for teachers or for Head teachers. The Act is specific: religious instruction and collective worship are

compulsory, but no teacher in a county school "shall be required to give religious instruction or receive any less emolument or be deprived of, or disqualified for, any promotion or other advantage by reason of the fact that he does or does not give religious instruction or by reason of his religious opinions or of his attending or omitting to attend religious worship". It is hard for a school's senior pupils to take the morning act of worship seriously if it is obvious to them that many of their teachers, often the best of them, don't. Anyway, they ask, can religious worship really be compulsory?

No wonder that the worship part of morning assembly is sometimes perfunctory. A hymn, a reading, a prayer, chosen without reference to each other, and then the important thing—the day's announcements. In this way the requirements of the law are met. Often both staff and pupils accept the situation and achieve in it a certain quiet dignity—it does at least express the social cohesion of the school by bringing its members together regularly.

There is a sense in which the conventional act of worship we have described is a watered-down version of Free-church worship. The elements of church worship are there, but it is a pale imitation because divorced from shared belief and commitment. It remains as a relic—almost vestigial—of the time when education was a work of the church. That time has gone. Like hospitals and various other social services born of the church, education is now a profession in its own right. The umbilical cord has been cut. Its standards of excellence lie within the area of its own competence; it no longer defers to the churches, still less to theology. Yet churches still cling to their toe-hold in the schools (in Agreed Syllabus procedures, for instance). And this is more than a cramping thing for the profession; it is a source of much resentment. It looks as if, in religious instruction and even in school worship, children are being 'got at' in a way in which they are not in other subjects.

It is becoming necessary for churchmen to recognise and accept that religious education in schools is not there as part of the propaganda machinery of the church. It would be wrong to take advantage of a captive audience by special pleading. Of course religious communities have a right to reproduce themselves, but the county school, in a pluralist society, is not a place in which they should seek to do it. In particular, school worship is not to be thought of as an introduction to church worship, to the cultic life of a believing community. Its purpose is different; it is educational.

The fact is that church influence in education is decreasing; some would say that Christian influence is too. Educational theory is humane rather than Christian; it looks to psychology and to social sciences for increased understanding, and not to traditional Christian doctrine. It can be argued that there is a hidden Christianity in the insights of the best educational theory and practice—and there is no doubt that the Christian can find his main sphere of service in education. But he has no monopoly of goodwill and concern; many humanists who would never call themselves Christian share them. Indeed the radical Christian, rejoicing in the new insights made available by (say)

group dynamics, and intent on translating ancient faith into twentieth century language, may forget that for some people the word 'Christian' still conjures up medieval concepts which he has discarded or reinterpreted.

It is significant that many humanists and Christians agree that "an understanding of religion is a proper and necessary part of education". The recent Social Morality Council's Report **Moral and Religious Education in County Schools** is a good summary of their present case. The fact is that both believers and non-believers have spiritual needs which the educator must seek to meet, and this is one of the functions of school worship. Here, the humanist who is unable to personalise his spiritual awareness though he is sensitive to the spiritual needs of young people, and the Christian who respects the integrity of the student and his right to be himself, may work together. The Christian may be able to go further, but there is much at a basic level that they can share. When they do this, the collective worship of the school, though not an "act of a believing community", is none the less an introduction to the world of the spirit. Openness of spirit, awareness of a dimension of life still to be apprehended, are the essentials. Such an assembly turns attention to central experiences, concerns and commitments; it takes life seriously (the first requirements of a religious attitude); it makes explicit fundamental assumptions—of the school, of the individual. It is noteworthy that most experiments in school worship are in this direction; they are educational (in the wide sense) rather than religious (in the narrow sense). This approach makes big demands on the school community; its ethos must be such that corporate worship becomes the natural place where basic values can be made explicit. Such worship is for all members of the school, believers and non-believers, caring humanist and serious doubter, the searcher and the orthodox; none should feel out of place, none should feel it is not for them.

The problems of school worship and of religious education in county schools—where no orthodoxy can be assumed, where final judgements must be left open (though sensitivity to the issues involved and the understanding are sought)—shed a good deal of light on the church's own teaching ministry. The journey to a Christian faith is now a double one: first from the spiritual void of current materialism to any kind of acceptance of a spiritual dimension in life, and, secondly, from there to the discovery of the meaning of the gospel story. It is the first part of this double journey which increasingly occupies the attention of the religious educator in schools. He must start from where his pupils are; it is not enough to dress up an eroded theology which takes for granted the existence of God. If his 'religious instruction' takes the form of discussion of situational ethics to the exclusion of 'the ground of our being', then he is evading fundamental issues.

Very few local Councils of Churches seem to be interested in religious education in county schools. Church members may nowadays prefer to do their 'good works' disinterestedly under secular auspices such as the Samaritans (no strings then attached!), but only rarely do they show a similar disinterested

concern for the **spiritual** well-being of believer and non-believer alike. Yet this is what religious education in schools is about; it does not seek to recruit. The consequence of this failure of the churches is that spiritual needs are often unrecognised and unmet, though the arts, including poetry and music, provide spiritual sustenance for some and a kind of lay spirituality. Indeed, many churchmen themselves find that the experiences which mean most for their own spiritual growth lie as often as not outside their loyalty to the institutional church.

The wastage from Sunday schools indicates a measure of ineffectiveness in the church's own educational work among young people. Too often all that has been required is that the child shall conform and accept the familiar vocabulary. The result is that adolescence is a time of retreat. The old apologetics could take natural religion for granted; consequently the traditional exposition of the gospel does not refer to the place of today's questions: whether there is any validity in the idea of the spiritual at all—the first part of our double journey. Young people are rarely equipped to face this new challenge when it comes to them, and because they have never been told how to demythologise childhood's stories and language (often perpetuated in hymns), adolescence is a time of retreat—from literalisms ("No, it doesn't mean that!")—instead of an exploration of an expanding world of the spirit. Ideally nothing should have to be unlearned, any more than in any other subject of a school's curriculum.

It is because schools, where they are alive to these issues, are facing these problems both in the class-room and in their worship, and are seeking to help all children, that their work is not a copy of what goes on in a church group where commitment, or readiness for commitment, can be presupposed. Conversely, the minister of religion, on entering a school (and particularly a county school) cannot assume that his expertise at once equips him for this new situation. In addition, the changed attitude to authority, evident in so many ways, adds to his difficulty.

The recent Schools Council Working Paper 36 **Religious Education in Secondary Schools** (1971) provides terms for the older and newer approaches to religious education in schools. It refers to the **confessional** approach and the **phenomenological** approach. The confessional approach is loaded to a particular end, its purpose is persuasion; the phenomenological approach aims at the promotion of understanding. "It uses the tools of scholarship in order to enter into an empathic experience of the faith of individuals and groups", but it does not seek to promote any one religious viewpoint. Many schools have found themselves moving from a confessional to a phenomenological approach because it works, subsequent analysis revealing what has been happening. The change arises from a fundamental respect for the child as a person: there is a lack of propriety in a view of religious education which takes advantage of the class-room situation and seeks to establish a particular (and sectional) response to religious persuasion (as though there were no other tenable one). An open-ended

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

My dear Brother Minister,

I have been writing these 'Appeal' letters to ministers over very many years, and I have never yet received a letter from one of our men telling me that he was sick and tired of reading my constant appeals for help and saying that he could do with a little help himself! It is a mark of the great kindness which ministers have always shown to the work of this Mission that this should be so, and I am "truly grateful".

I think you will realise that I simply must endeavour to make contact with the ministerial leadership in our churches, as you are the key men so far as we are concerned, and I therefore make no apology in continuing to write in this strain. I would like to set down one or two ways in which you could help us, for I am not simply asking for money, although we can always do with plenty of that commodity!

1) You might find it possible to invite me to take a Sunday at your church during 1973. I find that personal contacts made in this way keeps the work of the Mission vividly in the minds of the members of our churches, and if I can serve you either on a Sunday or during the week I should be glad to do so.

2) If you have a Church Night I would like to suggest that you should consider having an evening entitled "The Work of the West Ham Central Mission". We have a tremendous story to tell and a first-class colour filmstrip with an accompanying tape or manuscript, which has found great acceptance in our churches.

3) It would help if you could commend our work to your Youth Organisations. The filmstrip I have already mentioned makes a very good visual aid for introducing our work to children or young people, and I have written a special commentary for use in the Sunday School. If you could breathe a word of commendation into the shell-like ears of your Sunday School Superintendent, I would be most grateful.

4) I ask for the prayer support of your church. If you could hold a Prayer Meeting once a year with your people I should be grateful. I will gladly supply material to stimulate the prayers of your folk if you would be kind enough to write and ask for it.

Thank you for all your past help, and with warmest good wishes for God's blessing on your own ministry.

Yours very sincerely,

STANLEY TURL

Superintendent of the West Ham Central Mission

approach respects the child's integrity; it alone is consonant with what society now expects. It is of interest, too, that what is educationally sound is, for the church, strategically politic. Unless the church is prepared to forego the position of privilege which it has held in the past, it plays into the hands of those who argue for secular schools.

What does this mean for school worship? Experiments in religious education at the primary stage, with their implications for integrated studies later, have not always been followed up at the secondary stage. Nor have the opportunities which morning assembly provides for active participation. At first sight religious education would seem to be easier at the primary stage. But success cannot be measured by immediate response alone; what matters is whether an attitude is established which leads naturally to further development, avoiding the all-too-common 'retreat' in adolescence which we have described.

One real problem for the Christian in the school situation is vocabulary. He values for himself the form of words which he has inherited; for him traditional language is evocative and carries far more than its literal interpretation would suggest. But much of this is foreign to children of today. The meaning of such a phrase as 'Son of God' is not immediately evident. The regard accorded to many old hymns and credal statements, left unexplained, is itself a difficulty for children when they reach the critical stage. The solution is not to make old language attractive by gimmickry or pop music; it is to re-think and re-express the underlying ideas. One consequence is that pupils who are good church members may find the custom-built school assembly thin; it neither uses their devotional language nor supplies the answers they expect. They miss the fellowship of the in-group.

The nature and purpose of school worship as we have delineated it makes big demands on those who lead it. Every assembly has to be thought out *ab initio* for the particular occasion. This, of course, is what the good teacher expects to do in his ordinary subject-teaching; but leading worship makes extra demands of a spiritual sort—he is concerned not with a limited subject-response, but with the whole person. Those who take the task seriously find it both strenuous and rewarding. Instead of a chore, a 'morning imposition' every day, each assembly is a creative exercise, sometimes individual, sometimes joint, sometimes corporate. In the end the school itself feels involved. "Illustration, please!" is the obvious demand. Much of what is best is not transferable; it is spontaneous and arises from the particular occasion. The untidiness of active participation may be more worth while than the immaculate production of a set piece. But careful planning is essential. I have set down and explained the purpose of a hundred assemblies designed, in the main, for Sixth-formers in my two books **Education through Worship** (SCM Press 1969) and **Sixth Form Worship** (SCM Press 1968). In a different capacity, as a local preacher, I have found that the thinking necessary to meet the needs of the miscellaneous school audience is of great help in the conduct of ordinary church services. After all, the loyal church member lives in the same world as young

people and is assailed by the same self-contained ideologies. What is necessary for young people may also be just the buttress to faith that he finds necessary. For him, too, the hazards may well be in the first half of the double journey.

A. R. BIELBY

SERVICES FOR BIRTH AND DEATH

'Hatch' and 'dispatch' are frivolous terms but there must be few people who take either birth or death lightly when one or the other affects them intimately. The normal parent is profoundly moved as he holds his baby son or daughter for the first time. Few people remain totally unmoved by a death within the family. Both the arrival of a little one and the departure of a loved one can radically alter the pattern of life of those most closely involved. That tiny bundle immediately demands time and love his parents perhaps previously reserved for each other. The passing of a dear one often entails unprecedented loneliness for the remaining partner, sometimes the emotional and physical upheaval of moving house and adjusting to a life shared with younger generations. In short, a birth or death is usually a profound experience very often bringing those closely involved nearer to reality, to a religious awareness, than does any other personal event.

If my assertions are correct, the big question that follows is: do we, as ministers, do justice to these occasions in the services associated with them? Do we lift people, emotionally and spiritually, above the level of 'having the baby done' or 'giving him a decent burial'? Do we deepen this albeit fleeting religious awakening?

Personally, over the last few years, I have increasingly felt my answer to these questions to be a candid 'No'. Critical scrutiny of both Congregational and Baptist services has only intensified my uneasiness.

As probably only a minority of Baptist ministers use the Congregational **Services and Prayers**, I shall confine my comments to the services provided in the widely used **Orders and Prayers for Church Worship** by Ernest Payne and Stephen Winward. I hesitate to cast doubt on any literature produced by brethren to whom we all owe much. I appreciate they themselves might well have produced significantly different services for 'The Dedication of Children' and 'The Burial of the Dead' had they been doing so in the 1970s. Yet the fact remains, many of us do regularly use these orders and I therefore feel justified in expressing my reservations. I shall consider the matter of infant dedication first and that of the funeral second, offering in each case an alternative approach.

The introductory sentences of the service headed 'The Dedication of Children' are clear and concise but do they provide an adequate explanation? As the entire family of the church is nowadays usually present, it would not be wise to revert to the full-blown address. Yet the occasion surely warrants more than a four sentence introduction, especially

when there are people present unlikely to attend church again until the next big family occasion.

So far as the Biblical material is concerned, is it enough to read a selection of passages simply because they mention children? If the readings suggested are to be used we should at least use the clearest available translation, as such R.S.V. renderings as 'heritage from the Lord', 'keep his covenant', 'behold the face of my Father' are hardly likely to enlighten or inspire those unfamiliar with the 'language of Zion'.

The prayers are sensibly brief and generally eloquent yet, to my mind, are spoilt by the inclusion of certain obtruse 'churchy' words and phrases, such as 'entreat', 'sanctify', 'witness a good confession', 'to persevere therein'. The same charge may be levelled against the questions where we find phrases like 'dependence on divine grace' and 'discipline and instruction of the Lord'.

The Aaronic blessing pronounced after the naming may be historic and poetic, but what 'the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee' means to 'fringe' people is anyone's guess.

Coupled with my uneasiness over the actual service is my concern over the dearth of suitable hymns. Three of the four contained in the special section of the B.H.B. are to a greater or lesser degree effeminate, revelling in the imagery of lambs and bosoms, all rather unfortunate for minds inescapably influenced by an industrial, permissive society. Hugh Martin's outstanding hymn 'Christ who welcomed little children' is by far the best but I am sure I am not alone in pleading for some worthier alternatives.

In a nutshell, I believe the typical Baptist service of Infant Presentation is remote and unreal, failing to voice adequately the religious feelings of the participants or to recognize fully the magnitude of the privileges and responsibilities of Christian parenthood.

Now let me be positive and share with you my fumbling attempt to produce the kind of service present circumstances would seem to demand.

My Order begins with THE EXPLANATION:

"We welcome on Christ's behalf Mr and Mrs and their baby son They are here, together with the Church Family, for four reasons: to think deeply of their new responsibility; to give thanks; to make a promise; and to ask for help.

Nothing else in Creation should evoke our wonder as much as Man. Not even the advanced computer, itself a produce of man's brain and hands, can match the ability of the human mind and body. We are wonderfully made.

Each of us is also unique. In the long story of man's development there never has been and never will be a child exactly the same as this one.

As Christians we do not accept that something so wonderful and unique is the product of impersonal, physical forces alone. We affirm that these forces are in fact the tools of an Infinite Wisdom and Love, God almighty.

This infinite wisdom and love has been displayed: in the union which caused the life of this little one, in the plans

HAS THE BAPTIST HYMN BOOK GOT ALL THE HYMNS YOU WANT?

In view of the changes of the past ten years since THE BAPTIST HYMN BOOK was published, the Psalms and Hymns Trustees (publishers of Baptist Hymn Books) are considering whether there is now need for a reasonably priced paperback supplement, or even two. One could be a supplement containing some of the popular "folk hymns" of today.

One might be a supplement containing "standard hymns" written since 1962, or omitted from the 1962 book. Or one larger supplement might include both kinds of hymns.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS? Is there need for such a publication or publications? Would it sell in our churches?

Send your comments and suggestions, and any duplicated supplement your church has prepared—**BUT PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY COPIES OF HYMNS OR TUNES AS YET—to:**

**Rev. R. W. Thomson,
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which awaited his arrival, in the medical skill which accompanied him through the critical moments of birth, in the care daily lavished upon him, in the community which produces his food and clothing, medicine and security. For all this we now thank God."

The Explanation then looks forward:

"To most parents, looking on their tiny bundle of life, far-reaching questions come to mind. What will their little one become? What will he give to society? Will he be an influence for good? or for evil? The answers will depend so largely on what sort of parents they are, on their example, their values, their attitudes. The responsibility of parenthood is truly incalculable.

It is because they are aware of this, Mr and Mrs are here. Furthermore, it is because they recognize that God, in His infinite wisdom and love has provided in Jesus Christ the clue to all human responsibilities, they are to promise to try to bring up their son in a Christlike way and teach him the truths and duties of the Christian faith . . .

These promises will not be easy to keep. However, again in his infinite wisdom and love, God offers help through the Holy Spirit. And so we shall pray that parents and congregation may constantly seek the Spirit's aid through worship and prayer. We shall pray, too, that this child may so experience God's love, in home and church, that he may in due time freely give himself to God in baptism and church membership".

There follows THE THANKSGIVING, a brief prayer based on the earlier part of the Explanation.

An expression of gratitude leads naturally to THE PROMISES. The parents repeat, phrase by phrase:

"Before God and this congregation, we promise:
to try to bring up this child in a Christlike way,
to teach him the truths and duties of the Christian faith,
to worship regularly with the Family of God,
to pray personally for God's help".

Now the congregation stand and make their own promise:

"We promise to befriend, to encourage, and to pray for this family".

This is succeeded by the unsurpassable words of Jesus (Matt. 18, 4-5, TEV) and, having explained the significance of the naming, the minister takes the child from his mother, pronounces his name and says:

"May God protect and guide you. May you so learn of His love that you give Him your life".

The child safely handed over to his father, there follows THE PETITION. This consists of a reading (Eph. 3, 14-17a or 19, TEV) and a prayer for church, family and child. A certificate and recent version of the New Testament may be presented before a suitable hymn concludes this part of the morning worship.

Readers will already have mustered an armoury of criticism. Some, perhaps, will complain that the reference to the computer jars but I defend it on the grounds of realism, not to mention the example of our Lord who opted for the graphic

rather than the abstract. Others will argue that the Explanation is too long: may be, yet I can assure you the entire Presentation can be completed well within fifteen minutes.

But now let us think about the funeral service.

At a guess, the average Baptist funeral service is more intimate and more in harmony with the needs of the worshipers than the average Anglican, if only for the reason most Baptist ministers take far fewer burials or cremations than their Anglican counterparts and are therefore better able to acquaint themselves with the personal circumstances. Yet we must still ask ourselves whether we make the very best use of the precious seventeen minutes to which most crematoriums limit us. Do we give maximum help to the mourners of whom so low a proportion receive regular, spiritual nourishment?

Few would question the liturgical coherence and euphony of the Order for the Burial of the Dead contained in 'Orders and Prayers for Church Worship'. It is its relevance and clarity I query.

What does the cynical sixth-former or hard-headed businessman make of the frequently read passages from Revelation? Do the 'churchy' words really help the bereaved begin the process of readjustment or do they actually serve more as emotional sedatives consolidating the inevitable measure of unreality bereavement produces? Might not such well meant words as 'manifest' or 'unfeigned' and phrases like 'with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord' or 'world without end' tend to confirm the suspicions of the uncommitted observer that religion is really a lot of Mumbo Jumbo?

Most worrying of all, though, is the Committal, emotionally if not spiritually, the climax of the service. What sort of impression do the words 'Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God . . . to receive unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed' give when the death was tragically premature? The Committal offered in **Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship** (ed. by Caryl Micklem) is an improvement but the choice of words following is, to say the least, unfortunate: ". . . the sun shall not beat on them nor any scorching heat . . ." No, just the flames of the crematorium furnace!

In a sentence, the impression I have steadily gained is that funeral services are too often remote and unreal and consequently unlikely to satisfy either the mental or spiritual hunger of the mourners. Because of this impression I decided to try composing an entirely new Order, designed to feed both the mind and spirit especially of those who only darken church doors for 'hatch', 'match' and 'dispatch' ceremonies (an occasion which starves the intellect is hardly likely to nourish the soul). The result of my efforts I offer below, hoping that these extracts will give you sufficient idea of the service's aims and character.

The Introduction reads:

"As travellers on the journey of life, the death of . . . reminds us that this journey, be it short or long, inevitably ends. But as Christians we believe another journey can follow. Profoundly conscious of the fact of death yet also

confident of a life to come, we are here now to reflect, to be comforted, to give thanks, and to ask for help."

There follows a prayer asking God to help everyone present and ending:

"Because of this service, may we understand more of both life and death, possess peace in our natural sorrow, be sincerely thankful, and so be better equipped when we resume our journey".

Next there is the Explanation. This is divided into four Sections each summed up with a few verses from Scripture. I believe this is more helpful than reading a series of long, isolated passages.

The first section of the Explanation begins "We are here to reflect" and goes on:

"From the standpoint of naked reason, death confuses.

We find it hard to imagine a further existence once the body has been cremated/buried; yet we also find it hard to accept that something so marvellously made, possessing a mind and spirit with powers defying description, could be totally annihilated. Sometimes body, mind and spirit seem inseparably linked; yet at other times mind and spirit so prevail over body as to suggest the personality IS, ultimately, independent of its physical frame.

But however much we philosophize, and however long medical skill may postpone it, the fact of death remains. The person who lives as if it did not is a fool, as the well known parable makes plain . . ."

The parable is summed up with its punch lines quoted (Lk 12, 20-21 TEV).

The second section opens "We are here to be comforted" and continues:

"Naked reason neither proves nor disproves that a further journey can follow the one we travel now. Belief in life after death is a matter of faith, an attitude which does not ignore reason but recognizes its limitations.

If we believe that in the wisdom of his teaching, the quality of his life and the depths of his love, Jesus Christ provided the vital signposts to individual and communal living, it is reasonable to accept his word concerning life after death.

If we take into account the affirmation of the earliest witnesses . . . the Church's resilience . . . and those personal experiences we feel impelled to ascribe to Christ's own presence, the conviction that Jesus himself lived on after his physical death is wholly plausible.

And so, in the light of our Lord's own resurrection and trustworthy promises, we affirm that those who travel Christ's route in this life will 'not die but have eternal life'. As Jesus explained . . . (Jn. 11, 25 & 14, 6 TEV)."

The third section is introduced with "We are here to give thanks" and proceeds:

"We thank God for the one now parted from us . . . for the web of love that surrounded him in family, friends and society . . . for every token of sympathy and encouragement: for letters and flowers, for words and acts of kind-

ness . . . for the certainty of forgiveness, that remorse need never haunt us . . . for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which enable us to travel the present journey serenely and look forward to the next with confidence.

We now rejoice that, come what may, God's love will continue. Eagerly we echo the apostle's testimony (Rom. 8, 38-39 TEV)".

The final section of the Explanation starts "We have come to ask for help" and goes on:

"To some extent time heals the wounds of bereavement.

The discreet help of family and friends, in the years as well as the weeks ahead, will mean much to those of you who most keenly feel this separation . . . Your own, inborn resources will be needed but if this bereavement is to be a springboard of spiritual growth, you will need the power only God can provide, the help of the Holy Spirit".

Some words of Paul and James are read (2 Cor. 1, 3-4; Jas. 1, 12: TEV).

Next comes a prayer, beginning with thanksgiving based on the third section of the Explanation, continuing with a plea for God's help and ending with the congregation repeating either the Lord's Prayer or the well known 'Take our hands and work through them' prayer. Apart from its long-term value, a positive forward-looking prayer, said together, has immediate therapeutic value.

If burial, the service in the chapel ends here resuming at the grave with the comforting words of Jesus (Jn. 14, 1-2 NEB), the Committal duly modified, and blessing.

If cremation, the prayer is followed with the Committal. The congregation stand and with eyes wide open to the reality of the disappearing coffin hear the words:

"Thankful for the life of . . . and for every precious memory of him, we now commit his body to be cremated, rejoicing in the promises of Jesus and the infinite power of God".

The rejoicing is finally expressed in the words of 1 Peter 1. 3 NEB. The service ends with either The Peace or the challenging biblically based, dismissal beginning "Go out into the world" (preferably as in **Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship**, page 77).

Of course you will find many shortcomings in my Order but I hope you will nevertheless recognize a sincere attempt to provide intellectual as well as spiritual satisfaction, reality as well as euphony.

I am not sure whether it is because my congregation has taken to heart my thunderings on population control, but I have not yet had sufficient opportunities to assess fairly the impact of my service of Infant Presentation! I have, however used the order for Cremation or Burial a good number of times and, judging from subsequent comments, it seems at least to be pointing in the right direction. My main concern, though, is to stimulate further attempts to produce services worthy of the great facts of birth and death.

EDWARD J. HULME