

Foreword

It was through the generosity of Mr John Henry Keene, a citizen of the Borough of Chelmsford, that it was possible to establish forty-five years ago a Trust Fund which would enable us to invite to Chelmsford Cathedral speakers who could help us address theological issues of contemporary concern.

As the millennium approaches, we have thought it helpful to ask three speakers from different theological traditions to reflect from their experience on what they hold important in their vision of Christianity.

The Revd Graham Cray, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, has chosen to examine the nature of Christian worship in a post-modern age. In doing this, he points to some of the more important post-modern thinkers whilst also stressing the 'double benefit' of worship as that which is not only for God and to God, but also because its rites and practices make differences in the lives and communities of worshippers and hence worship becomes an integral part of mission and prophecy.

Professor Colin Gunton of King's College, London is also concerned to explore the challenges of post-modernity by posing the wider question of 'Is Christianity a Post-modern Religion?' Professor Gunton points out that like post-modernism, the Christian religion stands in opposition to modernism's overweening arrogance. It is also concerned with particularities in the sense that Christianity proclaims an eternal gospel on the basis of the historical particularity of the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. It is unlike post-modernism, however, because it believes in the God of Jesus Christ as the source of all being, meaning and truth, and so cannot see the world, even the fallen world, 'as a mere collage'.

Professor Mary Grey, of Southampton University, following in the spirit of the Rio Assembly in 1992 (as part of the Earth Summit Conference) suggests that our ecclesial responsibility for a greater ecological awareness is, in many senses, just beginning. In her paper she tackles some of the 'inertia and apathy of theology which prevents effective action for the earth' and proposes that 'we ground the idea of Church in such a way as to become a community conscious of dwelling on this earth, taking responsibility for the bio-region, integrating sustainable living into the heart of a vibrant, re-imaged Christian identity.'

Barry Thompson

'Christian Worship in the Post-Modern Age'

The Revd Graham Cray

The theme for this particular lecture was chosen partly because it brings together the two things I teach - Christian mission and apologetics on the one hand (including an understanding of post-modernity in contemporary western society) and liturgy on the other hand. But I chose tonight's subject primarily because as I study gospel and culture (particularly focussed on the church's mission), I find myself forced back again and again to the church as 'worship'. It is as if all roads lead back to worship and I have been given an opportunity in this lecture to try and put together some further thinking on this issue. In this context, I am grateful to Dr Andrew Walker of King's College, London, for his book 'Telling the Story' because in that book there are two occasions when, as a lay Orthodox theologian who is the son of a Pentecostal pastor, he puts forward many provocative ideas about what worship ought to be and in some sense I am responding to Andrew in what I am saying tonight.

I come to the subject with some underlying convictions about worship. Firstly, the centrality of it in the Christian life. The Old Testament theologian, Walter Brueggemann, once wrote, 'praise is the ultimate vocation of the human community, indeed **of all creation**' ('Israel and Praise', Fortress Press). Also, a colleague of mine has written a book on the arts which is called 'Voicing Creation's Praise' and this suggests that humankind, all of us, as the stewards of creation, are called above all to voice the praise of the whole creation in response to God's graciousness, and that's what makes us truly human. We are most of all 'us' when we worship as a response to what God has done for us. So worship is central, therefore and one cannot engage with contemporary society without asking questions about it. There is a relationship between worship and mission and the relationship is held together in our understanding that the God whom we worship as Christians is a God who is holy Trinity.

Professor James Torrance once wrote that 'worship is the gift of participating through the spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father.' ('Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace', Paternoster Press). Now that may sound complicated, but if we think about it for a moment, worship is a gift before it is a task and it is a gift in which through what Christ has done, we share his relationship with the father as of a loving child to a truly just and loving father, and it is the Holy Spirit that makes it possible. So that Jesus' word for his father, 'Abba', becomes our word by the spirit. Christian worship is of the father through the son and by the spirit. We are caught up in the worshipping life of Jesus in his risen and ascended humanity. But we cannot be caught up in his 'worship life' without being caught up in his mission. So Professor Torrance goes on, 'the mission of the church is the gift of participating through the holy spirit in the son's mission from the father to the world'. He is the shape of the Christian life, and God has stepped into his broken world on our behalf, has revealed himself to us again, has won us back to himself and so we worship him and every time there is a communion service in our churches, we end with 'thank you for feeding us - send us out'. The sense is therefore that worship and mission is a recurring dynamic, a reinforcing circle, based on the fact that the God we worship is holy Trinity, not a god of some strange theological algebra, but because that is the only way that we can speak of God - because of Jesus Christ.

So I am convinced then of the centrality of worship; that worship is Trinitarian and is permanently in relationship with mission, and that worship shapes the Christian life. 'Worship is the indispensable foundation for understanding and ethics' said one theologian. ('God's Ways with the World', D Hardy, T & T Clark). Also, a Christian ethicist in the States (S Hauerwas) tells how he teaches Christian ethics in a theological college in the framework of worship, because worship shapes Christian life; there is a moral consequence to engaging in worship. He talks about a course in Christian ethics 'shaped round worship, patterned on liturgy and organised round the basic movement of the liturgy' ('The liturgical shape of the Christian life in 'Essentials of Christian

Community' edited by Ford and Stamps'). Every major area of Christian ethics is put in that framework. So I am convinced that worship is central, it is trinitarian, it is inseparable from mission if it is to have integrity and it provides the shape of the Christian life. I also think it important as a consequence of this, that I want to look at three things tonight. I want to talk about the problem of the post-modern era and then to talk about the double benefit of worship and then the form of worship in the post-modern era.

The problem of the 'post-modern' era

Are we even sure that we can call it that? Is it stable enough to be called anything? Are we not just going through some great time of transition at the moment where all is in flux? The American Catholic theologian, David Tracy, says 'we live in an age that cannot name itself' ('On Naming the Present', SCM Press) - there are so many theories and competing words, and large numbers of them have the word 'post' put in front of them, which implies a sense of transition or ending. Is 'post-modernism' then too problematic to be the context of Christian worship; is the nature of post-modern claims such that all attempts at contextualising, or living out, or enculturating Christian worship or liturgy in them, automatically becomes syncretism - a selling out to the world of what is essential? Some extreme forms of post-modernism are entirely antithetical to the Christian faith; the most extreme 'doubting relativism' of some writers - however open-minded in their questioning of the Christian faith - are not bedfellows. Is the price of the potential loss of Christian distinctiveness then so high that we have to have a model of Christ against culture? - and whatever post-moderns are like, do we say that we are not going to have post-modernism in church? But if we were to come to that conclusion, we would be in the tragic danger of saying all of the right things in the language of either the modern era or, dare I say it, the Elizabethan era (depending on which prayer book we are using) but not **to** anybody because we have lost our capacity to speak the language of our peers.

So I believe we must engage with the post-modern world, that it is essential for our liturgy to engage with the changes of culture. But what is the post-modern? Well, you can look at it from various disciplines. There has been a spectacular upgrading of cultural studies recently. People are looking at the way art and everyday life has met in popular culture and are recognising that that actually shapes the way people see the world, and people working from that theory and that point of view would see our present society as depthless. Things are what they feel to you, they don't mean or point to anything else; they are based on images rather than concepts, based on sensations - and aesthetics becomes ethics - in other words, 'I like' means 'it is good'. 'It pleases me' means 'it is good'. And above all no symbol points to anything of greater significance than itself. The feeling you get from a picture or a piece of music is the feeling you get and that is it.

The sociologists came in after that, and they focussed on two particular things: firstly, that late western culture has become a consumer culture; that western society in the late 80's and 90's no longer provides identity through what you produce, through what you make and contribute, with the view that you are contributing to a potentially better future; rather identity is found in what you consume - where to be a consumer is to belong, and it used to be that to be a producer was to belong. So when sociologists write about post-modernity they are saying 'the integrating point of society has changed'. One writer says, 'if you want to know what modernity was like', (and remember, all this is terribly confusing), 'modern means old and going, post-modern means now' (it's like Michael Jackson: 'bad means good'). The 'modern' world was typified by the savings book. I remember my granny's savings book - people might be saving for Christmas or saving for their retirement or for that wonderful eschatological vision 'the rainy day', but often they were saving for a better world, for their children, and the assumption was - 'you live now towards a future that is going to be better, and it's worth making sacrifices for'. That was a future orientated society in which we thought of ourselves as producers - 'what do we contribute'? But now, 'we are in a post-modern era and if you want an emblem, a sign, an illustration, it's not the savings book - it is the credit card, which is about having now and paying later' - which is a present, consumer orientated, society. And I'm not making moral judgements here - I am describing a change which social scientists observe. I am not saying it's worse - I'm saying it's different. We have become a society focussed on the present.

The other issue that the sociologists will point out (and the sociologists are the ones who talk most about post-modernity) is that this is the age of electronic technology. The theorist Mark Poster writes: 'My contention is that a critical understanding of the new communications systems requires an evaluation of the type of subject it encourages, while a viable articulation of post-modernity must include an elaboration of its relation to new technologies of communication' ('Cyberspace, Cyberbodies, Cyberpunk', Sage Books). In other words, two things have to meet together - this change from the modern to the post-modern, from the producer to the consumer, from the future to the present - and this extraordinary development of electronic technology. So that quite literally, last night, in bringing together some final material for today, I was searching the world-wide web looking for quotations about post-modernity that had been posted all over the world. There is a sense that the whole way we relate to one another and communicate and the way things circulate has changed the way life feels, and that the combination of those two - the rapid growth in domination of electronic technology and the consumer society, together make it a different world - a world that began to emerge in the 50's and now has become dominant.

But most serious, are the perspectives of the philosophers; in particular, Jean-Francois Lyotard - a French theorist; Michel Foucault - a now deceased French theorist and Jacques Derrida. Lyotard says, 'Simplifying to the extreme, I define 'post-modern' as incredulity towards meta-narratives'. ('The post-modern condition'). Is not your heart strangely warmed within you?! Aren't you pleased you came tonight?! What he means is this: it is now incredible that anybody can believe in a grand story - a meta-narrative - a story that claims to be the key to all stories. Anybody who says 'The key to all truth is...' is unbelievable these days. Because we all know that the world is full of competing stories that people simply think are true because its the only one that they've known and that none has any greater validity than any other. And please understand me that Lyotard is not tilting at Christianity; he thinks science and the enlightenment finished off Christianity centuries ago. He is tilting at contemporary understandings of reason and science. He is tilting at the very foundations of the modern world that we have grown up in. He said the whole thing is based on a self-deception of what's true and what you know and what you can see. But if we are talking about questions such as: 'can you have Christian worship in the postmodern world'? then every eucharistic prayer is a meta-narrative; every eucharistic prayer is a grand story. When you say 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again, - you say here are the most significant things of the past, the present and the future through which we understand what life is about and it is a gospel that is about the transformation of the whole creation. If you believe the creeds, you believe the grand story and therefore you are in trouble with post-modernism.

Michel Foucault believed that truth claims were always the cloak for the abuse of power. He says, 'truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which induces it and which extend it' ('Power/Knowledge', Harvester Press). He said, 'there is a regime of truth' (he meant like the regime of the French Revolution). So any time anybody says, 'I want to say this to you because it is true - say in faith sharing - it, being interpreted through post-modern eyes, means, 'I am on a power trip to make you believe my thing'. So, then - is liturgy where we say together what we believe is true - a spiritually cloaked form of oppression that stops us thinking for ourselves?

Michael Vasey, one of the Church of England's leading liturgists, writing on behalf of the Liturgical Commission, says, 'It has been an important insight of modern liturgical study that it is the **shape** rather than particular texts that provide the common core of the service, that there are deep structures in the major acts of Christian worship' ('The Renewal of Common Prayer' edited by M Perham). There is a basic shape to a Eucharist, a service of the Word, and that's what gives it its personality and distinctiveness. But the moment a post-modern theorist sees words like 'shape' and 'deep structures' - that's about closing down options, that is about saying 'this is all that you may believe', that's saying 'shape up if you come in here or ship out'.

And then Jacques Derrida, who believes that there is ultimately no fixed meaning to language - language is indeterminate. He writes - and this is the simplest quote from Derrida I can find - 'A text is no longer a finished corpus of writing, some context enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces (memories of something before) referring endlessly to something other than itself' ('Living On' - Borderlines) - in other words, there is no fixed meaning to written words - they are all half memories of what's gone before or are allusions to what will come ahead - and we think we have something called Common Prayer because we have a body of services that we can say together. And Derrida would say, 'Under the guise of convincing yourself, you are responding to truth in Christian liturgy' - in other words - you are simply constructing it, you are making your own meaning of the words. The words may be the same, but the meanings are not fixed. There is a half truth there, but if we take these theorists seriously you will find it very difficult to have worship that engages with a post-modern era.

But I want to suggest to you that we have to contrast strongly between post-modernity and post-modern philosophy. Post-modernity, I believe, for the moment is here to stay - we are a consumer culture, we are a culture focussed on the present rather than the future, we are a culture that hasn't quite worked out how much it has been changed by the microchip. Do you realise the microchip was 25 years old this month? Think of everything in our homes that has been transformed by it! We really don't know how different our society is going to be. This is going to be a much more massive transformation than that brought about by the printing press. We really are heading into a different sort of shape of society, and a society which largely is global because the commodities and the technology will be exported everywhere (For example, I had a very good drink of Coke in a distant hill village in Nepal a few years ago!).

Post-modernity is here to stay. However, I want to suggest to you, that post-modern philosophy is a bulldozer too far. Nevertheless, it is remarkably effective at demolishing previous understandings of truth, and a great deal of what it says as negative critique is very close to the mark. We really have believed that we could somehow step outside of life as a universal spectator and work out what was true about the world. And as Lesslie Newbiggin says, 'then God created the universe - he didn't make a spectator's gallery'. No-one can step outside of life and observe it and decide what's true. Everybody looks from somewhere on the basis of what they take for granted. We believe the Christian faith because we believe God in Jesus Christ has stepped from the spectator's gallery into the place of human limited existence. And from that human perspective given us a way to see straight and done something to set us free from the things that blind and empower us.

We don't believe the modern western claim of the last couple of hundred years that human detached reason, regarded essentially as sinless, can understand the world and gets things right. The postmodernists demolish something which has never been of the essence of the Christian faith. But they are bulldozers because if there is nothing but local stories and local justices, if all truth claims are claims of power, and if all words have a meaning which slips out of your hands the very moment you try and get your brain round it - then how can you build the next era?

Modernity began in one sense with two pieces of thinking of the French philosopher Descartes. It began when he said 'I think therefore I am' - let's use human consciousness and rationality and reason as a basis for trying to work out the world. But he also said, 'you must use reason on the basis of the principle of radical doubt'. You must scrutinize and doubt and try and disprove everything, and at last what has happened is that radical doubt, via Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and all those for whom what they say just feels true, because they don't trust the old stories any more. Radical doubt has eaten up 'I think therefore I am' even to the point where many people today are profoundly uncertain of their own identity and therefore we must engage with the sense that sociologically an era and a world view seems to be coming to an end, but we need not believe as positive truth the demolition pattern.

This is an extraordinary time for Christians. The Baptist theologian, Harvey Cox in the 60's wrote a book called 'The Secular City'. He took the whole death of God movement and secularism

seriously and tried to rewrite Christianity in the light of it. Now with 400 million Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in the world, he's wondering if the move towards secularism missed some people! In his book 'Fire from Heaven' he says, quite literally, it did. 'As the 20th century progressed, large blocks of people became increasingly sceptical about inherited religious dogma, and ecclesiastical institutions steadily lost their power to shape cultures,' and from that being partly right, Cox predicted an increasingly secular society. However, he says, something else was happening as well which we didn't see - not only were large numbers of people becoming alienated from traditional religion - they were also losing confidence in the bright promises of science and progress.'

We are now at an era described by Grace Davie in her book 'Religion in Britain since 1945', where she says the closing decades of the 20th century are a critical moment in the religious history of this country; they are decades in which traditional institutions and traditional certainties struggle, in secular as well as in religious life' ... yes, the institution of the church is in real difficulty, but have you noticed it's in good - or you might think - bad company. People don't trust politicians any more, they don't trust the royal family any more, almost any ancient and particularly hierarchical institution is gravely doubted. The secular foundations are shaking just as much as the religious institutional ones. And this is a moment for the church - the church that is people and congregations and folk who know Christ - rather than in the form of the formal institutions. And Grace Davie says, 'it's a society in which spiritual stirrings - of a widely diverse, not necessarily conventional and frequently contradictory nature - are widespread.'

Postmodernity is a one dimensional culture. It has lost its sense of the past because for 250 years we have been marking the past simply to give us the evidence of how much more we have learnt since then. But we have lost our certainty about the future, we don't believe in progress any more. What we believe in instead is consumer choice, and that 80% of the population can be comfortable enough. It is a one dimensional perspective and it needs a three dimensional gospel - and that's where worship comes in. However, there are some disputes going on between Christians at the moment about what worship is for, and as a good Anglican I am going to do a both/and and call this next part of my address 'The Double Benefit of Worship'.

The Double Benefit of Worship

Given that worship is primarily for God to God (and if you go to church for what you get out of it primarily you ought to be ashamed of yourself) - given that it is first of all God centred and the benefits are matters of grace and overflow - then in the secondary sense, the benefits come from the gift. Is worship to transform Christians, or is it to be the shopwindow of a consumer society to attract and draw enquirers? Until recently - charismatics like me - have 'celebrated evangelism' where we praise God and celebrate his presence and want people to come. And people have tended to come and think there was something very moving going on and wonder why we were singing some of these quaint songs with very odd Old Testament lyrics. Others of us bought into something like the Willow Creek community church and got rid of everything religious from our services so that religious things wouldn't offend people who were enquiring about God.

However, the principal object of liturgy, says Professor Robin Gill, is to worship God, (Moral Communities, University of Exeter Press). The values that are generated in the process are a consequence of worship and not its object. An American scholar who lives in this country, Alan Kreider, has written a little booklet about worship before Christendom - the first few centuries - and says that the early church grew very powerfully, but it didn't grow because of the attractiveness of its worship - and he has a cast iron case because from just after the end of the New Testament period until the legalisation of Christianity a couple of centuries later, pagans weren't allowed to attend worship services. So in no way was the object of worship to attract the unbeliever. However, as Alan Kreider says, 'the worship to which pagans were denied admission, was all important in the spread of the church.' It was important not because it was attractive, but because its rites and practices made differences in the lives and communities of the worshippers. It performed the function of reforming those pagans who joined the church into

Christians, into distinctive people who lived in a way that was recognisably in the tradition of Jesus Christ'.

So we need profoundly to recognise that as Robin Gill says, 'within worship moral values take on a more demanding and insistent shape, than they do outside worship'. Every time you go to worship in your parish church or wherever you worship, you recognise yourself as answerable to one whose character is wholly self-sacrificing holy love and who created you to love him and to serve him and to serve others in his name. It changes the way you see the world, and there is the touch of God in it to change your character.

Professors Ford and Hardy say 'Evangelism is the horizontal dimension of praise - the content of praise repeated and explained to others so that they can join the community'. We are in the process of being transformed to be like Christ in church and we go out and tell people - but we are not pre-Christendom, we are post-Christendom, and there is still that strange breed of people around who, though they are scared stiff of crossing the door of the church, believe that the church building is still where you want to go if you are going to find out if there is a God or not - and you go on a Sunday morning. Therefore we have to have a form of worship that both transforms Christians to be recognisably people of Jesus Christ, and one which the enquirer who knows very little can engage with - for this in some way is a little transparent to them.

Andrew Walker - he is an Orthodox - in his book 'Telling the Story' says this, 'in this world where icons proliferate for the profane; where texts swarm everywhere but have lost their sting (the indeterminacy of language); where images dominate our senses but mirror each other, liturgy is a beacon to show the way out. People may be alienated by outdated traditions, (that is the response of modernity) but in a postmodern world liturgy is new and mysterious, numinous and beckoning. To come to the liturgy is to penetrate sameness, to discover for the first time transcendence and otherness; to experience words and images, signs and symbols that have a reference point beyond themselves'. So there is more than just what we feel. There is more than just what it may seem to you.

I am convinced that worship in the postmodern era must both be authentically full-bloodedly Christian to transform Christians to be like Christ, given that it is above all first of all for God and to God in response to his grace, but it must also be that place where the one dimensional world of postmodernity is shown to be one dimensional, where the blinkers are taken off and where the full three-dimensional world that God intended us to live in, rooted in the past, hopeful for the future not just trapped in the present is made available. So what is to be the form of worship then in the postmodern era?

Worship links past, present and future. It is three dimensional, it links them in the story of Christ. Christ **has** died, Christ **is** risen, Christ **will** come again. It is most evident in the Eucharist where you remember the death of the Lord Jesus in the past in his risen presence by the spirit, and as you do so you proclaim his death until he comes. Past, present and future are locked together as the dimensions which together give meaning to life and direction and focus. Dr Alan Torrance says, 'Worship may be described as an event in which the kingdom of God is in a manner actually and freely present and not merely future' - because the kingdom of God had its initial inauguration in the past when Jesus Christ walked the earth, ministered in the power of the spirit and died and rose for us - three-dimensional for a one-dimensional culture.

Therefore, I suggest to you that a form of worship that adequately links past, present and future needs three main ingredients. These may surprise you, and they are not parallel categories: Liturgy, Pentecostalism and Prophecy. Not liturgy - the inheritance of the past, Pentecostalism - present experience of the spirit, and Prophecy - a vision for the future. Rather, all three having each dimension - a sort of postmodern pick-and-mix. Things that belong together but have been spoilt in our modern culture need to be brought together again for the healing of our postmodern one.

Liturgy then - a framework that joins past, present and future which tells you a non-oppressive meta-narrative. In other words, we believe that there are grand stories that oppress people - there are enough of them going round the world at the moment. But that does not mean that any grand story automatically by definition oppresses people. Why can there not be a grand story that is about love and self-sacrifice and hope? And that is the claim of the Christian meta-narrative. 'Let us suppose', says Anthony Thiselton, 'that all that Christian traditions claim about love and about God as self-impacting Trinity, might be true ... a love in which a self genuinely **gives** itself to the other **in the interests of the Other** dissolves the acids of suspicion and deception'. ('Interpreting God and the Post-modern Self' T & T Clark).

The only way we are going to illustrate that Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida are to an extent wrong, is demonstrating that it is possible to live in a way that they deny; to offer an alternative plausibility, and it is in the given framework of the liturgy receiving through the past the essential framework of the Christian faith and living it out Sunday by Sunday in some shared way with brothers and sisters so that there is a family likeness across great families of Christians in the worship that that is reinforced to us.

Liturgy becomes the context for Christian discernment. Tom Smail says, 'the more we remain in fellowship with the prayers of the saints who have gone before us, the more open we shall be to the new things that the Spirit is doing in the church today. It is through our fellowship in prayer with those who belong to different ages and different cultures that the Spirit will teach us to discern his work and gifts from the fashions of the hour and the self-deceivings of our own hearts.' ('The Giving Gift', Hodder). Without liturgy you buy into the latest thing or you react against the latest thing. With liturgy you have an inheritance and a framework - a shape more than 'do we keep the exact words of the traditional prayers' - which gives you your bearings to sort out between what is really making the gospel contemporary and true and what is simply buying into the spirit of the age, so that if someone who is enquiring looks into the shop window they would otherwise not see anything different than they can see in any other shop window, except this one's religious.

Liturgy becomes the context for growth in Christian understanding and holiness. Andrew Walker calls charismatic renewal 'enthusiasm'. And he says, 'without enthusiasm it is difficult to see Christianity surviving in the future. But if that enthusiasm is not harnessed by liturgy communities will not learn to in-dwell the story of Jesus and become holy'. Liturgy does not just mean texts. Walker writes, 'liturgical renewal is necessary to restore the **image** as part of the divine drama of salvation in an electronic world that understands spectacle and drama but wearies of texts'. We have got to get the imagery back and there is creative work being done to discover some electronic imagery. And a television screen in a church is not automatically a blasphemy. It is what is on it that decides whether it is or not.

Liturgy must be the context for risky encounter. Now most Anglicans work on the basis that liturgy is to make sure that there is no such thing as risky encounter if you go to church. But listen to Professors Hardy and Ford, 'God is free and one cannot make rules for how he may speak and act. Yet the complementary point is that God is faithful and consistent, the sort of God that takes part in liturgies **as well**.' The trouble is that many Anglicans believe that God is the sort of God who takes part in liturgies **only**.

So what then are the dangers of liturgy? One of my fellow theological teachers from Nottingham, Adrian Chatfield, says in an unpublished paper, 'our approach to liturgy needs to avoid presenting it as **a controlling function**. (Foucault is alive and well in the Church of England - we have everything labelled to make sure nothing that we haven't planned will happen! - the Ecclesiastical Insurance Company even insures churches against acts of God!) 'Liturgy', says Chatfield, 'is better paired with liberty ... I long for Anglicans to think of liturgy as a vessel into which God may pour many and unexpected blessings without having to ask permission first'.

Liturgy must not be reduced to 'texts only' in a postbook culture. The study of liturgy these days is seen largely as the study of ancient liturgical texts with the assumption that when we have discovered what they did that we like we can transfer it straight to here. Liturgy is tending to be too much dominated by the inheritance of the past. 'Faith in the City' says, 'a church which has a single, highly intellectual style of doctrinal formulation and which orders even its most contemporary forms of worship by reference to a closely printed book of over a thousand pages, can never hope to bridge the gulf that separates it from ordinary people'. So I am not asking for another big book, I am pleading for a holding on to the inheritance of the shape of worship and some shared traditions - for a discovery of imagery in it. Andrew Walker again, 'already we are caught in an electronic field of blinding imagery and synthesised sound (popular culture). Where are our candles, smells and electronic bells? Where are our images of light and shade, our music, our divine dramas, the sacred dance? We have a story but no one can see it (the image culture). We tell the story but no one can hear it. We have a fundamental problem with communication because we are still bound to an anachronistic literary culture'.

Much of the work of liturgy today, even that which is trying to use contemporary language, is so rooted in the past that it is insensitive to the present. Go to one of the churches of the Anglican communion in Africa that isn't still using the BCP, that has created its own liturgy and understand that it has found the way to be indigenous - and it is true to the traditions of its land but it does not feel bowed down with the great weight of history.

I once went to Brussels with a group from the Diocese of York, and we were taken to see a church which had always been on the borders of where the Protestants and the Catholics have been fighting one another in the great wars of religion after the Reformation. In this place, they had been very clever - they had always surrendered to whoever was winning - so no one had ever destroyed anything in their church. This ancient church was like a postmodern nightmare. The religious arts and imagery of hundreds and hundreds of years was crammed onto every shelf and place, and nothing could be thrown away. The weight of the past drew the whole thing backwards. Professor Anthony Hanson (formerly of Hull University) was in the group and he looked around and said, 'Maybe a little bit of iconoclasm isn't a bad thing after all. Why didn't someone take a hammer to some of this lot or put it in a museum!' I say similar things about liturgy, but then the danger is that the great weight of the past comes down and we cannot appropriately relate to the present. The Anglican International Consultation on inculturating liturgy spoke of 'a willingness in worship to listen to culture, to incorporate that which is good and to challenge what is alien to the truth of God. It has to make contact with the deep feelings of people'. Sometimes we are so weighed down by heritage that we can't do that.

So we don't just need liturgy, I dare to say we need Pentecostalism. Why do I put it like that? I am not going to talk about charismatic renewal - you all think you know what I mean because you've seen this. Like Mark Twain being asked if he believes in infant baptism, and saying 'Believe in it - hell, I've seen it!' What you've seen is a Christian tradition meeting another Christian tradition. You've seen a bit of Anglicanism with a bit of Pentecostalism and it's called 'charismatic'. I want to talk about the raw tradition for a moment.

Significantly, some writers are now saying that if you want a model of religion for the next era it is either going to be New Age or the Pentecostals or the Fundamentals. And Pentecostals are not the same as Fundamentalists. Pentecostalism is a spirituality of encounter and presence. Adrian Chatfield writes, 'for Pentecostal Christians ... **dangerous presence** is the ideal starting point for an exploration of our spirituality. Encountering God is of course inherently risky not only because God is so much greater than we are, but because it cannot leave us unchanged. The folk spirituality of the West is quite clear that God is acceptable provided he does not unsettle us.' I long to see Anglican churches framed in liturgy where the people believe they encounter the spirit of the living God as they gather together, as well as guidance during the time. In a similar vein, Steven Land, another Pentecostal theologian, speaks of 'the centrality of the presence of God in Pentecostal worship.'

It is a rediscovery of the experiential perspective of New Testament Christianity. Professor Gordon Fee of Regent College, Vancouver, has said, 'it must be candidly acknowledged not only that the experience and life of the Spirit were for the most part more radically in the centre of things for Paul and his churches than for most of us, but that the Spirit was a more genuinely experienced reality as well.' ('God's Empowering Presence', Baber). Postmodern people will only believe what in some sense happens to them, what they encounter and what they believe is authentic. If in our worship services they do not encounter the living God, they will not believe that he exists.

The New Testament scholar, Max Turner, reviewing the work of the Spirit asks what that means for us today: 'It is endemic in fallen humankind to assert its autonomy over against God, and (among Christians) to over-formalise and over-institutionalise the divine presence and modes of address. In sacramentalism we may guarantee the presence and activity of the Spirit **whom we may not otherwise be aware of**. In preaching Scripture we may seek to guarantee the voice of the Spirit **that we do not otherwise hear**. In ordination we may guarantee the gifting and authority of the Spirit, **which is not otherwise apparent**. And in the corporate worship of the church we may claim we partake in the responsive theocentric doxological inspiration of the Spirit **without necessarily feeling moved**. When this becomes a substitute for any significant immediate awareness of God, then we risk reducing the Spirit to the immanence of God in the church.' ('Power from on High', Sheffield Academic Press). Paul encountered some disciples of John the Baptist that he mistakenly presumed Christians and said, 'did you receive the Spirit when you believed?' Not, 'you've obviously believed, so you must have received the Spirit.'

The Pentecostal tradition comprises the second largest Christian family in the world. There are more 'classical' Pentecostals in the world than there are Orthodox. There are the best part of 200 million of them at the moment, and there weren't any in 1906. There are also several times as many Pentecostals globally as there are Anglicans so let's keep this in proportion. I am not suggesting that this is some tiny hole in the corner thing that we might learn from. So do we then have something to learn from it? 'At its best', say Professors Hardy and Ford, 'Pentecostalism is distinctive by being able both to combine with the pattern in worship as liturgy and to dispense with it'. 'It has', they say, 'a jazz factor'. It isn't about disorder, it is about a mature awareness and recognition of the Spirit that disciplined those who have learned their scales and yet can improvise on and yet still remain within the framework of the melody. This is not disorder rather than order, this is liberty within liturgy. It is trinitarian in practice though not always in self-understanding. It mattered more to me today that I knew how to drive my car and to get it here than I knew how an internal combustion engine works. It matters more that there is trinitarian encounter with the Lord Jesus to the path of the Spirit 'of the end' than that simple Christians - as many Pentecostals are - can actually use the long words.

Pentecostalism is essentially eschatological - it has a foretaste of the future that gives joy in the present, hope for the future and a capacity to bear pain. Steven Land says, 'the presence of the Spirit 'of the end' sets in motion a people with a story to tell'. It manages to hold together reason and emotion. It has sometimes 'overbalanced' a bit on the emotional side, but there are some fine Pentecostal scholars now.

What are the dangers of it? Well, one writer said, 'in liturgy Christians should seek to avoid simply expressing themselves: they must express the faith which has grasped them.' (L. Houlden). And Pentecostalism (or enthusiasm without liturgy) often either becomes emotion for emotion's sake or shoots off in some serious doctrinal deviance or imbalance. But put the two together, put the pattern and the freedom to move with it, put the learned discipline inherited from the past and the capacity of improvisation, and you have the most powerful thing for worship in the postmodern era.

Prophecy

Lastly, very briefly, there does need to be a third component, which I call prophecy. Prophecy is about critique of the present and maintaining hope in the present in the light of the future. And in

the light of the future secure by what God's done in the past. The great Old Testament prophets, on the basis of the values of the Exodus, pointing to what God would do when he sent the Messiah, saw how things had to change now. Liturgy, Pentecostalism and Prophecy are all ways of holding together past, present and future. The Spirit given by Jesus from the cross in the past, experienced in the present as the foretaste of the future - there's the Pentecostal one. The first cry of prophecy, says Walter Brueggemann, is 'how long, O Lord?' Prophecy is rooted in prayer. The task of prophecy 'is to empower people to engage in history'. And Hardy and Ford also say, 'worship in itself is prophetic. To praise and know God is itself prophetic. It affirms the most comprehensive truth of history and of the future. It is an act of discernment and committed response'. If I am going to speak prophetically and justly and lovingly and clearly in my day, I need to refocus myself on the future that is coming and live in the light of it.

Worship in community should be an embodied sign of the future - it should be prophetic. Desmond Tutu speaks of multiracial services when he was Dean of Cape Town, and says, 'there (it was) in front of me with tears of joy sometimes streaming down my cheeks, as I knelt in the Dean's stall'. ('Hope and Suffering'). I hope that sort of thing happens here - sounds a bit Pentecostal to me, but still...! 'Tears of joy that it could indeed be that Jesus Christ had broken down the walls of partition, and here were the first fruits of the eschatological community.

Here for Tutu was the actual foretaste of what everything would be like when Christ comes again, 'right in front of my eyes', and the sense that we are here for the world in the light of God's future acts as a sort of diagnostic healthcheck within worship, so you are not just sucked into the past by the great weight of the background to liturgy, nor sucked into a self-indulgence by the extent of your experiences of God in the present. You were always reminded it's for the world, and prophecy provides the capacity to address the local situation in the context of the global, and to apply the Christian tradition to the local context. Worship leads to mission as prophetic action: 'Send us out in the power of your Spirit.'

What are the dangers then of prophecy when it loses its spiritual nerve from the past and in encounter? Jim Wallis once described to me a service that he said was 'ideologically perfect but spiritually lifeless'. And prophecy that is simply hard edged political correctness has lost grace. The three need one another; we need the frameworks that shape the faith that we inherit from the past and give us hope for the future and the theological context to understand the present. We need encounter with the living God, given by the work of Christ and in anticipation of the world which is to come and we need to know we are here for the world, and that the whole people of God is called to be a prophetic people. As we do that, our worship as we respond to God, will transform our humanity. We will be people in the present who are people of the future. In worship we respond to the gift of God and we open ourselves to be transformed within the grand story of God's self sacrifice for us in Jesus Christ.

Worship in the postmodern era - it is possible to have a grand story of love that holds together past, present and future, for Christ **has** died, Christ **is** risen, and Christ **will** come again.

