LIVERPOOL RELIGION
A BANE OR A BOON?

A Social Study of Religion in Liverpool: 1845-2000

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. NATURE OF RESEARCH: AIM AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role which Christianity has played in the social life of the city of Liverpool during the past century and a half. It is a well recorded fact that the city has been greatly affected by the sectarian form of Christianity exemplified particularly in the hostility expressed between Catholic and Protestant before and after the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At this time both Catholics and Protestants adhered to their own traditions and doctrines in an uncompromising manner, maintaining and re-enforcing the schism at the Reformation. This has been fully documented by other writers, and will be one of the main themes of the thesis. Yet it is the purpose of this work to demonstrate there was and is more to Christianity than the sectarian differences displayed. The thesis then is a socio-historical examination of the processes at work through the churches, through individuals and through movements which chiefly sought to demonstrate Christian benevolence in a pragmatic way.

The seed-bed for this research arose from the writer's experience of meeting with and listening to missionaries returning from their work abroad. As they spoke of the many varied cultures and religions they encountered, questions arose within the writer's mind as to what benefits, if any, the Christian religion brought to a nation or society. The opportunity to conduct research along such lines in Liverpool therefore, has proved to be both informative and immensely challenging, for there was no simple answer to the question. The story is a complex one, and amply suited to sociological procedures. Four approaches will be taken in examining the nature of Christian achievement in Liverpool.

1.1.1. An Historical Inquiry.

Historical research involves, amongst other things, a tracing of change through time, and this is precisely what will be attempted here. It will be part of the process of research to discover how much the religious sectarianism which once haunted the city, has given way to a greater sense of co-operation. The historical reasons underpinning any changes will be examined along with the pace and degree of change. Further, how the churches have coped with the more recent cultural changes of individualism and relativism will be evaluated.

What changes of emphasis, if any, have the churches introduced? Has doctrine been adjusted to accommodate a changing culture? Has church life become marginalised, and if so, how far? Personalities played a large role in the Christianity of the past in Liverpool, and it will be part of the purpose here also to examine whether the personality cult has now disappeared or is still emerging here and there, and to what effect.

Perhaps the most important issue for the present study, is the effect the Christian religion has had on the socio-cultural milieu of the city. Sectarianism created an environment of aggression, suspicion and fear, in which it was difficult for civic leaders in the past to create an ambience of solidarity and mutual support with which to face the rigours of poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Individual philanthropy was the primary means by which caring Christians of the nineteenth century attempted to achieve improvement in these areas of need. The thesis will demonstrate how far local government is now relating to the churches, and vice versa. It will also show how the work of the churches - some of it paid, most of it voluntary - is making a significant contribution to a wide age-range of people throughout the city, including special needs groups.

1.1.2. A Theoretical Analysis.

This second approach involves a survey and analysis of social religious theory. Scholarly interest in religion appeared to wane during the twentieth century, particularly the period between the two world wars (Glock and Stark, 1965, x). Yet since then there has been an increasing interest in the function of religion and its place in modern, advanced industrial society. On the one hand there are those who argue for the benefits of religion within a society, particularly where hegemony is evident (Berger, 1973; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985). When this is the case there can be a communal sense of identity, both personally and culturally, as the religion creates a sense of meaning for individual existence, and enables the community to weld together in a common bond of spiritual mutuality. Occasionally however, competing religious groups within the same society striving for hegemony, create conflict until one or the other attains ascendancy.

Others however claim that the supremacy once enjoyed by the Christian religion is now a thing of the past, and that a more autonomous approach to the sacred is being increasingly adopted (Luckmann, 1972; Luhmann, 1982). No longer is the corporate nature of religion a predominant factor in the worshipper's mind. Rather, the growing individualism in Western society is

now being expressed in varied forms of privatised religion in which the individual can pick and choose from the wide selection of religions available.

At the close of the twentieth century however, a new paradigm emerged in the sociology of religion. Many writers began to acknowledge the emergence of a robust religious zeal in many parts of the world. What was most noticeable was its public profile. Religious expression refused to be pushed to the margins of life and society, and is now re-emerging as a potent dimension in the socio-historical development of nations (Casanova, 1994; Heelas [ed.], 1998). The religious history of Liverpool provides an adequate resource for weighing the theory of social scientists in this field, with the empirical evidence plentiful during the research period.

1.1.3. An Empirical Examination.

It is also intended to examine the present religious scene in the city using first hand data gleaned from those involved with Christianity on a professional or semi-professional basis. One theoretical approach to religion is the 'functional' mode which lends itself well to empirical scrutiny. 'What the social sciences can do is to assess how the religious institutions of societies and the religious behaviour of individuals may be shaped and influenced by cultural, social, economic, and psychological factors '(Glock and Stark; 1965, 291). Yet this statement can also be turned on its head. Social science can also begin to assess how religious institutions and individuals can shape the culture and social dimension of a society. Both these approaches will be considered here. By means of primarily qualitative data collected through interviews, visits to churches, and by a questionnaire, an attempt will be made to assess the present outlook of those engaged in the pursuit of a more Christian society.

1.1.4 A Comparative Test

An important aspect of the research lies here. It is one of the aims to discover and evaluate what changes have taken place over the 150 years in question. This will be attempted within two frameworks. Firstly to divide the period in question into two parts, pre-World War II and post-World War II. How the Christian world-view compares and contrasts between these two eras will be assessed. There are within this framework however, other time phases which emerge, some more naturally than others. For example there is a phase between the mid-1840s and the 1880s when the city had to come to terms with a huge influx of Irish immigrants, bringing with them their internal socio-religious divisions to exacerbate the divisions already existing in Liverpool. Another phase lies between the 1890s to the First World War, a period during

which the city endured some of the most intense and bitter sectarian hostilities. A phase occurred also between the wars in which both sides of the religious divide established positions of intransigence. A quieter phase after the War was followed by a phase beginning in the mid 1960s to the present, in which the church has faced a growing permissiveness in society, a greater individualism and egalitarianism, increased wealth and leisure, and the emergence of a more pluralistic society. This approach takes in a large field and long time-scale, and inevitably will at times be impressionistic and concerned with big themes. Including these minor phases within the larger time catchments will make the assessment of change a more complex process, but nonetheless an engrossing one.

1.2. EMERGENT THEMES

Arising from the four approaches adopted above are a number of themes which lie at the heart of the religious developments in Liverpool during the period in question. In a sense, the themes which follow sum up the religious dimension in the city and enable a more detailed analysis to be executed.

1.2.1 Christian Relevance.

Steve Bruce describes the present state of affairs in church life in Britain in rather negative terms: 'Church attendance has now become so rare in Britain that it is no longer supported by group pressure....It has become an almost purely personal or idiosyncratic matter' (Bruce, 1995, 44). What this does right at the outset is introduce the significance of the process of secularisation as it affects the church's life and influence. Bruce here seems to be confirming what many social theorists have been arguing for many decades, that a secularising process has been taking place in the West. Peter Berger's definition of this process is succinct. 'By secularisation we mean the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (Berger, 1973, 113). It is not intended to enter into detailed arguments concerning secularisation at this point, but to use the concept to introduce a major problem confronting the church, namely a perception 'out there' in society, that the church is in fact finished. Of course the churches themselves do not need much convincing that something has altered dramatically. The writer is only too aware as a working cleric, that there has been a significant decline in church attendance over recent decades. Looking at it statistically, the present estimation of the proportion of adults in the U.K. who 'belong' to the churches amounts to about 14% or 6.7 million people (Bruce, 1995, 35). In 1900 it was approximately 30% of the adult population (Bruce, 1995, 38).

The issue of Christian marginalisation is also faced, for all is not as it seems with the secularisation explanation. Surveys continually reveal a population in Britain, the majority of whom, if not eager for church attendance, nonetheless still believe in a God and identify themselves with a particular church or denomination. Outright atheism is rare (Brierley, 1997, 5.13; Independent On Sunday, 4th Jan. 1998). Furthermore, the broader issue of spirituality is still one which is integral to our society. In an increasingly pluralistic culture, more and more variations of the sacred are emerging and introducing new sets of values to British society. This leads Grace Davie to make the following assessment about the study of religious trends; 'The secularisation thesis is far from straightforward. It is complex, nuanced, and at times contradictory. It is however becoming clearer almost by the day that an approach based on the concept of secularisation is getting harder and harder to sustain' (Davie, 1995, 7). What then is the relevance of Christianity for Liverpool today? How does it fit in with the wider vista of apparent decline, particularly in Western Europe, yet the maintenance of an individualised spirituality? This thesis will attempt to uncover something of this paradox as it is expressed in the religious life of the city.

1.2.2. Clerical Perceptions.

Christianity is still very much identified with its clergy, despite the fact that an increasing number of lay ministries have emerged over the last number of decades. The clergy in many ways are the public face of the church. So what has become of the clergy over this period? There are a number of spheres in which the role of the ministry can be evaluated. Firstly in its function. What are clerics for these days; what do they do? Bryan Wilson has referred to the 'alienation of the clergy' (Wilson, 1966, 76) in attempting to underline the anachronism of such a profession operating amidst a secular society. This becomes evident in the empirical data examined, in which a number of clergy were interviewed. The roles they themselves expressed as undertaking are quite varied, and not all of a 'spiritual' nature by any means. The writer is also aware from personal experience that the days when a man or woman entered the ministry and had an established pattern to follow seem to have gone forever. Adjustment, flexibility and multi-functional ability are now essential requirements as much as preaching and the conducting of worship. Specialisation too is another means of coping with change, either within the scope of a team or operating in one specified role. This will require new forms of training for ministry over and above the traditional theological kind, as is acknowledged by a number of the respondents (see 8.2.3).

The status of the clergy is also in question today. This raises the issue of the professionalism of the ordained ministry and how society now perceives them. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was little doubt that the clergy had a powerful influence on the lives of individuals and the communities in which they lived. Catholics in Liverpool once talked of their clergy acting like 'benevolent tyrants' (Hornsby-Smith, 1987, 29). Throughout the twentieth century however, the clergy have suffered a decline in status. 'The very fact that ordination is seen as something of a sacrifice shows the low social status of the occupation. The respect is at arms length; it is a good thing that there are people like that, but we do not want to be like them' (Bruce, 1995, 34). The story in Liverpool at the close of the twentieth century however, reveals that some distinguished clergy in the Catholic, Anglican and Free Church hierarchy, could still become public role models, by influencing civic events and helping bring people and churches together (see 6.2.3).

Finally the image of the clergy also appears to be undergoing a minor revolution. No longer can our society be content with images of elderly middle class gentlemen, but has to confront new images, as the door to the ordained ministry is opened to a greater variety of candidate. Women are now much more widely recognised in ministry, though not in the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches. Even the controversial matter of homosexual clergy has come to the fore and become the subject of much debate. How the clergy of Liverpool fit into this minor revolution taking place is examined, and the social consequences discussed.

1.2.3 Class Perception.

It has almost become a maxim to state that the church is middle class, and for a long time the church has berated itself for being such. In Britain for example, the middle classes have been predominant, but not overwhelmingly so. In 1991, 16% of white collar and professional people said they went to church at least once a fortnight, compared to 12% of manual workers (Bruce, 1995, 44).

One of the aims of this thesis however, is to ask other questions surrounding Christian commitment. For example, what kind of involvement is being asked of church members, and to what end? Does this involvement have real social value apart from the obvious spiritual benefits many seek? Membership too has to be queried as a true indicator of religiosity. The writer is only too aware that people can be on a membership list, but not regularly in the pew. Finally, attendance at church may be an indicator of interest in religious matters, but it

may not. Demerath made some pertinent observations here about the United States in the 1960s. 'Membership need not connote a commitment to religion. It may stake a status claim or serve as a vehicle for mobility as the cynics suggest.....in fact, it can be argued that the church has sought to capitalise on all of these motives' (Demerath, 1965, 339). By way of contrast, Bruce's more pessimistic conclusion at the close of the twentieth century in Britain is that church attendance is no longer an important mark of 'belonging' to a social formation (Bruce, 1995, 44).

Perhaps another question needs to be asked. Is the church working class? If the above indicators are used the answer might be a resounding negative. Christian groups working in inner city areas or in large post-war housing estates have their own story to tell when discussing membership, attendance and involvement. Urban and estate churches are not renowned for flourishing congregations, yet it must not be forgotten that much of the Roman Catholic Church in Liverpool is largely grounded in working class culture. Irish Catholics comprised the great majority of Catholics in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. In terms of origin, they still do.

But in what way are the Protestant churches working class? If other indicators are used it may well be that a different dynamic will emerge. For example, judged on their commitment to a local community, many inner city churches score well in comparison to other churches (Faith in the City, 1985, 36-37). The writer has some considerable experience in working within this cultural milieu. He has witnessed first-hand churches with limited memberships of local and other people, led by clerics who may be the only professionals willing to live in such communities, attempting to engage the culture, alleviate a variety of social needs, and working with children, youth and others. Some, as will be shown, are quite innovative. It may well be that the church needs to think again about how it perceives itself. It need not be an either/or situation in relation to class, but a both/and scenario. The social classes may simply be practising their churchmanship differently.

1.2.4 Sectarian Issues

One of the central religious themes emerging from the recent history of Liverpool is this one of sectarianism. Perhaps only Glasgow in Scotland can compare with the kind of social upheaval the Catholic/Protestant dichotomy thrust upon the city of Liverpool in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This in fact will become the dominant theme throughout the thesis, and around which other themes will emerge. Some of the questions emerging

from this which have sociological relevance are the following. What were the causes of this sectarian strife? What were and are its manifestations? What changes, if any, have come about in this form of religiosity, and what are the reasons behind the change? Finally it has to be asked if the sectarian issue is now dead or still alive. Some detail will be given to this issue, as it is central to the religious evolution and spiritual psyche of many in Liverpool.

1.2.5. Ecumenical Partnership.

From ecumenism's launching pad at Edinburgh in 1910, something of its emergence as a meaningful force will be traced within the city of Liverpool, and its effects assessed even beyond the churches. It will be noted how two men particularly appeared on the horizon to gather together the strands of ecumenical activity already existing, and initiate a much higher profile for the more substantive ecumenical partnership now in place. The manifestations of ecumenism will be examined along with its effects, with the aim of discovering just how far it can really be deemed supreme in Liverpool's religious life.

Yet dominant as this form of churchmanship may appear, it is important that other questions are asked and answered too. For example, what now is the position of the Roman Catholic Church towards its 'separated brethren'? Is there a genuine move from this monolithic church towards other Christians? If so, how far, at what rate, and to what depth has it gone? Furthermore, is there any meaningful opposition to the ecumenical mood? If so, where does it spring from, and how strong and broad is it? Is there actually an alternative to the ecumenical style of churchmanship? If so, where is it coming from? Finally it will be considered whether ecumenism is now a lasting harmonious factor in Liverpool Christianity, replacing the older contentious sectarianism.

1.2.6 Christian Education: Its Nature and Purpose.

As education is increasingly placed at the top of government's and society's list of priorities, it is of some importance that the roots of the education system are remembered, and its place in the scheme of things evaluated. The churches in Liverpool played their part in attempting to educate what was a substantial proportion of the city's children before the watershed of 1870 when government legislation began to impinge upon the existing fragmented educational system and give it direction. An attempt will be made to examine just how the churches faced up to the educational needs of the populace, and how effective they were in educating poorer communities.

Following government intervention from 1870 onwards, the effects on

education were momentous. State schools financed by local authorities were established, providing competition to the church schools, and placing restraints on the style of religious education taught within them. The historical and empirical data will trace the effects of these changes and discuss how far church ownership of schools has fomented or reflected sectarianism. Furthermore, the role and impact of present day church schools, along with the place of worship and religious education, are subjects of ongoing debate. How are such schools faring in Liverpool? What is the present state of religious education and worship in schools, both church and state (non-denominational)? How is the 'system' coping with the greater religious pluralism evident today? Finally, the relationship between higher education and Christianity will be considered with reference to Liverpool Hope University College.

1.2.7. Cultural Adaptation

A final dimension lies at the core of present day Christianity. It addresses the very nature of contemporary Christian practice and asks whether there has been a significant shift in attitude to the world by Christian people. The church through the centuries, has often been accused of adapting to the prevailing wind of opinion, political and even moral, and thus finding itself being shaped rather than shaping the world into which it has been sent by its Founder. How far this cultural adaptation has taken place in the church in Liverpool is something worthy of inspection. Two initial indicators may help to make this evaluation fruitful, namely the beliefs and the practices of believers. If there has been any significant change of mood; any sign of cultural shift - particularly in the last fifty years when many accepted norms have been all but eradicated, then it should be apparent in those Christians interviewed.

There are other indicators too which will help in assessing whether there has been a significant shift in attitude amongst those of a broadly Christian disposition. The first is in the area of attendance. How far does church attendance count with religious people today? Is there a noticeable 'believing without belonging' as Davie asserts? (Davie, 1995, 5). Has a more private and personalised religion replaced a corporate form? If so, how far does Liverpool mirror this? Secondly, how big a shift has taken place amongst the churches themselves ie. has 'combining' replaced 'contending' in the outlook of Liverpool Christians? If so, how far has this new mood permeated the culture of Liverpool people generally?

Finally, it will be worthwhile noting how the churches in Liverpool have fared in their relations with external authorities. Have they adopted a validating

attitude towards civic and governmental authority, or have they become an agency for challenging them? Are some Christians opting out of this sphere of activity? The historical and empirical data will help unfold just how far the church today in Liverpool is extending its influence on local and national government.

1.3. 'SITZ IM LEBEN': LIVERPOOL

The above term describes the cultural milieu of a given historical series of events. It is used here to describe the period chosen for this socio-historical exploration of Christianity's influence on Liverpool. Liverpool is a suitable focus of the research, because over the period it has had relatively low numbers of other faith communities, in contrast to cities like Leeds and Bradford. Within this broad homogeneity it is intended that the more specific locus of religious animosity be examined and some of the reasons as to its origins and existence assessed. There are four characteristics of the city's life which form a framework for doing this.

1.3.1. Its Cosmopolitan Nature

Liverpool became an increasingly cosmopolitan city, reaching its zenith in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when trade was at its peak. Something of the magnitude of this trade is evident in the statistics of the day. 'In 1875 £105,095,188 of imports entered Liverpool. By 1906, £146,701,650 was entering....ships were getting bigger and using steam ' (Garstang, 1920, 37). This trade was worth more than the equivalent handled in London, New York, Hamburg or Antwerp. The 'fabulous riches' (Garstang, 1920, 29) which had come to the city chiefly as a consequence of the slave trade, became a magnet for the dispossessed in other parts of the country and indeed the world. Into Liverpool flowed a large number of British immigrants, primarily the poorest (Chandler, 1957, 371), with the purpose of earning a living, finding a home, and maybe making their fortune.

Those British nationals who chose to make Liverpool their home, came mainly from Lancashire and Cheshire, Yorkshire, Cumberland and Westmorland, and from the naval towns of Devon and Cornwall. Many also came from North Wales, with the decline of the small Welsh coast ports and the copper industry (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 66-68), and brought with them their Methodism and chapels. '[Liverpool] was for almost a century, from the mid-nineteenth century, the urban home of some 20,000 Welsh-born immigrants...It is unlikely that there has ever been such a concentration of Welsh speakers in one city' (Jones and Rees, 1984, 34). One historian declared; 'There are almost as many

Welshmen as Irishmen in the city' (Muir, 1907, 305). The Irish were chiefly Catholic in religious persuasion, the majority of whom had come to Liverpool as a result of the potato famine of the mid eighteen forties (see 4.1.2). There were also many of Presbyterian background who had emigrated to the city to find employment. The Scots also arrived in numbers, some of whom joined the shipbuilding trade in Birkenhead, along with others who took up important business and professional posts (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 68). In 1934 it was found that British immigrants to Liverpool formed 16% of the sampled population (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 75). A matrix of religious systems as a consequence, began to emerge in the new, polyglot city of Liverpool.

Added to the nationals who found a home in the city, were the mixture of international groups who also sought a new life within the now rapidly expanding metropolis. There was the substantial Jewish community with an estimated population of over 6,000 in 1921. Then there were Americans, Germans Scandinavians, Australians, along with some West Africans from within the Empire (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 70-71). The Chinese community, one of the oldest in Europe, instituted its own Chinatown in the heart of the city. It had its origins in the development of trade with China in 1868, when Alfred and Philip Holt formed the Ocean Steam Ship Company for this purpose. It was as seamen on these ships that the Chinese first came to Liverpool. From a small group of 15 in 1881, they amounted to 571 in 1921 (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 72). A further group arrived at the beginning of the Second World War, recruited as sailors for the Chinese Merchant's Pool, which had its headquarters in Liverpool. Some stayed on after the War and found work in the restaurant trade (Shang, 1984, 10). Muir asserted in 1907; 'There is no city in the world, not even London itself, which so many foreign governments find it necessary to maintain consular offices for the safeguarding of the interests of their exiled subjects' (Muir, 1907, 305).

Finally there is the black community based in the south end of the city. This is one of the longest established and most integrated black communities in the country and goes back as far as the early nineteenth century (Gifford, Brown, and Bundey, 1989, 42, 26). Following the First World War however, black people found work as firemen on the West African vessels, and this formed the growing basis of the black community in Liverpool, as some began to settle there. In 1934 they included approximately 500 adult males (Caradog-Jones, 1934, 75). By 1984 it was estimated that there was a maximum of 30,000 and a minimum of 20,000 in the black population of Liverpool, ie. between 4-6% of the general population (Gifford, Brown and Bundey, 1989, 37). Many

black people were recruited from the Caribbean both to fight in the war efforts and to work in the war economy (Gifford, Brown and Bundey, 1989, 28). The levels of immigration markedly increased from the 1950s as many West Indians came to work in Britain, often in jobs the British people did not want.

1.3.2. Its Partisan Spirit

It is in this area that Liverpool is particularly suited to a religio-sociological inquiry. The immigration of many thousands of Irish from their own land brought in its wake a religious divide which had been historically present on their own island since Elizabethan times, i.e. 300 years earlier. The disenfranchisement of Catholics at the hands of a Protestant monarchy and government, coupled with intense persecutions over this period, ensured a permanent and deepening bitterness existed between Protestant and Catholic. Despite Catholic Emancipation in 1829, this sectarian spirit was transferred to Liverpool as the city became an alternative locus for the ongoing hostilities between the two Christian factions. This is underlined by Bryson who states that in Liverpool, 'Sectarian violence became an internal Irish private battle' (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 10). This is not to imply there was no partisanship prior to the mid-1840s, but it certainly was re-ignited by this additional factor.

This religious partisanship resulted in two dominant cultures developing within the city. Both Catholic and Protestant groups resided in distinct territories within certain areas in the city - in the north side, near Everton, and on the south side near the Dingle. In both these areas the two groups could be close to the docks and thus closer to work opportunities. This exacerbated the problem, and residential segregation became a corollary of religious intolerance. It also resulted on occasions, in families having to move out of certain streets for fear of reprisals from those of opposing religious views, thus confirming the divisions all the more. Religious partition came to be one of the marks of the new culture emerging in Liverpool.

1.3.3. Its Discriminatory Practice

Due to the social factors already mentioned, the city became a centre of discrimination. How far this spread and how much this still remains the case is part of the purpose of this research. The most obvious discrimination occurred in the early years of the period between Catholic and Protestant. In the area of jobs, it was a continual struggle to find an employer who would be free of prejudice against one side or the other. Houses too were hard enough to come by at the best of times, despite a fairly intense building rate from the first years of the twentieth century, which had mixed success (Garstang, 1920, 40; Friend,

1981, 12ff.). As some housing became locked into a sectarian scheme of partition however, sectarian attachment could on occasions determine where individuals would find housing. How far sectarian issues continue to impinge on people's employment or neighbourhood is something mentioned only occasionally in the data, perhaps implying the demise of such practices.

Similarly, within the black community there emerged a sub-culture based in the south side of the city near the docks. Within that community, tolerance and acceptance of a multi-racial society is almost universal. Yet the prejudice of those outside the community to both black and white who come from the area remains bitter (Gifford, Brown, and Bundey, 1989, 42). Young black people therefore have a greater prospect of unemployment and disadvantage generally, than most of their white counterparts. Has the Christian community then, attempted to deal with race both within and without its own borders? For example, how are black people incorporated into the churches? Are there in fact any black churches?

1.3.4. Its Ecumenical Experiment

Ecumenism can now be said to be part of the Liverpool cultural scene since the mid -1970s, following the arrival of the two Bishops, Sheppard and Worlock, to the city. There had been some embryonic ecumenical activity prior to their arrival, but only operating at local community level (May and Simey, 1989). Even between the two World Wars, there had still been an active sectarian stream in the politics and religion of the city. Public rancour was one of the hallmarks of both the Anglican and Catholic Bishops, David and Downey, during the thirties (Peart Binns, 1985, 48). The local political scene was also plagued by religious divisions, particularly within the emergent Labour Party.

In the mid-1970s however, a new conciliatory spirit was introduced to Liverpool religion. The first of the two new Bishops to arrive on the scene in 1975 was the Anglican David Sheppard, formerly the Bishop of Woolwich. He was quickly followed by Archbishop Derek Worlock in 1976 and almost immediately they both formed a strong friendship, having met briefly in London many years earlier. Religious rancour was replaced by personal respect, as the two men set about introducing their new brand of religious optimism based on concord rather than discord. It is this new mood of optimism which goes some way to making Liverpool an important setting for a sociological study into the religious dimension of the city's life.

1.4. TIME-SCALE (1845-2000)

The time-scale chosen for this thesis is one in which very real change has come to Liverpool. Within the period studied, many diverse factors combined to make the city a melting pot for strife, religious fervour, high unemployment, poverty and political intrigue. What lies at the heart of this ferment? What was and is so special about this period of Liverpool's history?

1.4.1. The Irish Factor

It seems that no matter what area of Liverpool's life is explored during this time, the Irish factor appears to permeate it. How could it not, when the face of Liverpool life was dramatically transformed in the mid-1840s? During the two critical years of 1846-7, and subsequently, thousands of desolate Irish who were suffering from the ravaging forces of nature in one of the worst potato famines in their history, made the voyage across the Irish Sea to inundate the city of Liverpool. No less than 300,000 had arrived by the end of June 1847 (Simey, 1992, 41). Many passed on to America and Canada, and other parts of Britain, but tens of thousands crammed into a Liverpool already inadequately housed and quite unprepared for such an 'invasion'. The consequences of this sudden upsurge of population had a detrimental effect upon the city in a multiplicity of ways.

Firstly, the substandard and totally inadequate housing conditions already being endured by many of the inhabitants, were now completely swamped, with many thousands living in courts and cellars with little or no sanitation or toilet facilities. Often one or more families would be assigned a room to share, with little or no space for furnishings. In some cases, fifty to sixty people were occupying one house 'containing three or four small rooms about twelve feet by ten, and in more than one instance upwards of forty were found sleeping in a cellar' (Simey, 1992, 41). Secondly, intemperance became a huge problem as many of the Irish immigrants discovered their fortunes hadn't changed. 'Famine at home [was] being exchanged for death abroad' (Burke, 1910, 88). A Temperance Movement had been in existence however since 1830, indicating the problem was not an entirely Irish one (Waller, 1981, 109).

Another corollary of the atrocious conditions was crime. Dunning, the Head Constable of the city, pronounced Liverpool the worst city for juvenile crime (Waller, 1981, 170). With few or no jobs for immigrants, despite being a busy port, petty crime was one of the means of putting food in mouths. These then were some of the appalling conditions afflicting the city and exacerbated by the arrival of such a vast number of immigrants.

The Irish did what migrant societies have done the world over, and turned in on themselves to form a ghetto-like community. In this case, 'the interests of the Catholic Church and the interest of the immigrants interacted to reinforce each other. For the migrants the church was their major social institution, the one thing they had in common and the only source of communal leadership, so they turned to it' (Bruce, 1995, 25). The anti-Irish attitude of many Liverpool people also played its part in creating these Irish ghettos, forcing the immigrants to seek solace amongst their own kind. The Irish factor from this time on continued to influence Liverpool's politics, religion and culture generally (see 4.1.2). No analysis of the city's life can ignore this potent ethnic dimension.

1.4.2. Fluctuating Religious Antagonism

The time-scale of just over 150 years is a long one for the purposes of close research. It will therefore be helpful to break up this larger field into smaller segments of time and note how the religious scene appears to fluctuate in intensity with regard to religious antagonisms. Slowly but surely during the twentieth century, the city appears to have withdrawn from confrontational religion to a more co-operative form. Reasons for this will emerge in more detail later, but by way of introduction it is necessary to develop the segmental time-spans introduced previously (1.1.4) and observe the nuances of change.

Firstly there is the period of persecution from the mid-1840s to the 1860s when sectarian strife was heightened by Irish migration. An anti-Catholic spirit had already been evident in Liverpool however, led by the charismatic Ulster minister Hugh McNeile, who had taken a post at St.Jude's in Liverpool in 1834. He claimed Popery was 'religious heresy....and political conspiracy' (Waller, 1981, 11). Something of the intensity of his sectarian prejudice is revealed by the Liverpool Mercury who quote McNeile as claiming; 'He hated popery. He was born and bred to hate it. He hated it through life and he would continue to hate it until death' (Quoted by Neal, 1988, 50). 'Protestant ascendancy was described as truth over error, light over darkness, freedom over slavery' (Waller, 1981, 18). Between 1836 and 1860, there were at least 41 sectarian riots in Liverpool (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 117), indicating further the intense ill-feeling between the two religious factions.

The second period may reflect an increasing concord. It ranged from the 1860s to the 1880s, when the city seemed to be focusing attention on other important issues such as the housing problem. The more violent symptoms of sectarian

feeling were apparently held in check. Some indication of this comes from two of the city's leaders. Firstly, William Rathbone the Unitarian social reformer and politician, hints at the improving relations in his address to the Liverpool Council of Education on Jan. 26th 1892. He queries; 'Can there be any doubt of this [perfect harmony in Liverpool] when we remember the time when Liverpool was as notorious for the bitterness of its religious animosities as it is now conspicuous for the cordial union of its citizens in public beneficial work' (Rathbone, Address, 1892). The other testimony to improved relations during this period comes from a statement made by the Chief Constable Leonard Dunning in 1904 (when the situation was troublesome again) to the Watch Committee. Looking back he remembered a time when party animosity had been for some time 'almost extinct' (Daily Post, Sept. 13th, 1904).

The third period of violent confrontation, ranges from the 1890s to the beginning of the First World War. This period was probably the worst in the history of the city for its intense violent sectarian bitterness, as the pendulum swung back again to confrontational religion and politics. The chief reason for this was the emergence in the 1890s of yet another greatly influential sectarian leader, George Wise. Waller claims Wise 'did not cause Liverpool's sectarianism; he activated it' (Waller, 1981, 240). By means of regular street processions and his regular open air preaching on St.Domingo Road, Wise brought sectarian havoc to the streets once more, and became the scourge of the Chief Constable who had him incarcerated twice. The writer has a friend who was brought up in this sectarian culture, who to this day still refers to Protestants as 'Wiseites'.

The fourth period was one of suspicion, and embraces the inter-war years when relations continued on a strained note. Henry Longbottom had succeeded George Wise on his death in 1917, as the 'self appointed head man of the Liverpool Protestants' (Braddock, 1963, 81). Longbottom maintained an anti-Romanist spirit, but gained his power from the surviving sectarianism and not from his own radical views (Waller, 1981, 303). During this period too the Labour Party was emerging in Liverpool, but was also experiencing the downside of sectarianism within its ranks. A coterie of Roman Catholic councillors set their own agenda over the building of a Roman Catholic Cathedral at the expense of party unity (see 4.2.4). Bevins described the religious hostility within the Labour Party at this time as 'an exercise in apartheid' (Waller, 1981, 325). This internecine fighting, added to the fact that most Protestants voted Tory, seems to have been a factor in preventing Labour

becoming a more potent force until 1955 when it finally won control of Liverpool.

A further indicator of sectarian strain is evidenced in the relations between the two Bishops of the day, the Anglican Albert David and the Catholic Richard Downey. Despite a passive approach to Catholics initially, David was pushed by some anti-Romanists into lifting the lid on sectarianism again. He invited a prominent anti-Catholic speaker to give three public lectures in Liverpool. He followed this by criticising Catholics for holding street meetings near Anglican churches and also criticised the Catholic approach to mixed marriages. He further denounced the Irish for continuing to come to Britain for the higher dole, stating 'The most serious effect is political. They may give control to the Labour Party, which in turn may gain control of local government. In this event, Liverpool will be dominated by Roman Catholics' (Peart-Binns, 1985, 48). Downey on the other hand, is credited with encouraging 'a greater emphasis on assimilation, rather than defence of the faith for the local Catholic population' (Davies, 1996, 70).

The fifth period was one of tolerance, and includes the years from the second World War to the 1960s when matters began to improve as the post-War society emerged with all its changes. More and more men were finding a new brotherhood in the Trade Union movement, enabling them to cross the sectarian divide. Chandler, after outlining the range of new industries in Liverpool, goes so far as to state in the 1950s that 'the new industrial developments have made Liverpool a boom town' (Chandler, 1957, 366). New housing estates were built on the outskirts of the city, resulting in a decanting of the city centre with a corresponding break-up of cultures and communities which had often been dependent on churches for their raison d'être. A new Catholic Cathedral was erected in 1967, and a new friendlier spirit was fostered between the two Bishops now in residence - the Anglican Martin and the Catholic Heenan. The two became great personal friends (Bailey, 1985, 65).

The final period within the time scale runs from the 1960s to the year 2000, and has been one of growing ecumenism. The sixties was one of the most significant watersheds for social change in Britain this last century (see Davies, 1975). During that era a generation emerged which began to challenge the established norms and authority structures of society. Out of this era has come a new individualism and relativism, which some see as bringing moral and spiritual confusion to Western culture. Wilson puts it this way; 'The

decline in religion seems to have brought about in its train a process of uncertainty about morals and the abandonment both of earlier moralising attitudes and the genuine concern about the role of morality in contemporary culture' (Wilson, 1982, 88). Yet during the 1960s and in the period immediately following, there arose in Liverpool a renewed spirit of Catholic/Protestant co-operation probably unsurpassed in any other city in the land. The reasons for this transformation and its effects, are one of the central themes of this thesis, but suffice to indicate here again the role of the two Bishops in bringing this about. David Sheppard and Derek Worlock, like their predecessors in the 1950s, became close friends, and adopted as their motto 'Better Together', which also became the title of one of their books. Concentrating on what they had in common, they set about transforming the outlook of Liverpool people, both Catholic and Protestant, to their religious neighbour. Whilst they began the process from a low baseline, their collaborative approach nonetheless was quite unique. The religious mood of Liverpool as a consequence seems to have altered.

1.4.3. Radical Change

The period researched is also one which has witnessed significant changes in the thinking of British society. In the spheres of religious belief, educational philosophy, and political ideology, new views emerged - particularly in the nineteenth century, which have altered considerably the intellectual climate.

1.4.3.1. Religious Education

Religious education has also undergone a radical change during the last century and a half. As has been stated earlier (1.2.6), education generally has had an important place in the efforts of the church to improve the lot of both individual and society. In 1845 the churches were almost exclusively the sole purveyors of education. Elementary schools were the most common, dealing with children from five to eleven. Though there were obvious advantages in attending a church school, their sectarian nature continued to be a major cause of dissension in the late nineteenth century.

Forster's Education Act of 1870 began the process of change by offering education to a wider range of children. Those who could not afford to pay the fees of the church schools would be offered schooling at the new Board Schools financed out of the rates, and providing a basic education with a non-denominational curriculum. The churches felt threatened, but came to terms with the new system. In 1902, Balfour's Education Act replaced the School Boards by handing administration to Local Education Authorities, whilst

retaining the same religious policy (Pritchard, 1980, 105f). In 1944 Butler's Education Act included more legislation on religious issues in State schools. That Act required 'all pupils in county maintained schools to attend and take part in a daily act of collective worship unless withdrawn by their parents' (Hull, 1995, 22). These Acts maintained the requirement that worship should not be of any denominational character. Religion was now to be part of the overall school experience.

Baker's Education Reform Act of 1988 changed the nature of collective worship however, and offered head teachers in State schools a further number of options. The Act introduced a new clause 7, stating that collective worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (Hull, 1995, 23). It was still not to be denominational in character, but reflect the 'broad traditions of Christian belief' (Hull, 1995, 23). This presented head teachers with difficulties. What was meant by 'wholly or mainly' of Christian character? In areas of large ethnic minorities, could the worship of the school be mainly Christian, yet also include other religious traditions? Hull sums up the solution for some teachers. 'It quickly became apparent that acts of collective worship could be drawn from more than one religious tradition and that what came to be called multi-faith worship was permitted by the law every day of the week, provided that...on a majority of days, the mainly Christian character could be demonstrated' (Hull, 1995, 24). This is not the whole story however. The Reform Act also relegated the old 1944 Act to clause 6, in which nothing was specified about the content or approach of acts of worship. This allowed other minor collective acts of worship to take place which could be wholly or mainly of a broadly Muslim or Hindu character, depending on the make-up of the school population (Hull, 1995, 24). It does appear then, that the influence of an increasingly pluralistic culture has been responsible for such ambiguity in the new legislation. How this is presently being reflected in Liverpool schools is considered later (see 8.4).

1.4.3.2. Political Re-alignment

For the best part of a century, until the mid-nineteen fifties, the city was governed by a strong Conservative Party, colluding with the Orange Lodge for a short period at the latter part of the nineteenth century, and with the Protestant Party in the early twentieth century. This tended to divide the city along politico/religious lines, with the Liberal Party sympathetic to Catholics and their emancipation (Neal, 1988, 54). The three-way alliance of Protestant, Conservative and Orange Order, helped maintain the Conservative stronghold in the city, with the exception of a few years between 1892-5 when the Liberals

had control.

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the Conservatives retained their power amidst the slow growth of the Labour Party in the city. They lost the automatic support of the Orange movement early on in 1889 however, which affirmed its independence from the Conservatives and put forward its own candidates for local government (Waller, 1981, 95). Nonetheless, they both continued to unite for Protestant issues. Some of the more extreme Protestants formed their own independent party in 1903 called the National Protestant Electoral Federation, with George Wise in the forefront (Waller, 1981, 201). Catholic energies in politics were channelled through the Irish National Party which argued for Home Rule in Ireland. With the creation of the Irish Free State in 1921, the Independent Labour Party founded locally in 1892 (Waller, 1981, 136), became the home for more and more Catholics and was the dominant force in Catholic wards in the early 1920s (Davies, 1996, 70). 'The tradition of aggressive Protestantism was discarded by Conservatives in the years following the War, perhaps because some felt it distasteful and others merely useless. Increasingly people were finding alternatives or surrogates for religion' (Waller, 1981, 350). This detachment from sectarian politics was also evidenced in the demise of any Independent Protestant candidate as early as 1928 (Waller, 1981, 303), though some re-emerged in the guise of Conservatives later on (Braddock, 1963, 81). Many internal divisions were to mark the Labour Party's efforts through the thirties and forties, but in 1955 they were finally elected the dominant party in the Liverpool Council for the first time.

1.5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL: COUNTERPOINT

Counterpoint is a term used in the composition of music. It involves the interplay of different melodies, sometimes contrasting with and sometimes complementing the main melody. The various independent melodies come to form one single harmonious texture. This concept of counterpoint forms an ideal framework for expressing the detailed interplay of events and personalities who make up Liverpool life. In order to ascertain some meaning to the trends and events of the past 150 years, a central theme will be used which appears to pervade these events. That central theme is sectarianism. Other themes emerge too however, running in counterpoint to this, to form a more complex picture of the city's life. They will be examined to see how far they harmonise or clash with the central theme. Finally, it will be determined whether there is a new tune emerging, which more aptly conveys the religious scene at the present. The following is an outline of how this might develop.

1.5.1. Main Theme: Sectarianism

This seems to be the most appropriate central theme around which to examine the multi-faceted range of experiences and events which have occurred in Liverpool's religious life. As has been shown, the Catholic/Protestant sectarian influence pervaded the mainstream of civic life. It dominated the arena of politics for more than a century, it divided the Protestant churches as to the degree of anti-Catholic vitriol they were prepared to engage in (Unitarians however were free from this), it disrupted the educational system by insisting on instruction along sectarian lines, and it overflowed to the employment and housing sectors, with prejudice being exhibited to one or other of the factions. Finally, it exacerbated the political and denominational divisions already existing in the working class community.

Such has been the impact of sectarianism on the life of the city, that few of its citizens can talk of the church and the faith without reference to it. The writer has found from experience that many long-standing citizens find it difficult to discard the prejudices they imbibed as children, and consequently remain suspicious of those on the other side of the Christian divide. Even at the present time, when the cutting edge of sectarianism has been severely blunted, there remains a sectarian core to the religion of many Protestants expressed in the continuance of Orange parades on 12th July.

1.5.2. Christian Counter-Culture: Alternating Themes

Having established the main theme, it will be necessary to consider the alternative themes which emerge from the data. The thesis will explore the range of strong themes operating in counterpoint to the main sectarian tune. For example, alongside the bitter feuding in church and city, there was a very wide-ranging social amelioration programme, staffed by some very dedicated individuals from most of the denominations. Similarly, despite the sectarian nature of education, the churches contributed greatly to the schooling of Liverpool children prior to 1870 and have continued to do so subsequently. Finally, in politics there were a few in the past who attempted to resist the pressure to conform to a sectarian mould. Examining these alternative themes will provide relevant data for an evaluation of Christianity's contribution to the city at that time.

1.5.3. A New Tune?

The Liverpool religious scene in the present is quite different from that of a hundred years ago. So what has changed? The politics of the city have

changed, with political rather than religious ideology now more of a determinant factor. The Labour Party, rather than the Conservatives, has been in control for most of the time since the 1950s. Housing has improved through the years. Social services are now more readily available and government financed. The nature of employment has changed with the demise of the docks and its industry. The churches appear to have changed too. There are fewer of them, but of greater significance is the change in direction in which they are now moving. Ecumenism is the watchword of the day. Since the mid-1970s, the move to do things together has become increasingly a mark of the major denominations. Is this however just the church playing at political correctness, or is it something more? Is there a genuine attempt now being made to integrate Liverpool society? The social dimension of ecumenism has to be examined, the evidence weighed, and some conclusions drawn as to whether there is now a new tune, a new central theme playing at the heart of Liverpool Christianity. And if so, is there then a new counterpoint playing around that? What follows is an outline of how this conceptual model will be developed.

1.6. THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Following the methodology outlined in chapter two, the third chapter deals with the social theory of religion. It will be shown how there has been a major shift in thinking regarding the place and role of religion in the modern world. Strong doubts were expressed about its ability to recapture the hearts and minds of humankind on a large scale (eg.Wilson, 1982). This has altered dramatically however in the most recent literature on the subject. Instead of religion being seen as a philosophical fossil in the evolution of humankind, it has re-emerged with renewed vigour in the many expressions of fundamentalism and other public forms of religion. This provides the framework into which the religious development of Liverpool can be placed.

The historical backdrop is presented in chapters four and five, and provides the main theme to the thesis. In these chapters the root causes of sectarian religion, not necessarily Christian religion, will be traced along with the 'alternative' Christianity operating in parallel with it. Sectarianism is often the image of Liverpool religion portrayed in the media and in folklore, and while much sectarian religion has indeed marred the history and development of the city, these two chapters aim to provide a better balance. Chapter four will consider the causes and manifestations of sectarianism, as well as revealing how widespread was its damaging influence. It will also show however, that the sectarian dimension to Liverpool life had more than a religious expression. It was a multi-faceted issue. Social, political, economic and even ethnic factors

played a significant role in this phenomenon. Chapter five provides the counterpoint however, by demonstrating the more positive elements of Christianity during that same period. The achievements in education by all the major denominations, the social amelioration programmes introduced by Christian philanthropists, and the improved health care provision, are some of the more positive means expressed by the Christian community during this phase.

Chapter six brings the research up to date by outlining something of the Christian scene at the close of the twentieth century. This data emerges from the interviews conducted with 26 participants across the religious divide, chiefly from positions of leadership or prominence. It reveals that despite a decrease in numbers, the churches are engaged widely in numerous social and educational ministries and projects. Neither national nor local governments are able to plug every gap in the provision of care. The churches are often at their strongest in this area therefore, working with a variety of age groups, from children right through to pensioners, working with the disaffected and the terminally ill, and also with politicians and police. These three chapters (4-6) provide a longitudinal approach to the religious history of the city and enable the researcher to make a valid comparison with the past. What emerges is not only evidence of a healthy interaction between the church and diverse sections of society, but a significant shift in denominational alignment. Sectarianism has given way to a conspicuous ecumenism. Religious schism has been replaced by a greater visible unity.

The more specific sociological findings to emerge from the interviews are detailed in the seventh chapter. Seven main concepts arose from the data and are used as a basis for assessing the views of the respondents. These concepts are: a secularised church, a privatised faith, consensus religion, the demise of sectarian religion, clerical role-change, a marginalised church and Christian education. From this data, it was possible to assess the present state of the church in relation to the past. The respondents disclosed their most personal feelings and beliefs, and certain trends became apparent. These reveal a combination of views confirming some of the theory developed in chapter three, like the marginalisation and privatisation of religion. Yet the paradox of religious revival is also apparent in Liverpool with the emergence not only of ecumenism, but a form of conservative religion bordering on fundamentalism, known as Together For the Harvest (TFH). Moral and gender issues give further proof of the changes in thinking, along with increasingly relativistic attitudes to other faith groups. This chapter provides the reader with some

insights about present Christian thinking in Liverpool, and underscores the major shifts which have taken place through the twentieth century. Some of this can be attributed to cultural influences from the media and to greater cross-cultural interaction. It would appear that the global village has embraced even the church!

How the church leaders view the future is the subject of chapter eight. A detailed analysis of attitudes to interfaith and religious pluralism is provided. This reveals a substantial move by a significant number of respondents from Christian orthodoxy to a more inclusive form of religion with strong pluralistic intonations. The chapter also outlines some of the hopes and dreams of the respondents for the church in the twenty first century. It will be seen here that there is little that is concrete or definite. The future is contemplated with a great deal of wishful thinking laced with a touch of nostalgia. This lack of vision could be one of the reasons for the church's present condition.

Chapter nine focuses on the present attempt in Liverpool to re-align the churches. A detailed look is taken at the widespread changes in the Roman Catholic Church. The question of a 'Protestantisation' of the Catholic Church following Vatican 2 is examined, with contrary views expressed. A reflection is given on the numerical decline faced by all denominations and how far this has pushed the churches to seek re-alignment ie. is ecumenism a movement born out of necessity, or is it something much deeper? Finally, relativistic approaches to religious belief are also seen to impinge in a small way on the strong ecumenism now evident in Liverpool.

The theme of counterpoint is used in chapter ten to inquire if there is now a new religious tune playing on Merseyside. The extent of the divisive nature of sectarianism is summarised, followed by an appraisal of the role of the two Bishops in creating the alternative to sectarianism, ie. the 'Mersey Miracle' of a resurgent ecumenism. Could there however be another counterpoint to this model? Various possibilities are examined and evaluated, with one emerging as a potential challenger.

The development of religious activity is perpetually in a state of flux, and Liverpool has possibly displayed this more publicly than any other city in Britain. This thesis aims to show this both historically and empirically.

2. METHODOLOGY

Much of the raison d'être for the research, along with the outline of approach, has been given in the introduction. There it was shown that the thesis required both historical and sociological disciplines for a proper analysis of religion's effects over the period under review. The historical survey aids the assessment of any changes which have occurred in attitude, in numerical involvement, and the level of influence of the churches and individuals on the politics of the city. Sociology on the other hand, is an effective tool for uncovering the reasons behind any changes which the history throws up, with its investigative questioning and conceptual analysis. 'The basic questions are who, when, where, what, how, how much, and why?' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 77).

Most of the historical literature on religion in Liverpool relates to the latter half of the nineteenth century and up to the Second World War. It has been shown that this was an exceptionally virulent period in the religious history in Liverpool and much was written in the newspapers and in the plethora of Christian literature around at the time. This then became a convenient dividing line for making a comparison between events following that War with what had passed previously. Some literature has been written during this latter period, particularly to do with the work of the two Bishops and the other church leaders, but no substantial religious history has appeared. As a consequence, greater reliance has been placed on interviews with key players, with the purpose of filling in this period with some snapshots of religious life in the city as it grew out of the War into the flourishing ecumenism of the nineteen seventies and eighties.

The sociological analysis also provided the writer with some of the reasons behind the present thinking of the church at the close of the millennium. The decline of a sectarian mood and growth of ecumenism, the emergence of a pluralistic attitude to other religions, the insidious secularisation of some church practices, the changing role of ministry, and the confusion over gender issues is apparent in the respondents interviewed. This contrasts with the spirit prior to the Second World War in which Christians knew more clearly where they stood on such issues and could therefore argue more resolutely when they differed. A notable number of Christians today by contrast, appear to be more confused and less certain, and the sociological discipline has helped to expose this.

2.1. AN EXAMINATION OF THE SOCIAL THEORY OF RELIGION

A look at the broad sweep of views and analyses of a range of writers on the effects of religion on communities and nations was also undertaken. The social theory of religion offers some pertinent functional insights to some of the difficulties being faced by the Church today. Opinions were considered from both past and present day sociologists, which in a sense mirrored the lengthy period of time being studied. The functional approach adopted by many writers was particularly applicable to the aim of the thesis, and aided significantly the analysis of the religious scene in Liverpool over the research period. Their insights about sectarianism were particularly apposite for the Liverpool scene, where both traditional and sectarian forms of religion intertwined.

Many of the acknowledged theoretical writers on this subject have been studied (eg. Durkheim, Berger and Wilson), along with other writers providing a more empirical approach (eg. Bruce, Davie, McLeod). Some also provided an overview of religion in Europe and America (Stark, Bainbridge and Glock). Though the American religious scene has a lot in common with Britain, namely its Protestant and Nonconformist heritage, it also has travelled a different path in recent decades. Whereas the churches in Europe are in decline, the churches in America appear to be thriving. The 'inner secularisation' thesis which is often used to account for this American phenomenon, may be displaying some effects in Britain as well, as evidenced in some of the interviews. Yet it is doubtful if this is the full picture. The 'Bible Belt' in America is a powerful reminder that there remain thriving conservative groups who resist this 'inner secularisation', something mirrored on a very small scale in Britain with the rapid growth of the more conservative Housechurches. It could be argued that the churches which are least affected by inner secularisation are, in Britain at least, the most thriving.

An attempt has been made to relate the context of Liverpool life, as it has evolved over the past 150 years, to the main theoretical approaches to religion. Consequently, some of what has been argued in theory was also evident in practice eg. Durkheim's totemic principle is seen to be apparent to an extent in Loyalist Protestantism. Some theories now appear to be dated however, as in Marx's famous 'opiate' statement on religion. The working classes are not found in the churches in any significant numbers now, but have not embraced Marxism either. The analyses of the secularisation theory were particularly apposite, revealing a paradigm shift in the thinking of social scientists in the last thirty years. The outcome reveals how some of the old theory still fits,

and that much of it was influenced by a Western European culture. Today there is a new pattern emerging world-wide in which religion is acknowledged as having a significant bearing on the culture and lives of the nations. Liverpool people are no exception to this.

2.2. AN HISTORICAL INQUIRY

A survey of some of the most prominent literature on the social and religious history of Liverpool was undertaken at the outset to create a basis upon which to build the hypothesis. Literature written within the period was examined in order to gain insights to the language, beliefs, prejudices and thoughts of people at each phase of the city's religious evolution.

The writer found most of the material for this research in the local archive department in the Municipal Library in Liverpool. This material was not available on computer at the time, so it was not possible to do a computerised data search as can be done with existing research documents. Having established a preliminary outline of the thesis, the writer had some idea of the areas which needed examining. Added to the general historical literature were also a great many sources from newspapers, articles, magazines, biography, scrapbooks, surveys, censuses, reports, periodicals, etc (see bibliography for detail on these). These provided much primary material and filled out many of the issues raised in the more general literature. The sources ultimately chosen and referred to had some bearing on the initial concepts envisaged, and provided insight to attitudes and actions amongst Christians and others, particularly prior to World War Two. They also helped with a comparison in numbers attending church in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The length of period researched also meant there had to be a time limit on the amount of reading done here, as the thesis was intended to be more sociological than historical. The task then was to discover if there was sufficient data to investigate the hypothesis being considered. It seemed to the writer there was more than enough for doing so.

2.3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The empirical research undertaken involved three approaches. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, a brief questionnaire was sent out to selected denominations, and the writer visited many of the churches in the Liverpool area on Sundays.

2.3.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

In planning the research, the writer considered that a qualitative approach via

interviews would be the best means of extracting the kind of material with which to build the thesis. This enabled an in-depth appraisal to be made using the same questions for each respondent, yet allowed enough freedom to follow through other issues which arose in the process. 'By taking advantage of this method, the interview comes closer to a conversation and is more natural than a formal interview with a highly structured schedule' (Hall and Hall, 1996, 158). Semi-structured interviews therefore, were conducted with 26 people throughout Merseyside and in varied positions of leadership. The amount of qualitative data from these interviews provided ample material from which to derive a meaningful analysis. No Christian sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons were consulted, as being considered outside orthodox Christian parameters. Nor were any Jews selected, though having a long-standing place in Liverpool's religious history. The writer felt that for the best analysis of Christian input to the city, the recognised Christian denominations' members should be consulted, ie. the Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, United Reformed, Baptists, Congregational, Salvation Army and other independent churches. The exception to this are the Unitarians, who though not fully recognised as orthodox Christians, have long been bracketed with Christian Nonconformity. Their very significant contribution to Liverpool's city life in the late nineteenth century also makes their inclusion desirable.

The sampling included 7 members of the Roman Catholic Church, and 7 members of the Anglican Church. The Free Churches or Nonconformists were represented by 11 personnel as they are more varied. Finally, 3 members of the Orange Order were interviewed together, though the writer requested only one member for interview. On arrival, the writer found the prospective respondent flanked by two other members who remained and participated in the interview with some fervour. This however is taken as one interview. These numbers were not intended to be clear-cut ratios at the commencement, but are the outcome of the writer's attempts to get some kind of balance amongst the denominations.

Candidates for interview were chosen partly from personal knowledge. They had been in ministry in Liverpool for some years, were in a position to know well the stance, the work and the ministry of their particular denomination, and were free to convey their views. There was a deliberate attempt to obtain respondents from varied sectors of Christian involvement, so that within the parameters of semi-structured interviews, a broad canvas of Christian life in Liverpool could be obtained. This required a bit of digging to discover who they were. Finally, seven were chosen through the 'snowballing' process, in

which 'you start with one or two informants and get them to refer you on to others whom they think you should talk to as well' (Hall and Hall, 1996, 113).

The number of representatives from each denomination was intended to reflect its size, though it has to be borne in mind that some churches may have more active members than others (eg. the Catholic churches are generally better attended than the Anglicans). The following figures were provided by the denominations as representing the number of their churches in the Liverpool area. There are 62 Catholic churches, 105 Anglican churches, 17 Baptist churches, 24 Methodist churches, 80 'Together For the Harvest' churches, 9 Salvation Army Centres, 1 Unitarian church - and many others not mentioned. The sampling also attempted to include denominational groupings similar to those involved in Liverpool's religious past.

Finally, it was intended to interview the three main Church Leaders at the time, but sadly Archbishop Worlock was seriously ill and died before this could be achieved. Bishop Sheppard and Keith Hobbs the Free Church leader, were interviewed however, and John Furnival, personal chaplain and assistant to Derek Worlock, spoke for the Archbishop. Further details of the breakdown in job description of the respondents is given in Appendix 1.

In order to retain some level of anonymity, pseudonyms were used for the respondents most of the time. The exceptions to this are the occasions where mention of the individual's position makes anonymity impossible, or where identity lends added weight to the comments. Where such a respondent is named, the name has been given fully. Pseudonyms are only referred to by a Christian name. Finally, there are times when some individuals who are named are also given a pseudonym when speaking on issues other than their own work or ministry. As a result, some of the interviewees have more than one name in the text.

The interviews consisted of 18 open-ended questions. The questions were intended, amongst other things, to extract something of the background of the individual. How many for example, were Liverpool born? Out of the 26 interviews, only 9 respondents were either Liverpool or Merseyside born. These 9 however include the 3 Orange respondents taken as one interview. This factor may enhance to an extent, the degree of objectivity in many of the views expressed about the city and the churches.

The main purpose underlying the choice of questions however, was the writer's

desire to discover as much as possible about the functional level of the Christian religion in the city - what it is/is not achieving. There were originally 19 questions, but one was dropped as being superfluous (see Appendix 2), while other supplementary questions were added. The questions were piloted with the help of a friend of the writer, himself a clergyman. Following this amendments were made to the question on ministry. To question six were added three supplementary questions dealing with the place of women in ministry, the acceptability or otherwise of homosexual clergy, and the necessity of celibacy in ministry. The nineteenth question was dropped after a few interviews. As it was a semi-structured interview, varied supplementary questions were also added to the main question as the interview proceeded, so not all respondents had the opportunity to cover exactly the same ground. On other occasions, as time was running out during interview, certain questions had to be selected over others in importance. This meant sacrificing some data for the purpose of achieving greater depth in other areas. Bishop Sheppard had his own set of questions owing to his unique contribution to the religious scene in the city (see Appendix 2).

The questions asked also attempted to uncover both the positive and negative sides to Christianity in Liverpool. As the research is primarily sociological in nature, the practice of Christians and their experiences of church life and ministry, were particularly sought, and theological issues kept to a minimum. Questions on the church's involvement in community life and the place of ecumenism were also to the fore. Finally, attention was given to the role of the clergy in contemporary Christianity, providing fruitful material for analysis. Each interview lasted around the hour, with the exception of two occasions when it lasted half an hour due to the respondents' time schedule. All the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis, with the exception of the Orange Order. The interviews were sometimes conducted in the home of the interviewer, but more often in a place convenient to the respondents.

2.3.2. Grounded Theory

The interviews with the respondents were analysed without the aid of any computerised package. The writer made his own analysis at two levels. The material from the interviews was divided into major themes, and these themes lined up with those of the other respondents for categorisation. Further, the detailed answers to each question were also summarised, laid alongside the other respondents, and compared. This 'constant comparative method of analysis' is a process recognised as being central to the 'grounded theory' approach used in this thesis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 62). Taking this dual

approach meant not only certain large themes emerging, but also a plethora of sub-categories. Further, the 'grounded theory' approach to research implies the hypothesis being investigated was inductively derived from data collection and analysis. This means 'one does not begin with a theory and then prove it. Rather what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 23).

Grounded theory also requires the researcher to concentrate less on statistics and stress more the need for a theoretically derived explanation of events. Thus greater stress is laid on detailed questioning with a chosen sample. Over time, certain themes become more focused in explaining the processes being researched (Hall and Hall, 1996, 169). These then have to be analysed by means of 'open coding', in which the more detailed conceptual labels are extracted and categorised under more manageable classifications. The writer used the questions put to the respondents as the basis for open coding. The answers were analysed and categorised, with similar and dissimilar responses being noted.

Following this, the material was re-assembled under what is known as 'axial coding'. Here the material is put back in new ways by a complex paradigm in which connections are made between categories and sub-categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 114). 'The final theory is limited to those categories, their properties and dimensions, and statements of relationships that exist in the actual data collected' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 112). The main conceptual themes that emerged by this route in the present work are given in the introduction (1.2). The writer's aim was to discover what the Christian religion has contributed to the city of Liverpool, apart from the flagrant sectarianism at the turn of the last century. The data reveals there was and is significant social input from Christian individuals, agencies and churches of a positive and beneficial nature.

2.3.3. An Appraisal of the Interview Data

At this point it is now appropriate to sum up some of the strengths and weaknesses which emerge from the interviews. To begin with it was felt appropriate to interview only those from within the broad Christian tradition. Much thought was given to this at the outset, for the writer initially felt that to restrict the data to those within the churches and Christian organisations would present a one-sided view of Christian life and thought. Yet the difficulties presented by the alternative of finding views outside Christianity was even greater. Some specialists might be able to contribute something of note, but

for the general purpose of the thesis it was felt that those with a limited knowledge of the Christian church and its ministries would fail to provide the information necessary for building a theory along the lines planned. Having said this however, it has to be noted that the sample chosen consists almost exclusively of those in diverse Christian leadership roles. They reveal how the leaders of the denominations interpret the trends of the past and express their view of the future. Yet the downside to this is their obvious limited perception of events. The person in the pew may have a different standpoint. Grassroots experiences are often very different from the perceptions of the leader, and the writer is only too aware, as a working minister, that this dimension is absent.

The number of respondents was limited to twenty six. The nature of the research imposed this kind of restriction on the numbers, for the research was longitudinal requiring much time on historical investigation. Within such parameters, this allowed time for only a limited number of respondents. While again it might have been desirable to interview more people, the qualitative material derived from the 26 achieved was plentiful and detailed. These were people 'in the know', having their ear to the ground within their specific areas of service, and able to articulate their knowledge through the medium of a semi-structured interview. Divergence in opinion and belief could be traced within similar groups or denominations, as well as across denominational frontiers. Above all, the writer was impressed by the honesty of most respondents, maybe because they did not personally feel themselves under any kind of threat. Only a very few respondents escape this tribute. One great regret was the failure to obtain an interview with Archbishop Derek Worlock. His death deprived the research of the voice of an important actor in the recent religious history of Liverpool. His personal assistant however, has more than adequately conveyed his thinking and actions on the development of unity in the city.

Another feature of the research was the opportunity to compare the past with the present. To be able to talk to representatives from the same church and sectarian groupings as were present at the turn of the century, contributed considerably to the socio-historical perspective and analysis of Liverpool's religious journey. Having spent some considerable time investigating the history of sectarianism and the central characters within that period, it proved rewarding to be able to place some of the contemporary Christian leaders alongside them for comparison. The writer felt he had come to know some of the historical figures quite intimately, and that such comparison was beneficial to the thesis as it underscores the importance of charismatic individuals to the

religious history of the city. Therefore one of the strengths of the thesis lies in the personal cameos and assessments of the central players through the last two centuries. Personalities like Bishop Sheppard and Archbishop Worlock can be contrasted with their sectarian predecessors like McNeile and Wise. The social amelioration programmes of the past can be placed alongside the voluntary and statutory movements of the present with the differences of emphasis stressed. The move away from the personal philanthropy of a Nugent or Rathbone to a greater sense of corporate responsibility amongst churches and groups is another of the many changes observed.

A further positive outcome of the empirical data is that the church is seen to be resisting the pressures of secularisation. Whilst acknowledging the drop in numbers, the limitation of its influence and the decline in commitment and Christian morality, the Christian church appears to be working extremely hard to serve the community in ways which are practical as well as spiritual. There is still some way to go on this, but the data reveals many Liverpool Christians refusing to be overlooked. They are taking the initiative in social and educational projects and generally adapting where they can to meet the needs of their local communities. It will also be shown how two interdenominational movements, though not yet working in harness, carry similar agendas, namely the unity of the church. The first is the renowned Ecumenical Movement fronted initially by the two Bishops and other church leaders, while the second is the newly emerging Together For The Harvest Movement of evangelicals (TFH), with its more conservative, yet personal life-changing agenda. The religious and social potential for the city, should these two movements somehow converge, might be considerable. It really would mean completing that turbulent circle of events begun during the middle of the nineteenth century and provide Liverpool with a cohesive, yet diverse, church.

Having undertaken the research by the above route a few comments can be made on the actual process of acquiring the data. On reflection, it would have been better to have provided a longer time for interview. For some respondents an hour was adequate. For others however it was apparent that another half-hour at least would have given them opportunity not only to expand on certain topics, but also complete the full questionnaire. Further, to help those who found it more difficult to express themselves, it would have been beneficial to have had ready a pre-arranged set of supplementary questions for each main question rather than rely on ad hoc responses from the interviewer. This might have extracted a more comprehensive set of answers from the respondents. There was also an overlap on some questions which

only became apparent as interviews proceeded. Greater thought might have pre-empted that. Overall the approach taken was satisfactory and achieved much of what was initially desired.

2.3.4. A Brief Questionnaire

This was a very short questionnaire, as the writer wanted to be sure of a reasonable response from busy professionals. It consisted of only three questions (Appendix 3), initially with the aim of ascertaining the level of voluntary and paid work within the churches, and perhaps evaluating something of the economic contribution of the churches in their social activities. The value of the questionnaire lies in its capacity to reach a far wider number of people than was possible in the interviews. A total of 172 clergy were given the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire. Its limitations lie in the fact that it only contained three questions and had a relatively low response rate of 28%. The questionnaire was sent to clergy in the Roman Catholic, the Methodist, the United Reformed, and Baptist churches, and the Together For The Harvest (TFH) group which includes a variety of denominations. None were sent directly to the Anglicans as they were unable to co-operate in distributing them. The writer depended on the willingness (or otherwise) of the denominations to distribute the questionnaires via an appropriate person, and as has been mentioned, this had its problems. The questionnaire had further limited value. The calculations needed to ascertain the original economic benefits became too complex and involved a much wider field of research. The quantity of data too was unfortunately restricted by the Anglicans' decision. The difficulties of getting sufficient numbers to respond, and the less detailed nature of the questions, limits the value of the quantitative data collected. Nonetheless, as will be shown (6.2.2.5), enough data was gleaned to provide some appreciation of the breadth of social involvement by the churches, and something of the financial benefit to their communities.

2.3.5. Visits to Churches

The writer undertook the task of visiting 24 churches on Sundays during monthly sabbaticals taken in the month of November over a period of three years, during 1996, 1997 and 1998. This was not initially intended to be part of the research - more a matter of interest, but began to impinge upon the writer's view of church life over the period, and thus merited inclusion in the work. As a consequence the views attain their own value in being those of a participant observer at the worship of a significant number of Liverpool/Merseyside churches at the close of the second millennium. The

visits were not carried out with any great balance and only a little forethought. In all, 15 Free Churches were visited, including the Unitarian Church, the Free Presbyterian Church (closely linked to the Orange Movement), the Salvation Army, Toxteth Community Church (a Black-led church), and a number of Baptist, Methodist, Independent and Charismatic Churches. Seven Anglican Churches (including the Cathedral) and two Roman Catholic Churches (including the Cathedral) were also visited (See Appendix 4). The limitations of this are obvious, for on a visit of an hour or so, little can be ascertained to effectiveness or range of activity. Nonetheless, it gave the writer a 'feel' for atmosphere in churches; it provided an opportunity to gauge numbers attending churches; it helped assess the clergy at work - their preaching, their apparel, their personality - and importantly, it demonstrated the kind of welcome given to a visitor often entering strange territory. It also revealed the wide range of worship styles at present being practised, underscoring perhaps the supermarket element in church attendance.

Through these means of historical inquiry, semi-structured interviews, brief questionnaire and church visits, the writer has been able to gain a remarkably broad view of church life in Liverpool at the close of the twentieth century. This provides not only a historical overview of the last one hundred and fifty years of religious life in the city, but the substance for a continuing drive towards unity and further social action in the century to come.

3. AN EVALUATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGION TO SOCIAL COHESION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the place of religion in the structure of societies and reflect on some of the main theories which analyse the way in which it functions. The specific hypothesis which will be tested here is whether the *Christian* religion provides a sense of identity and meaningfulness for individuals and the societies in which it has been predominant. Some may doubt the claim of religion to be beneficial to humankind at any level, but the claims and counter-claims have to be weighed and tested. This chapter will attempt to do this by exploring some of the theories on the function of religion. It will consider the role of religion as a personal quest, reflect on its impact upon cultural development, and review its use by authorities in establishing social control. This is followed by a review of the secularisation debate. Here it will be shown that there has been a significant shift in thinking about the effects of a secular world-view on religious expression. From this it will be demonstrated that in recent decades there has been a marked upturn in religious practice throughout the world, with the exception of parts of Western Europe. These theories and changing patterns of religious expression are also applied to the religious experience of Liverpool, preparing the ground for the historical and empirical data to follow.

3.1. FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

If, as Christians might claim, their religion enhances the individual's personal behaviour and subsequently that of the overall society, then some evidence of this should be apparent. One response might be the individual's positive attitude to labour as presented in the Weberian Protestant work ethic based on Calvin (Weber, 1963, 110-112). All work will be done to the glory of God. Before an attempt can be made to define the contribution of the Christian religion more broadly however, it will be necessary to examine those functions of religion which are commonly identifiable within the world's religious systems.

3.1.1. Religion Confers a Sense of Personal Identity.

The belief that religion gives the individual spiritual sustenance and comfort is central to most faith communities. The societal aspects of religion may have greater significance in that they often direct trends and movements, but the starting point of much religion lies here; 'What does it do for me?' Perhaps the most fundamental questions religion faces are still the most important ones ie. 'Who am I'? and 'Why am I here'? Wilson asserts, 'Religion responds to these

questions with finality and totality' (Wilson, 1982, 34). Religion confers identity on individuals and groups.

Positivists may argue for an evolutionary development of humankind from lower species, and palaeontologists may be able to legitimise such ideas by empirical evidence, yet for the bulk of the world's population, this does not appear sufficient for offering solace at times of crisis. For example, during times of pain or suffering, metaphysical questions almost inevitably occur. 'Why should this happen to me?' Or, 'What have I done to deserve this?' The questions 'Why?' and 'What have I done?' imply a moral universe, to which rationalism offers little or no answer. 'We see no reason to suppose that the diffusion of science will make humans in the future less motivated to escape death, less affected by tragedy, less inclined to ask, "What does it all mean?" True science.....cannot provide the primary satisfactions that have long been the raison d'être of religions' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 431). Herein lies the importance and value of prayer, ritual and worship, for in these acts the devotee believes he/she finds supernatural help with some of life's seemingly unanswerable questions.

Highest on the agenda of ultimate questions is that of death. Death not only poses many questions, but engenders many fears. The ability of religion to remove much of that fear is of very real social importance. It enables individuals and society to face that 'great divorce' with a measure of serenity, and for some, optimism. It does more however, in that it meets a social, as well as a religious need. It enables the family and relatives to gather together, and with some coherent religious rite, acknowledge the departure of one of their number by death. This was acknowledged by two of the respondents who confront the issue of death amongst non-churchgoers. They claim that when faced with death, many people in their parishes still adhere, if somewhat vaguely, to a Christian rite of passage. Perhaps this is due to few, if any, alternatives being available, yet some appear to express a deep faith in God (see 8.3.2). The Christian religion particularly, with its strong intimations of life after death and promise of bodily resurrection, enables the departed individual to retain his/her own personal identity in the afterlife. 'The familiar forms of religion known to us....are specific historical institutionalisations of symbolic universes [which] are socially objectivated systems of meaning that refer, on the one hand, to the world of everyday life and point, on the other hand, to a world that is experienced as transcending everyday life' (Luckmann, 1972, 43). Religious belief brings meaning even to death.

3.1.2. Religion Creates a Sense of Cultural Identity.

This assertion links the identity of a culture with the religion which often underpins it. An attempt will be made therefore, to examine some of the main social theories lying behind this claim. Max Weber saw religion as a dynamic for social change. A crucial point in Weber's social theory is his belief that there was no society which did not have some form of religion. For Weber, religion powerfully influenced cultural identity. He believed for example, that it was Protestant Calvinism in Europe with its strong work ethic, which consequently encouraged the kind of economic endeavour from which capitalism emerged. This work ethic arose out of the Calvinistic doctrine of election. Calvin's followers inmmersed themselves in intense worldly activity as evidence of God's election to salvation (Weber, 1963, 110-112). Weber interpreted this as a form of 'inner-worldly asceticism' (Parsons, 1966, li), which weds hard labour to a frugal, pious lifestyle producing great economic benefits. 'If that God in whose hand the Puritan sees all the occurrences of life, shows one of his elect a chance of profit, he must do it with a purpose.....he must take advantage of the opportunity' (Weber 1963, 162).

Yet Weber was also convinced that religion was a source of social change and not merely 'a reinforcement of the stability of societies' (Parsons, 1966, xxx). As a consequence he was an advocate of prophetic religion, in which he perceived social change resulting from a charismatic figure arising with a mission, and drawing followers after him. 'Prophetic revelation involves for both the prophet himself and for his followers....a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude toward life' (Weber, 1966, 59).

Something of this prophetic religion may have been evident in Liverpool in the emergence of the two Bishops Sheppard and Worlock, who paved the way for the ecumenical 'miracle' on Merseyside. By breaking from the recognised sectarian social order, and moving their respective churches towards each other, they inaugurated a new religious culture based on co-operation and mutual respect. Derek Worlock in particular moved Liverpool Catholics from an insular denominational position and challenged them to face the future with their fellow Christians in social and spiritual engagement (see 7.3.1).

Emile Durkheim by way of contrast, attempted to discern the most primitive form of religion, along with its elements, based on information from Australia. For him the effects produced by religion were chiefly social rather than economic. He developed an evolutionary theory of religion in which primitive

forms were retained. These constituted 'that which is permanent and human in religion' (Durkheim, 1915, 5), regardless of how sophisticated a religion later came to be. As he probed deeper into this primitive religion, he unearthed two parallel religions, 'though being united closely and mutually penetrating each other, do not cease, nevertheless, to be distinct' (Durkheim, 1915, 48). The one was 'naturism', and the other was 'animism' because it has spiritual beings as its object, either geniuses, demons or divinities. Yet Durkheim believed that underlying these two phenomena in religion, lay something with a greater objective value. He believed both 'naturism' and 'animism' were derived from another sort of cult, 'more fundamental and more primitive' (Durkheim, 1915, 88). This other cult which he finally uncovered, was totemism.

Totemism lies in the group's collective understanding of the 'ideal' society. 'The individuals who compose [the clan] consider themselves united by a bond of kinship' (Durkheim, 1915, 102). That which binds the clan together is known as the totem. This totem is expressed in a two-fold manner. 'It is the outward and visible form of the totemic principle or god, but it is also the symbol of the determined society....the clan' (Durkheim, 1915, 206). These two concepts are brought together in Durkheim's totemic theory that the society and the totem/god are one. For him 'the concept of deity was an unconscious attempt to represent and objectify in symbolic terms society to itself' (Wilson, 1982, 8).

For Durkheim then, a society cannot create itself without at the same time creating an idea which it forms of itself and to which it aspires, namely the 'ideal' society. Further, it is from this 'ideal' society that Durkheim derives his concept of the sacred and profane, which for him, is 'the greatest single distinction the human mind is capable of' (Nisbet, 1982, ix). The 'ideal' produces the sense of the sacred, and those objects and people identified with the totem have sacredness attached to them. The profane conversely is associated with chaos and disintegration, and thus defined by that which is destructive of the 'ideal' society.

Durkheim argues that if ideas of the sacred and the gods can be explained sociologically amongst certain peoples, then it must be assumed 'scientifically that in principle, the same explanation is valid for all these peoples among whom the same ideas are to be found' (Durkheim, 1915, 415-6). He reasons that even the most advanced religions share the same principal ritual attitudes of the simpler systems he studied (Durkheim, 1915, 415). Even supposedly secular societies may display evidence of this primitive totemic principle. He

suggests the French Revolution was an example of an advanced society setting itself up as a god and creating its own cult, in that case, the cult of Reason and Supreme Being (Durkheim, 1915, 214).

If this theory of Durkheim's is applied to Loyalist Protestantism in Liverpool at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it appears that some aspects of the theory are confirmed there also. The cult endorsing this movement became not only the visible form of this totemic principle, but also the symbol of their 'determined' society. The distinction between the sacred and profane was also evidenced in the relation anyone or anything had to the Protestant 'ideal' society. Those deemed sacred were those who embraced and promoted its practice. 'If [society] happens to fall in love with a man and if it thinks it has found in him the principal aspirations that move it...this man will be raised above others and, as it were, deified' (Durkheim, 1915, 212-3). Something of this may be evident in the elevation to cultic status of the preacher and chief protagonist of Protestantism at the time, George Wise and others like him (see 4.2.3). Such men became symbolic icons of the cultus. By way of contrast, the profane became anything connected with the Roman Catholic Church. Its practices, its doctrines, its buildings, its clergy, its people, its schools - were all identified with the forces of darkness.

Yet there are weaknesses in such a Durkheimian analysis. His whole thesis rests on the ability of religion to bind the individual to the social order, and in that process create a homogenous, cohesive community. It takes little account of a pluralistic society in which religions with diverse traditions coexist. Furthermore, a strongly knit religious community with strongly held beliefs, has the capacity for engendering social conflict with those who do not adhere to their tradition. History and experience has demonstrated only too often, how nations have inflicted cruelty on others under the name of their god. Certainly Liverpool's own religious history reflects this aggressive dimension. Not only was this evidenced in specifically religious disturbances, but also in socio-economic conflict over jobs and housing. Little love was lost between the two religious factions (see 4.1.5).

Peter Berger argues for religion being a means to cultural harmony, by referring to what he terms nomisation. He claims it is the most important function of society (Berger, 1973, 31). This process of nomisation is what he calls a 'world-building enterprise' in which 'men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality' (Berger, 1973, 31). The function of any society is to attain this nomisation. 'It is a shield against terror' (Berger,

1973, 31). For Berger then, nomisation is the imposition of law, morality and meaning on society. The role of religion in this process is to introduce meaningfulness to the human psyche, as a part of this world-building task. Religion introduces a 'mysterious and awesome power, other than man, yet related to him' (Berger, 1973, 34). The religious dimension is what makes the nomisation process ultimately attainable, because 'religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant' (Berger 1973, 37). Consequently, as religious institutions are nomised and become integrated into society, so they are 'ipso facto legitimated' (Berger, 1973, 39).

Perhaps an example of Berger's nomisation of religion can be evidenced in nineteenth century England. Society then was built upon the Christian ethos as it applied to almost all areas of life. Hugh McLeod delineates the pervasive Christian presence evident at the time. He cites the following as examples; the numbers of religious buildings, the almost universal practice of infant baptism, the varied expressions of charity, the overwhelming number of Sunday Schools, the place of religion in education, and the association of religion with politics (McLeod, 1996, 71-96). He argues that during the period from 1850-1914, a relatively high degree of religious consensus existed. 'One must be struck by the degree to which Christianity was at least passively accepted by the great majority of the [British] population' (McLeod, 1996, 2).

Berger further argues that the religious and the sacred determine the social order, with all that is disorder relegated to the 'yawning abyss of chaos' (Berger, 1973, 48). 'To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated, is to make a compact with the primeval forces of chaos and darkness' (Berger, 1973, 48). Denial of this socially defined reality also takes on for believers the quality of evil. Many of Christianity's practitioners in Liverpool view the present religious scene in England from Berger's perspective. They see social fragmentation as an inevitable consequence of a secular worldview, as the Christian religion particularly is rejected. No longer does the sacred determine social norms. On this issue, Luckmann believes other models of 'ultimate significance' are emerging (see 8.3.1.1).

According to Berger, religion has been 'one of the most effective bulwarks against anomie throughout human history' (Berger, 1973, 94). So on this argument, when the very basis of a religion is thrown in doubt, and its legitimisation is brought into question, the disintegration of society may follow until a new legitimating power replaces it. The American religious scene however, may offer an alternative to anomie. Casanova points out that since

the disestablishment of Protestantism from the American way of life, the pluralistic approach to religion has led to a 'moral denominationalism'. Now there are a multiplicity of ways of life, religions, and choices (Casanova, 1994, 145). This observation about American culture is also noted by Martin. 'Religious pluralism is strongly associated.....with the stability of pluralistic democratic regimes' (Martin, 1978, 24).

3.1.3. Religion Establishes Social Control.

Sceptical views are found in this connection in the writings of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. Freud's view, based on his studies in psycho-analysis, understood humankind's belief in God to have originated in a primitive attempt at projecting onto a divine being the need for a father-figure as a means of expiating the murder of the primal father by the younger males. 'That primal father has been the prototype of God, the model after which later generations have formed their figure of God' (Freud, 1928, 75). He further suggested that the worship of God and the belief in an absolute system of values belonging to him, 'was a necessary fiction to preserve some semblance of law and order until the human race had advanced sufficiently in wisdom to do without any of the illusions to which it had hitherto clung'. (Stafford-Clark; 1965, 224). The whole concept of belief in a supernatural being was part of humankind's neurosis.

This evolutionary analysis of religion however, has some weaknesses. Human advancement has not resulted in the demise of religion, but in its modification. Religious revival is evident at the close of the twentieth century (see 3.2.2.1). Furthermore, far from preserving law and order, as Freud claimed, certain interpretations of religion occasionally exacerbated divisions within societies. An illustration of this comes from the Spanish Catholic Church. In 1971 it produced a public confession of sin for the divisive role played by the church during the Spanish Civil War, asking forgiveness for failing to be true ministers of reconciliation to its people (Casanova, 1994, 85). The divisiveness of religion is a major theme of life in Liverpool and is examined in some detail in chapter 4. At the close of the twentieth century, whilst greater scientific and technological advances may be evident, and some might say a greater wisdom, it has not always been at the cost of religious expression. A greater pluralism in religion is apparent, and the new unity being expressed by Christian denominations in places may be a factor in restoring some semblance of harmony in these societies.

Karl Marx on the other hand, developed the concept of religion as illusion, but

saw it as a means of escape from the harsh realities of the economic system which disempowered the majority of working people, the proletariat. For Marx, the use of religion at the hands of the bourgeoisie was only a means to a political end. It functioned as an 'opiate ' for the people, keeping them looking to a future utopia, whilst masking the reasons for their present suffering. 'To secure the real happiness of men it is necessary to abolish religion as their illusory happiness. The demand that they abandon their illusions about their condition is a demand to abandon a condition which requires illusion' (Marx, 1844, 249). So, change the economics and improve the proletariat's conditions, and the need for religion would dissipate. Humankind will have come of age.

The evidence of history however, seems to point in another direction. It begins in Russia itself where ironically there was a rigorous attempt by the Stalinist regime to impose a doctrinal Marxist orthodoxy. When faced with criticism by some dissidents using Marx's earlier writings, 'the Soviet regime insisted there were two Marxs – a young Marx and a mature Marx of which only the second properly stated scientific socialism' (Brown, 1978, 51). This suggests that political ideologies can also become a means of social control by a new bourgeoisie.

From another perspective however, it has been argued that the effects of Methodism on working class communities actually prevented revolution in Britain. 'In the nineteenth century, Methodists and those associated with them, inspired many of the social and political reformist movements of industrial Britain' (Blackwood [ed.], 1982, 246). In the Evangelical Awakening of the eighteenth century, working people were encouraged to express and organise themselves through the Methodist church. The basis of the Trade Union Movement was laid then also. Furthermore, the choice between an economic or spiritual salvation has not everywhere been viewed as being a mutually exclusive one. Over the past fifty years, as institutional religion has diminished in influence, so alternative religion has become more prevalent. The religious spirit prevails even amidst a more affluent society.

A corollary of this attempt by religion at social control lies in the use of 'value orientations' (Glock and Stark, 1965, 8). Smelser claims 'a value is the most general component in social action. Values state.....the desirable end states which act as a guide to human endeavour.....They are taken for granted; self-evident' (Smelser, 1963, 25). Yinger agrees, contending, 'A society without some integrating system of values is a contradiction in terms' (Yinger, 1963, 19). The 'system' in question may be opposed to theistic religion, but it

performs the task of welding together a group of people under its system of values, however they may be judged.

Religious values therefore, may become a powerful legitimating lever for all sorts of irregularities, as witnessed in the pre-Reformation church, or they can become a platform from which great beneficence can be launched. On the former view, Frank Manuel claims even the sceptics of the eighteenth century recognised that 'religion was a mechanism which inspired terror, but terror useful for the preservation of society' (Manuel, 1959, 240). Frederick Engels, like Marx, argued that the bourgeoisie in England discovered religion could make the masses 'submissive to the behests of the masters it had pleased God to place over them' (Engels, 1892; 301). Religious values in Victorian Liverpool were responsible for the view that poverty was a consequence of moral failure (see 5.3). This perspective failed to grasp the immense social and economic crisis impacting the city due to the large numbers of Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine. Housing shortages, lack of education and unemployment left many with little opportunity to improve themselves – even if they wished. Yet it will be demonstrated at some length in chapter 5, that despite such a prevailing mind-set, a countervailing set of values began to emerge, with many Christian philanthropists in the forefront. By means of legislation, educational programmes, social amelioration, and medical care, other values like compassion, neighbourliness, and self-improvement were promoted. Some religion it seems, has a self-correcting mechanism in which values can be re-shaped by personal commitment and public action.

3.2. CHANGING THEORETICAL PARADIGMS

The sociology of religion has undergone a sea change in the last thirty years or so. The theory of secularisation, which was for a time all-encompassing, has faced much more intense scrutiny. It has not emerged with much credit. Some prominent sociologists now challenge many of its premises. Aldridge contends the evidence was reinterpreted to fit the theory. 'Far from showing the truth of the secularisation thesis, this treatment of evidence perhaps demonstrates that what we are dealing with is not a testable scientific theory at all, but an anti-religious ideology...'(Aldridge, 2000, 3). Berger openly confesses to being wrong about the theory. 'A whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled 'secularisation theory' is essentially mistaken. In my early work I contributed to this literature' (Berger [ed.] 1999, 2). What will be attempted here is a review of the paradigm shift which has taken place regarding the interpretation of secularisation and some of the reason for such a radical U-turn in the field of social science.

3.2.1 Paradigm 1: The Demise of Religion

Much of the literature written on secularisation theory over the past thirty years or so has tended to view institutional religion as something on the wane. The argument was that science, the mass media, and modern communications were destroying any sense of religious identity, and as a consequence the churches were slowly emptying. The death knell was sounding. A huge amount of evidence was presented to demonstrate the soundness of the theory. The following are some of the most cogent arguments.

3.2.1.1. The Marginalisation of the Church

Despite the cohesive nature of much religion, experience testifies to the fact that not all that is religious has proved beneficial for humankind. Extremes in belief and practice have been evident in many world religions, leading not only to a polarisation amongst believers at times, but causing fragmentation in society as a whole. The Western religious scene particularly has witnessed a proliferation in religious diversity and dysfunction. For many people, the church has become increasingly irrelevant to their busy and varied lives, something underscored in the Liverpool region (see 8.3.1.2). This process has contributed increasingly to the marginalisation of the church and its institutional decline.

A number of social scientists however, claimed that religious belief itself was not in any great decline (Luckmann, 1972, 91; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 3). Davie, more recently, follows in their wake. She states 'It seems to me more accurate to describe late twentieth century Britain - together with most of Western Europe, as unchurched rather than simply secular' (Davie, 1995, 13). Davie also notes that 'in Britain nominal allegiance is by far the most prevalent form of religious attachment' (Davie, 1995, 49). Bruce puts it this way; 'Few people claim to be atheists or agnostics' (Bruce, 1995, 48). Davie has summed it up in her now famous dictum; it is 'believing without belonging' (Davie, 1995, 5).

Statistically however, all the trends in church attendance have gone downwards since the Second World War. Amongst Anglicans, baptisms have dropped from 67% of births in 1950, to 27.5% in 1990. Between 1960 and 1982 confirmations fell from 191,000 per year, to 84,500 per year (Davie, 1995, 52). 'It is not exaggerated to conclude that between 1960 and 1985, the Church of England as a going concern, was effectively reduced to not much more than half its previous size' (Hastings, 1986, 603).

The Roman Catholics have not escaped this slide either. Hornsby-Smith writes of the post-war period, 'The transformations which have taken place in English Catholicism over the past three to four decades can best be interpreted as a process of dissolution of the boundaries which once defended a distinctive Catholic sub-culture from contamination in a basically secular society' (Hornsby-Smith, 1987, 214). The peak for Roman Catholic activity was in the 1960s, but in the next ten to fifteen years the figures started to turn downwards. The total number of priests is now around 6,000, but new ordinands are well below replacement levels (Bruce,1995, 33). Nonetheless, their congregations remain far larger than any other denomination (Davie, 1995, 58), though this is probably due to underbuilding for the size of parishes.

The Free Churches of England and Wales reached their maximum membership just before the First World War. Between 1914 and 1970 their total membership dropped by about one third. The Baptists, the partial exception, have through the 1980s arrested this trend (Davie, 1995, 61). The present proportion of the adult population in the United Kingdom which belongs to the churches is about 14%, or 6.7 million people (Bruce, 1995, 35). In 1900 it was approximately 30% (Bruce, 1995, 38). Figures based on a church census of 1989 reveal that fewer than 1 in 10 people in England attend church (Brierley, 1997, 2.12.1). 'Church attendance has now become so rare in Britain that it is no longer supported by group pressure, and is no longer an important mark of belonging to any larger social formation. It has become an almost purely personal or idiosyncratic matter' (Bruce, 1995, 44).

The respondents interviewed in Liverpool confirmed many of these social changes which have affected church attendance. Apart from acknowledging the growing media influence on attitudes in society, some also noted how huge population shifts had severely damaged what were once close-knit communities and left the churches subsequently wounded - in some cases mortally so (see 8.3.1.1). Neither were they slow to point out the failures of the church. It had become lukewarm, inward looking, uncaring, dogmatic, and refusing to listen to what people were saying. As comfort levels generally improved due to economic growth, many of the churches still refused to adapt and improve their buildings. It was felt that too many older Victorian buildings remained, with outdated symbols, language and architecture for the functional necessities of present day church life (see 8.3.3.3).

Having faced up to these issues, the respondents were keen that the church adapt as quickly as possible to the changing society it operates in, and become

less marginalised in the process. In addition to the work of the two Bishops and Free Church Leader, this work attempts to relate some of the ways that the respondents suggested the churches could stem the tide (see 8.3.3). From the writer's experience in visiting 24 churches in the Liverpool area, it has to be said that many of them still do remarkably well. Fourteen of the churches had at least 100 attending, and some of these a lot more than that - one with approximately 200 and another with about 300. Some of the other churches had 50 or so. Those with less than that were all evening services. The unevenness of church attendance however, is detailed in chapters 6.2.1 and 10.2.2. There it is shown that despite decline in the more established/traditional churches nationwide, there has been a remarkable growth amongst the Charismatic and Housechurches. The writer's own experience in visiting Liverpool churches revealed a more balanced picture. Numerical strength was more evenly spread throughout the denominations. (see Appendix 4 for list of churches visited).

It may well be that the church has become marginalised as an institution in Western society, with little notice being taken of its pronouncements or its views. Yet the church remains relatively strong by today's standards of congregating. Trade Unions have declined significantly and local political parties struggle for members (see 10.2.2). Further, as a practising governor the writer is only too aware how schools regularly suffer from poor attendance at parents' evenings. Despite this trend away from socialisation, the churches still maintain a significant level of attendance.

3.2.1.2. The Privatisation of Religion

'Society can no longer be grasped from a single dominant viewpoint. Its dynamic is clarified through the fact that functional systems for politics, the economy, science, religion, family etc, have become relatively autonomous and now mutually furnish environments for one another' (Luhmann, 1982, xii). This insight from Luhmann expresses the view that society had become so fragmented due to the process of functional specialisation discarding any hierarchical unifying principle. Religion, which traditionally had fulfilled this unifying role, had been unable to adapt to this emergent segmentalism. The dogmatism of the religious system had failed to recognise the move of society to a series of personal choices - including choice in religion. This was claimed to be the reason for the unsatisfactory socialisation in present industrial society (Beckford,1989, 82-3).

Thomas Luckmann also acknowledged the decline of institutional religion, but

believed 'religion as a constituent feature of all societies was not in decline' (Beckford, 1989, 102). Rather the institutional nature of religion had been marginalised, and has ceased to legitimate the new social order. 'What are usually taken as symptoms of the decline of traditional Christianity may be symptoms of a more revolutionary change; a replacement of the institutional specialisation of religion by a new social form of religion' (Luckmann, 1972, 91). An institutionally non-specific form of religion had emerged in response to the declining significance of church oriented religion in modern societies. The reason was a shift in priorities. 'What were originally total life values became part-time norms' (Luckmann, 1972, 39). This radically new religion, according to Luckmann, would consist of an assortment of sacred themes chosen by the individual, be unconnected to any institution, and would be rooted in personal sentiments (Beckford, 1989, 103). Such themes would include individual autonomy, self-realisation, and familism (Luckmann, 1972, 110-112). For Luckmann, it was this assortment of religious themes which would make religion essentially a phenomenon of the private sphere.

It will be shown that in Liverpool these claims for a more privatised religion are not without foundation. The respondents interviewed were all aware of the growing individualism and personal choices being made by the public on the matter of religion. One even suggested there was an increase in religious interest during his time in the city. Many recognised the distinction between people being 'religious' and being committed to a faith through a local congregation. Yet for the majority of the respondents, there was an unwavering acknowledgement that the communal role of the church is essential to its nature. Rather than the church accommodating the individualism emerging in society, it needs to re-affirm the benefits of fellowship together as the 'body' of Christ (see 7.2.2).

Here then is a daunting challenge for the church as it enters a new millennium and a new, more autonomous culture. How is it to maintain its appeal, when the communal nature of its structure is at odds with the emerging individualism in society? The solution to this may lie in the church's prophetic role - a role stressed by some of the respondents (see 9.2.2). In this way the church not only confronts society's standards, but calls upon individuals to consider their raison d'être. It will be shown that the emergence of fundamentalism as a potent religious force globally, has further confirmed the growing desire for a communal based religion (see 3.2.2.3.2). The expression of a form of fundamentalism in Liverpool through the TFH movement is discussed in 6.2.1. and 11.3.

3.2.1.3. Religious Pluralism

Western religious diversity had its roots in the Reformation movement of the sixteenth century, what Martin terms 'a crucial historical event' for the outcome of Western culture (Martin, 1978, 4). Then the German priest Martin Luther first declared his dissatisfaction with the moral and spiritual state of the mediaeval church. Yet Bruce suggests it went further than this and voiced 'simmering social, political and economic tensions' (Bruce, 1995; 4). Throughout Europe, parts of the Church were re-orientated as individuals were encouraged to approach God directly to receive forgiveness without human mediation, and to rediscover the Bible as God's word speaking to them. This was not without its cost however. As Luther strove to put the Bible into the vernacular, he discovered 'there were not a few who thought themselves vouchsafed Biblical revelations more authoritative than those of Luther' (Dickens, 1977, 151). In fact two key themes of the Reformation were 'individualism (in rights and responsibilities), and egalitarianism' (Bruce, 1995, 4).

Bruce notes further however, that 'increasing religious toleration allowed sects to grow and recruit a following. Thus the Christian world in the early modern era became divided into churches, sects, and a growing band of mutually tolerant, respectable religious bodies....which were clearly not 'churches' in the classical sense. These bodies we normally call denominations' (Bruce 1995, 8). Bruce is being generous in his claim that the sects were mutually tolerant of each other. Certainly the century following the Reformation was one of great intolerance, in which some Protestant sects were relentlessly pursued and persecuted by their newly established Protestant masters. The first Baptist Church in Britain for example, was forced to escape to Holland in 1608 to avoid Anglican persecution, whilst the dissenting Pilgrim Fathers made that famous voyage to America in the Mayflower around the same time in 1620 to practise their faith without fear of reprisal.

It may be then, that as the various sects gained respectability, a greater mutual recognition appeared. Yet it is this sectarian nature of the Christian church which exacerbated the discord between parties. Following the Reformation, increasing religious toleration enabled sects to form, grow and compete for exclusive claims to spiritual 'truth'. As these sects were formalised however, so they developed into denominations, returning to many normative church practices in their organisation and form of worship. This cyclical process has led sociologists to acknowledge a three-fold classification of religious bodies, namely church, sect and denomination. The church aims to be co-extensive

with the society in which it functions. The sect is a voluntary group of believers bound together by a common core of beliefs and lives separate from the world. The denomination stands in the middle, not claiming to have exclusive access to the truth but embracing aspects of the other two. This classification however, also recognises the break-up of the church into competing factions, which have severely damaged any idea of unity, and dinted the arguments of sociologists for the cohesive power of religion.

This three-fold classification of church, sect and denomination is applicable to Liverpool ecclesiology. Certainly the church form of organisation is still prevalent in its Anglican and Catholic forms. It will be shown also that both these churches retain a wide appeal outside their immediate memberships in a kind of 'semi-detached' church which only attends on special occasions (see 8.3.2). Links with civic and governmental authorities are also maintained, particularly amongst the Anglicans, and ritual - with few exceptions - remains the main ingredient of the worship style.

The sect finds its expression in the large number of conservative housechurches and independent 'fellowships' springing up throughout the city. Many of these groups order themselves and function independently of any hierarchical structure. Many are relatively small in number - though some have quite sizeable congregations, and are close-knit in their communal lives. Emphasis is placed upon the need for new birth - as in 'born again Christians' - though no longer are they necessarily aligned with the marginalised of society. Many function in middle class areas, and of those meeting in urban areas, many seem to have a commuting congregation. They do however display a flexibility and spiritual drive to evangelise and embrace the marginalised, and this has resulted in a move to work more on a united front under the Together For The Harvest (TFH) umbrella. This carries with it the danger of functioning more like a denomination.

The denomination also remains a central feature of church life in Liverpool with all the major denominational groups being represented ie. Baptists, Methodists, United Reformed, Presbyterian, Unitarian and Pentecostal churches. Having been viewed as sects in their infancy, these denominations are now formalised into recognised Christian alternatives to the church style of worship. It may be however, that this threefold classification of religious groups is undergoing some modification in Liverpool, with a fourth classification emerging amongst religious bodies, namely that of the Coalition. Here and there churches of different denominations are coming together under

the ecumenical banner, to serve local communities (see 6.2.4). Covenants are being established in which churches commit themselves to working corporately where possible and sharing worship, whilst retaining their denominational affiliation. It is a positive step on the road to a fuller ecumensim.

3.2.1.4. Relativist Attitudes

It has been argued that another consequence of secularisation is the religious relativism which marks the present scene in the West. Religions which could once claim an exclusivist tag to their beliefs, history and practices, now find themselves confronted by questions challenging their authority to make such claims. This is not a problem peculiar to religions; it confronts all truth-claims, scientific or historical. Relativism in religious terms has both advantages and disadvatages, as will be shown. On the one hand it helps break down barriers to other groups by opening the mind to accept more readily their truth claims. This for example, has helped advance the cause of ecumenism. On the other hand, by allowing a multiplicity of truth claims, the individual may end up with a 'relative absoluteness' in which everyone has the truth - regardless of differences (see 10.3).

At the root of relativism is post-modernism, a philosophy of history and culture which tends to denigrate much that has gone before, and attempts to establish a new way of constructing society. 'Post-modernism...breaks down the dividing lines between the different realms of society - political, economic, social and cultural' (Kumar, 1995, 102). Jean Francois Lyotard introduced the term 'meta-narratives' or great narratives, to describe the definitive principles of Western society (Boyne & Rattansi [eds.] 1990, 16). These are 'the great historico-philosophical schemes of progress and perfectability that the modern era threw up' (Kumar, 1995, 133). An example of this was Marxism which was formerly seen by its devotees as a total explanation of all social processes, but which is now 'assailed for its theoretical shortcomings and historical implausibility' (Kumar, 1995, 145). Lyotard asserts that these 'meta-narratives', these interpretations of history, are now defunct. For post-modernists, it is not the past or the future which matters, but 'a world of eternal presentness without origin or destination' (Kumar, 1995, 147). Post-modernism then, resists any suggestion that the end of history has been reached. We may in fact be at the beginning of a new era of history. There is a move away from a linear to a cyclical perspective on existence. What matters is where societies are at now.

Post-modernism then pushes aside all artificial categorisations, and replaces them by a relativist position which states 'anything goes'. 'There is simply a

more or less random, directionless flux across all sectors of society. The boundaries between them are dissolved, leading to....a post-modern condition of fragmentation' (Kumar, 1995, 103). Eclecticism from varied disciplines is all-pervasive, and historical context is ignored. All points of view are valid, for none is supreme.

This post-modern relativism is also crucial for an understanding of the religious condition of Western nations today. It challenges to the core traditional tenets of Christianity. For example, two major by-products of this post-modern relativism are autonomy in interpretation of religious texts, and a lack of concern with matters like truth and history (Guinness, 1995, 106-7). No more need the Bible be read solely through the eyes of the Church, but through other institutions; no more ought the Bible be viewed as different from any other literature, but just one text among many. 'If postmodernism is correct, we cannot even aspire after truth, objectivity, universality and reality' (Guinness, 1995, 107).

The respondents in Liverpool again reflect something of this debate. Relativist attitudes are widely evident, in that many refuse now to view Christianity and the salvation it offers in exclusivist terms. A significant proportion of Liverpool Christians are beginning to reflect what social theorists are propounding. No longer for them is salvation explicitly viewed in Christological terms; no longer is truth the preserve of the Christian; no longer does God reveal himself solely through Jesus or the Bible; no longer are other religious adherents automatically the object of God's judgement. These pluralist themes are voiced by many of the respondents (see 9.1.3).

However secularisation is interpreted, it is a crucial issue confronting the Christian religion at the present. Bryan Wilson suggested two conditions, over and above relativism, which had arisen and had been unconducive to the maintenance of the older religious patterns (Wilson, 1982, 128-130). Firstly, the 'massive expansion of education'. It is now more technical, scientific and abstract. There is now a growing reliance on different sources of information and a parallel disparagement of religious teaching. Secondly, there had been an 'explosive growth of the mass media'. Knowledge used to come in the context of unchallenged religious apprehensions of the world from known and trusted counsellors. Most of the information and entertainment today is secular, and religious ideas are pushed to the background.

There has been consequently a shift in moral responsibility. 'The large-scale

societal system does not rely, or seeks not to rely, on a moral order, but rather, on technical order' (Wilson, 1982, 161). Wilson observed two forms of moral order, or maybe better, moral containment, replacing the old order of personal responsibility. The one was the technical order just mentioned, in which means such as data-retrieval systems and electronic eyes help regulate the activities of humankind. The other was by means of legislation in which 'residual moral problems', unable to be dealt with by the technical order, are dealt with by law. Such examples are the sex and race discrimination legislation (Wilson, 1982, 161). Berger saw in this a secularisation not only of society and culture, but of 'consciousness'. 'This means that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations' (Berger, 1973, 113).

Berger believed as a consequence there had arisen a problem of 'meaningfulness', not only for institutions such as the state economy, but for the ordinary routines of everyday life. 'Probably for the first time in human history the religious legitimations of the world have lost their plausibility, not only for a few intellectuals.....but for the broad masses of entire societies' (Berger, 1973, 130). Furthermore, 'the peculiar Christian theodicy of suffering lost its plausibility and thereby the way was opened for a variety of secularised soteriologies, most of which however proved quite incapable of legitimating the sorrows of the individual life' (Berger, 1973, 130).

3.2.2. Paradigm 2: The Re-emergence of Religion

Many leading social scientists have had to look again at the secularisation theory with new eyes over the closing decades of the twentieth century. The reason for this has been a proliferation of religious movements emerging in the public sphere on an almost universal basis. For example, Bernice Martin says of the rise in Latin American Protestantism; '.....before the event, the emergence of such a movement on such a scale would have been regarded as thoroughly implausible in the most influential sociological circles' (Martin, 1998, 106). What then has happened to bring about this upsurge in religious fervour?

3.2.2.1. Religious revival

Most, if not all, the major world religions have experienced renewed vigour both in expression and belief in the last twenty or thirty years. Sociologists therefore could no longer continue to view the world's religious scene through the spectacles of a secular Western Europe. Bernice Martin again contends that 'religion has acquired a new lease of life in the postmodern era, sprouting

vigorous revival movements in Islam and a vast, worldwide expansion of "third force" Christianity based on the "Gifts of the Spirit" ' (Martin, 1998, 106). The expression of religious revival across the globe had to be confronted. Berger goes so far as to assert; 'The assumption that we live in a secularised world is false', and concludes that the whole body of literature on secularisation theory is essentially mistaken (Berger [ed.], 1999, 2).

Casanova takes a more analytical approach to the issue and suggests there are three propositions making up the secularisation argument. The first is to view secularisation as religious decline, the second as differentiation, and the third as privatisation (Casanova, 1994, 7). He proceeds to argue that there is no empirical evidence for religious decline in the modern world and that privatisation as a necessary consequence of secularisation, is no longer defensible. Differentiation, he believes, is the one strand of the secularisation theory which stands scrutiny (Casanova, 1994, 7). The separation of church and state as well as the separation of church from church, need not be evidence of secularisation, but of differentiation, a post-modern freedom to choose one's religious lifestyle in both worship and practice.

Another argument for renewed religious vigour is a historical one. The pre-industrial 'age of faith' to which the present is often compared, was in reality an age of apathy. With the church closely allied to the state, the populace was cajoled by law and patronage to be 'Christian' and attend church. However, 'The modern era is the true age of faith where people participate in religion because they freely choose to do so' (Aldridge, 2000, 96,100). It will be shown how this is evident in countries where church and state have separated, leading to new growth and a broader participation (eg. Spain and Brazil). Heelas however issues a warning. He suggests that 'the more people come to treat religion as a consumer item, the less likely they are to be attracted by the "real" thing' (Heelas [ed.], 1998, 16). Although this was not an issue directly addressed by the respondents in Liverpool, the writer himself can testify that consumerism is increasingly becoming a factor in people's attendance at church. What the individual can get from a church is often becoming more important than what they can give to others. The worship style, the music group, the number of youth, the ambience of the building, are all telling factors for many in choosing a church. The danger is obvious. Treat religion as a source of fun, entertainment, or mere self-discovery, and the challenge of faith as a corrective or a means to knowing God diminishes accordingly.

A further indicator of religious revival may be noticed in a paradoxical

dedifferentiation in religious practice. While it is apparent that an increasing differentiation has taken place in religion due to the separation of church and state, there is also some evidence of barriers being surmounted. There has recently been a move by growing numbers of believers, to change from denomination to denomination, finding very little difference between the churches in their corpus of beliefs (Heelas [ed.], 1998, 3). One of the catalysts for this dedifferentiation has been Vatican 2. The wider effects of this momentous Roman Catholic Council will be considered in 10.1.2, but suffice to say here that it was an enormous step for ecumenism as that Church opened itself to others for the first time. Dedifferentiation is not only evident in ecumenism, but is also emerging amongst more evangelical groups. In Liverpool this is particularly noticable in the growing TFH movement. Here evangelicals covering a broad range of churches (chiefly, but not exclusively, charismatic), work together as one church where possible, sharing personnel and resources and allowing a freer movement of believers between churches as the need requires (see 6.2.1). This is a novel move, for traditionally independent churches have been just that – independent. Yet now there is a deep desire for greater harmony and co-operation and this movement is growing in momentum.

A final argument for religious revival is the growing deprivatisation of religion. This is the central thesis of Jose Casanova's book, 'Public Religions in the Modern World' (1994). He refuses to align himself totally with the new scepticism over secularisation. Adhering to what he terms the core of secularisation theory, namely differentiation (Casanova, 1994, 212), he also attempts to demonstrate that the privatisation which often accompanies differentiation is not the full story. Paradoxically 'while religion in the modern world continues to become even more privatised, one is also witnessing simultaneously what appears to be a process of deprivatisation of religion' (Casanova, 1994, 41). By this he means a distinct development around the world which reveals religions going public again. The city of Liverpool has witnessed this very trend over the past twenty-five years. The work of the Church Leaders received high profile coverage as they sought to identify their churches with the social and spiritual challenges presented by the city's chequered history. Their influence on city leaders and politicians will be dealt with extensively in 6.2.4 and 6.3.1. The TFH movement is also taking a greater public stance in meeting social and community need, as well as mobilising marches of witness in the city.

Casanova provides a critique of church life in three different countries which

demonstrates a more public religious expression. The countries in question are Spain, Poland and Brazil. In Spain a major shift took place following the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. 'The change in language from Latin to the vernacular was accompanied by a more significant change in the content of Catholic discourse.....The training of the priests in seminaries underwent a radical overhaul.....A new generation of priests avidly embraced the new direction, taking a confrontational attitude vis-à-vis their older colleagues....' (Casanova, 1994, 84). From about this time, the Catholic Church also began to openly demand the liberalisation and democratisation of the Franco regime. This paved the way for some further changes which followed in the 1970s at the conclusion of Franco's period of office. The convention of the First Joint National Assembly of Bishops and Priests then made a public confession of sin for the role played by the church during the Spanish Civil War. They had failed to be 'ministers of reconciliation' between the various factions in society (Casanova, 1994, 85). Finally, 'The Spanish Catholic Church.....accepted officially and without apparent misgivings the reality, and more importantly, the principles of separation of church and state, and of religious freedom' (Casanova, 1994, 88). The Catholic Church came to recognise that it no longer had a right to a monopoly in religious expression. Religious worship and allegiance would be undertaken on a voluntary basis. On this note one Catholic cleric in Liverpool claimed he had been brought up in two churches. By this he meant the Catholic Church either side of Vatican 2. The pre-Vatican 2 Church he describes as always being right and having all the answers. The post-Vatican 2 Church on the other hand, was more open to discussion and more conciliatory (see 6.2.1). He had come to favour the latter expression of his Church.

Catholicism in Spain at one and the same time became more privatised, yet remains a potent influence within Spanish society. Catholicism became more evenly spread across the social and political spectrum. 'Practising Catholics are distributed relatively evenly throughout the Spanish population: they constitute 44% of the upper middle class, 38% of the lower middle class, and 34% of the working class. This is probably the most dramatic historical change when contrasted with pre-civil war trends' ie. when the church was a 'bourgois institution' (Casanova, 1994, 89,78).

The story of Poland is quite different. During the Communist regime the Catholic Church became a bulwark to the people in withstanding the new ideology. 'Polish Catholicism historically has served more as a public civil religion than as a private religion of individual salvation' (Casanova, 1994,

113). Instead of decline during the Communist period, there was measurable growth in clergy, parishes, and in religious belief amongst the young. Even those who would not have considered themselves 'believers' participated in religion 'as a symbolic opposition to the regime' (Casanova, 1994, 96). This resistance to an outside enemy was further demonstrated in the shipyard at Gdansk when the workers fell to their knees to partake of Holy Communion. In this way, 'popular Polish religiosity...has survived the thrusts of modern Polish history' (Casanova, 1994, 106). In Poland, Catholicism became a public means of demonstrating national solidarity against an ideological enemy.

The issue of ideological confrontation at a more local level, was introduced to Liverpool in the early 1980s. At this time local politics confronted national politics. The leftist local Council took on the might of the national government. In contrast to the Polish church which felt compelled to identify with one side, the Church leaders of Liverpool became mediators, or to use their phrase, 'interpreters' of what each side was endeavouring to say. In their unique capacity as civic and religious leaders, they succeeded in keeping the channels of communication opened until the left collapsed due to the withdrawal of support from the national Labour Party. In this way the Church in Liverpool came to the forefront of political engagement in the interest of the wider community (see 6.2.3).

The Brazilian Catholic Church faced yet another problem, that of a dwindling membership. The Church had allied itself for too long with a totalitarian regime, which despite its claims to Christian legitimisation, was 'endangering not only the autonomy of the church but fundamental human values' (Casanova, 1994, 123). In increasing numbers Catholics moved over to the Protestant Pentecostal Churches with their close-knit communities, leaving the Catholic Church leaders with a dilemma. How were they to combat this membership drift? The answer lay in the church as an institution freeing itself from the old ties.

In the 1970s a new Brazilian church emerged, the People's Church, 'which not only became the main force of opposition to the bureaucratic- authoritarian regime, supporting the reconstruction of civil society against the state, but also began to sponsor the radical transformation of Brazilian society' (Casanova, 1994, 118). Many church intellectuals were also freed from the old ties partly due to modern secularisation and partly due to Catholic aggiornamento (Casanova, 1994, 125). By the early 1980s a new 'ecclesiogenesis' had taken

place. Ecclesial base communities (CEB's) had reinvented the Brazilian church. No longer was the church concentrated in the south, or overwhelmed by huge numbers attended by fewer priests, but now spread more evenly across the country in tens of thousands of these new ecclesial communities with few if any, clerics to officiate. 'The Brazilian Church is probably the top heaviest in the world, yet it is also perhaps the least hierarchic, the least clerical, and one of the most democratic internally at all levels' (Casanova, 1994, 130). This alternative church model could never have emerged without the full support of the Church hierarchy making the conscious decision to transform the church's identity making it become again the church of the people (Casanova, 1994, 130). Interestingly this kind of ecclesiology is emerging in the thinking of some Liverpool Catholics (see 8.2.2). For them the parish system is outdated. New ministries, lay and ordained, and new ways of meeting in smaller groups (ecclesial communities?) are envisaged. Already more and more lay people are being used, though it is acknowledged there is a long way to go if greater changes are to be realised.

In each of the above cases it is apparent that neither the church nor religion has faded away or been relegated to the ideological scrapyard. Casanova's aim is to present real empirical evidence of the resurgence of religion in new forms following a period of decline or internal threat. Luckmann's view that the privatisation of religion necessarily meant its de-institutionalisation, may be apparent in some parts of Europe, but the wider evidence reveals both models functioning side by side. The changing paradigm of religion witnessed in Brazil and some European countries is, as has been demonstrated, emerging in Liverpool also. Here the churches are refusing to lie down and be completely marginalised. What is being witnessed in many parts of the world is the church exercising its right to decide which form of religious involvement or practice is appropriate for its situation and act accordingly. The deprivatisation of religion is a notable social phenomenon evident at the turn of the twenty first century.

3.2.2.2. Religious 'Exceptionalism'

'In a world characterised by religious resurgence rather than increasing secularisation, Western Europe bucks the trend' (Davie, 1999, 65). In this forthright way Davie, like Berger (1999, 9) and Lyon (2000, 23), introduces her premise that Western Europe, far from being normative for the direction of world religion, is in fact the exception. The earlier approach to secularisation tended to see the United States as the exception to the rule, rather than Europe. This is no longer the case however. It has already been demonstrated by Casanova that parts of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, are in fact strongly

cohesive due to a sturdy religious homogeneity fashioned by the Catholic Church. Yet even in traditionally 'nationalist' churches, there is a trend towards greater freedom and privatisation. As has been shown the Spanish Catholic Church has already disestablished itself from the state. The Vatican with its Polish pope is now pressing the Polish Catholic Church on the need for greater religious freedom. Casanova states however, 'It is hard to imagine that Polish Catholicism could soon become privatised. Undoubtedly, Catholicism in Poland will continue being a public religion for the forseeable future' (Casanova, 1994, 109).

In other parts of the world nations are becoming more religious, not less, and increasingly Western Europe is being promoted as the exception rather than the rule in its secular trends. Berger re-enforces this when he acknowledges, 'The world today is massively religious, is anything but the secularised world that had been predicted....' (Berger [ed], 1999, 9). What then has brought this about? Why has Western Europe failed to follow the rest of the world in religious revival? Davie has given some thought to this in her writings and provides some possible answers as to why this is so. To begin with it would appear that even this is an immense generalisation. There is no monochrome approach to religion in Western Europe. She quotes Stoetzel (1983) in the French version of the 1981 European Values System Study Group (EVSSG). He suggests there are four 'types' of religious variation in Western Europe. There are the Catholic countries like Spain, Italy and Eire; the predominantly Protestant countries like Denmark, Britain and Northern Ireland; the mixed variety like West Germany; and what is termed a 'region laique' (France, Belgium and the Netherlands) where those who recognize no religious label form a sizable section of the population (Davie, 1995, 13). It has to be borne in mind then that even in secular Western Europe there are pockets of strong religious practice.

One possible reason for the secular ethos in parts of Western Europe could be the establishment of a secular school system. France particularly followed this road after the Revolution. The present anti-religious mood may be a consequence of the religious hostility associated with that momentous event. Davie concludes; 'This accounts for the higher profile of anti-religion as well as non-religion in France' (Davie, 1995, 15).

Steve Bruce further suggests that the secularisation process in Western Europe is a consequence of a greater choice in lifestyles and options being made available. 'The great majority of people not only reject serious convictions for

themselves, but find them difficult to comprehend in others' (Bruce, 1996, 231).

The EVSSG studies of both 1981 and 1990 identify other patterns emerging. Religious indicators in these studies 'cluster into two types of variable: those concerned with feelings, experience and the more numinous religious beliefs, and those that measure religious orthodoxy, ritual participation, and institutional attachment' (Davie, 1999, 67). Davie claims it is the latter category which demonstrates more evidence of secularisation in Western Europe. By way of contrast, 'the former or less institutional indicators, indicate a considerable persistence of some aspects of religious life' (Davie, 1999, 67-8). Even Max Weber argued this primitive emotional experience was the fundamental form of religious behaviour (Daniele Hervieu-Leger, 1993,138). Davie's verdict on the overall pattern is that 'Western Europeans are unchurched populations rather than simply secular' (Davie, 1999, 68).

From the foregoing it is clear that there is no easy solution to the European 'exceptionalism'. Western Europe is not one homogeneous grouping, despite present attempts by some politicians to form a European federation. It does seem however, that a historical perspective is crucial if the approach of individual states to the religious question is to be understood. No greater contrast could be evident as that of Britain and France. The British have learnt to grow up within a tolerant religious pluralism in the aftermath of the seventeenth century Civil War, whereas the French reacted violently against a monopolist Catholic Church during their Civil War in the eighteenth century, creating the chasm which now exists between state and church. Whatever the historical perspective, much of Western Europe now exists in the shadow of a global religious revivalism.

3.2.2.3. Two Post-Modern Models of Religious Practice

Two further trends have emerged at the close of the twentieth century which reveal a contrast in the content of the present global religious revivalism. They provide two paradoxical models of religion, yet both have their advocates throughout the world and both are at the heart of the re-emergence of religion in the twenty first century.

3.2.2.3.1. The Consumer Model

'Consumerism is an ideology which locates meaning not in things held sacred but in the profane pursuit of gratification' (Aldridge, 2000, 186). This sums up succinctly the problem for religion which sees choice as the essence of

freedom and self-fulfilment. Yet this is a model of religion which has became more popular in recent decades as the range of choices in consumer goods has increased considerably. In many parts of the world there has developed a preoccupation with consuming, and religion has responded to its appeal. 'It seems difficult to deny that consumerist approaches have invaded the sacred realm.....people increasingly regard it as their right to pick and choose' (Aldridge, 2000, 213). A few respondents pick up on this in their analysis of numerical decline in churches. They acknowledge the consumer culture means that people have greater options on Sundays. They can 'visit' church on TV's 'Songs of Praise', or even choose to engage in some other form of religious or secular practice, like clairvoyance or shopping (see 8.3.1.1).

One of the most illuminating critiques of this consumerist model of religion is David Lyon in his book, 'Jesus in Disneyland' (2000). Using a world-renowned brand name as a metaphor, he designates the intellectual postmodern era as a period of Disneyisation. Alan Bryman defines this trend as, 'The process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world' (Bryman, 1999, 26). Disneyisation comes to epitomise the postmodern era with its simulations of reality. 'Canadian Mounties, British Beefeaters, Japanese samurai meet in one place. Like zapping with the remote, to visit Disneyland is to walk through a TV set' (Lyon, 2000, 11). This love affair with consumerism and technology inevitably provides some 'fall-out' for the church and religion.

There has emerged a 'sacralisation of the self' (Lyon, 2000, 9). As the desire to please oneself grows increasingly with the availability of choice, so the Self is elevated to the position of prime importance – even above God. While a personal relationship with God is sought, people want 'an easier, no-fuss, microwavable God' (Maier cited in Lyon, 2000, 136). In the world of Disney, history and truth are also blurred as distinctions of time and space are removed. 'The true problem with virtual reality is that orientation is no longer possible. We have lost our points of reference.....many people question their religious identity today...' (Virilio 1997, 45).

Churches which follow this course find themselves undergoing an inner secularisation where 'entertainment rather than obedience is [the] real dynamic' (Lyon, 2000, 9). Reality is obscured amidst a compulsive drive to be lost in an alternative 'virtual reality', where image becomes all-important. Here the outside world of suffering, disease, and death are ignored and a

substitute unreality of 'living happily ever after' is embraced. Here right triumphs, patriarchy rules, and robot like passivity is encouraged (Lyon, 2000, 10). Despite its limitations, this model of religion is finding favour with many across the Western world and beyond. People are encouraged to make choices in a wave of 'new voluntarism'. 'Choosing one's religion is the privilege not of selfish materialistic consumers, but of mature citizens acting as autonomous individuals' (Aldridge, 2000, 91). Further evidence of this is witnessed in the growth of 'parachurch' associations. As conventional institutional religion declines in the wake of Disneyisation, there arises here and there a strong desire to express a more individualistic form of religion with specialised skills (Lyon, 2000, 56). The writer's experience as a practising Minister would endorse this conclusion. Many of these parachurch 'gurus' move in and out of the institutional forms of religion as cavalier contributors, without the accompanying restrictions or disciplines. Increasingly it appears that more Christians (and leaders) are choosing to work outwith the established churches in parachurch movements or academic institutions, and feeding into the churches as their needs require (often financial).

3.2.2.3.2. The Fundamentalist Model

In contrast to the more fluid religion evidenced in the 'consumer' model, the fundamentalist model is much more rigid and certain in its aims. The term however, has to be expanded to include not just fundamentalist Protestants, but fundamentalist Jews, Hindus and Muslims. 'Since 1989....the very word fundamentalism has been increasingly pluralised.....the central premise accepted by most scholars, is that fundamentalism has mushroomed into fundamentalisms.....globally' (Lawrence, 1998, 89).

Defining the term however is not so easy and sociologists are having to look again at some of the ways in which it is being used. Lechner suggests there are three kinds of fundamentalism at work around the world (Lechner, 1993, 20-22). The first is subjective ie. whatever the 'people themselves' mean by it. He feels this has limitations however, because the term has been contaminated by other users and can mean different things to different people. The second definition is sociohistorical. 'The focus is on public action rather than private belief'. Finally, there is a theoretical definition. 'Fundamentalists in this view are those engaged in reintegrating a social order under the canopy of one all-encompassing sacred tradition'.

Bauman attempts a more expansive definition. 'Fundamentalism is a thoroughly contemporary postmodern phenomenon, embracing fully the

rationalising reforms and technological developments of modernity and attempting not so much to 'roll back' modern departures as to 'have the cake while eating it''(Bauman, 1998, 72). He understands the new fundamentalism as an attempt to enjoy all the benefits of a contemporary society, whilst resisting many of the processes by which it has come about. This view coincides with Lechner who denies any claim that fundamentalism is archaic. He argues that many themes in fundamentalist thought derive from recent intellectual developments. 'Adhering to tradition is different from 'traditionalism', which is a deliberate effort to regenerate tradition and make it socially significant again. The latter is a form of engagement with the modern world' (Lechner, 1993, 23).

Bruce Lawrence takes a reductionist approach to the subject. 'There is but one fundamentalism, yet there are many forms of fundamentalist expression' (Lawrence, 1998, 88). At the heart of fundamentalist expression is the issue of Truth. 'For fundamentalists Truth is always and everywhere one. Hence there can only be one true text, one true reading of that text and one true community. The very notion of fundamentalism disconfirms the heart of each fundamentalism' (Lawrence, 1998, 88). Fundamentalisms are in a way the children of postmodernism, for as relativism becomes an increasingly acceptable way of viewing religious truth and values, fundamentalisms will rise up to protest. Truth for them, cannot be an issue for discussion and debate. Rather it has to be believed and acted upon. Modern fundamentalisms are concerned both with private beliefs as well as public action. This is again reflected in the TFH movement in Liverpool which aims to combine the spiritual and practical at all times and refuses to be marginalised as a social force (see 6.2.1).

At the heart of this action is very often a desire to see the community or nation undergo some form of religious restoration. In doing so, fundamentalisms would reject any accusation of being antimodern. Their 'opposition to the perceived evils of the world are real, but a plural and inclusive world is to be replaced by a highly integrated and closed one. The sacred canopy has to be restored' (Lechner, 1993, 24). Casanova attempts to delineate something of this process in the United States, along with its limitations. Having presented evidence for the disestablishment of the church from the state, from the higher education system and from the 'American way of life', he then considers the options for fundamentalists who want to see a return to a more homogeneous religious society. Firstly, the re-establishment of a Protestant theocracy is undesirable. 'Protestant fundamentalism neither wants to nor could become an

established church' (Casanova, 1994, 159). American fundamentalists wish to retain a pluralistic society. Secondly, the re-establishment a Protestant civil religion is also unworkable due to the diversity of religious groups. Finally, the re-establishment of the Protestant ethic as the American way of life has no real basis for becoming reality. The fundamentalists only represent a twenty percent minority, and a threatening one to the more diverse majority (Casanova, 1994, 161).

Casanova argues in conclusion that fundamentalists in America will have to validate their claims through public argument. For some this will mean an abandonment of their fundamentalism at least procedurally. As they argue their case, some may stop to buy their 'antiques', while others will look on with some nostalgia to a past era but press on searching for contemporary answers to the fundamentalists' questions. For others, the 'true' fundamentalists, they will have to abandon the public square and return to isolation where they can be left alone. Fundamentalism, 'unable to become an established church or remain a separate sect, will become just another denomination' (Casanova, 1994, 166).

3.3. CONCLUSION

It is now necessary to evaluate the influence of religion, particularly on Western culture, in the light of the arguments presented. On the one hand there are those who have announced its communal demise and inability to provide social cohesion in the postmodern era (Wilson, Yinger). On the other hand there are the proponents of religion, both past and present, claiming for it a central place in the life of a wide variety of nations. On this latter note, some claim religion helps cement a national identity and provide a sense of meaning to human existence (Durkheim, Stark and Bainbridge). Others believe that renewed religious vigour is symptomatic of a postmodern culture in which individuals are freed to choose a religion which meets their personal requirements (Lyon, Aldridge).

The case for religion as conferring personal identity seems at first hand to be largely unaffected by the undoubted changes which have come to the Christian tradition in the West. The decline in the strength of the churches, the weakening of the local congregations as a result, and the increasingly less participative element to religious practice, appear not to have weakened religious belief. Yet the populist view that one can worship God without going to church, though appealing, overlooks the very real importance attached to Christian membership from the church's inception. The act of 'belonging'

has been crucial to Christian fellowship and mutual support, and therefore any move towards a more privatised religion would severely diminish one of the core elements of traditional Christian faith.

Some evidence of this religious 'privatisation' occurring is reflected in the experience of some Liverpool churches. Fewer people are committing themselves to membership, to the development, growth and maintenance of the church and faith, whilst others prefer to remain as casual adherents. This in turn leads to fewer churchgoers being willing to attend regularly, and consequently a loss of the socio-spiritual identity which the church claims to impart. Yet running parallel to this privatisation of religion is the growing movement of approximately 80 evangelical churches known as Together For The Harvest (see 6.2.1) encouraging a dedifferentiation of religion. With a broadly conservative approach to the Bible and religion in general, they are coming together for leaders meetings, prayer gatherings and to tackle social exigency. An annual 'March for Jesus' is undertaken through the city along with a multi-church service held yearly in the Philharmonic Hall. The Anglican Bishop James Jones spoke at this service in 1999. As a consequence, denominational barriers are softening and with their undoubted zeal, the movement is growing. As Heelas suggests, many believers are 'finding much the same truth behind the differences' (Heelas [ed], 1998, 3).

The sense of cultural identity claimed for religion by Durkheim and Berger is currently being eroded in the West. Durkheim's view of the society worshipping itself in the totemic cult is dependent on that society, or groups within it, being religiously homogeneous. Yet most Western nations are experiencing a greater heterogeneity in their cultural development. With an increasing mobility amongst the peoples of the world, a developing recognition of the value of all cultures, and the growing acceptance of a minority of ethnic peoples practising their religious traditions, many Western countries now face difficulty in maintaining a sense of national identity. The basis of Durkheim's totemism, rooted in the spiritual homogeneity of a people, has been greatly undermined. How can a society worship itself when it is so diverse? The Spanish Catholic Church's move to positively encourage religious differentiation is further evidence of the limitations of 'totemism' in a modern culture. Religion's ability to produce cohesion is shown to be considerably impaired in a pluralistic society.

Berger on the other hand argued for religion as a means of establishing social order. Only as the religious social order gains legitimisation however, can it

fulfil this role. Yet this is precisely what was challenged by the secularisation theory. Its proponents claimed the increasingly secular and pluralistic tendencies amongst Western nations diminished the ability of religion to establish social order. The recent revival of public religion globally has demonstrated again that the nomising capacity of a unified religious movement is still a powerful political tool. Not every nation has succumbed to pluralism. In Poland, Catholicism was legitimised by the people as a counter-ideology to Communism. Its value-system was endorsed even by non-believers, as a means of resistance to an unwanted regime. Similarly, it was noticed that in Brazil, the church, which had been closely allied to an oppressive regime, only began to achieve a significant legitimisation amongst the people as it increasingly democratised its churches. Even in Liverpool the concerted efforts of the Bishops and others, having gained legitimisation, have aided a nomising process helping produce a greater measure of religious and social harmony.

Some nations then, confronted by growing multi-faith cultures, will continue to struggle to achieve some sort of consensus on values amongst those of religious conviction and of none. Yet others have shown a remarkable resilience to these trends as has been shown. Wilson however, was pessimistic on this front. 'It does not appear that men will be able to remake the world we have lost, and unless there is a massive change of heart, a veritable revolution in thought and feeling, and a willing surrender of many of the conveniences of modern life and organisation, it is difficult to see how the otherwise irrevocable pattern of societal order could be reinfused with religious inspiration' (Wilson, 1982, 179). The twenty years following that statement have shown just how nations *can* be reinfused with religious conviction. Civil religion in Poland, consumer religion in America, and fundamentalist religion throughout many parts of the world, have provided significant empirical evidence to expose a glaring weakness in the secularisation argument, namely the implication that trends cannot change.

Despite the increase in knowledge and wisdom since Freud's day, humankind retains a religious disposition, but its expression is often much more varied within formerly homogeneously religious societies. Religion may not be the social force it once was in some nations, but neither can it be argued with conviction that religion is a transient phase in humanity's progress. If humankind has come of age, it has done so accompanied by a plethora of religious movements and practices.

The Marxist view of religion as an opiate used by the church to restrain the

masses from revolting has also lost much of the credence it once had. The promise of 'pie in the sky when you die' has ceased to be the central message of the church for many decades now, as the church has sought to re-align itself more and more with the marginalised in the urbanised conurbations. Despite this, the absence of the bulk of the working classes from the church in much of Western Europe has also lessened the import of Marxist philosophy at this point. Here it is the comfortable middle classes who frequent church the most. The church can no longer be deemed an 'oppressed' people.

The acceptance of pluralistic religion and an accompanying relativism of beliefs, may now be an increasingly accepted approach to the multiplicity of faith groups in existence. Yet history has already shown us that nothing remains the same. Religion is fighting back – at times through fundamentalist re-assertion and even occasionally in the form of civil religion. The future of religion remains as bright as ever, for 'the history of religion is not only a pattern of decline; it is equally a portrait of birth and growth.....the sources of religion are shifting constantly in societies..[but]...the amount of religion remains relatively constant' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 3).

4. SECTARIAN STRIFE

4.1. CAUSES OF SECTARIANISM

4.1.1. Reformation Origins

Many of the major changes which have occurred in Western religion can be traced back to the period of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Throughout Europe, individuals were being encouraged to approach God directly to receive forgiveness without human mediation, and to rediscover the Bible as God's word speaking to them directly. The attainment of these rights was not without its cost however. Despite Luther's initial desire to internally reform the Roman Catholic Church under the Bible, the church viewed his arguments as a challenge to its authority, and eventually excommunicated its rebel priest on 15th June, 1520. Against all his wishes Luther found himself at the head of a radical movement for change outside the established church. Others across Europe also took up the torch of reformation however; Zwingli in Switzerland, Calvin in France and Knox in Scotland.

In England the move to the new Protestantism was precipitated by King Henry VIII's wife Catherine's inability to produce an heir. In order to get the necessary divorce to remarry, Henry separated himself from the Roman Catholic Church and founded the Church of England over which he made himself head. Trevelyan however suggests there was more to it than that. Henry believed Pope Clement VII to be under the sway of Charles V the Emperor of Rome, who in turn was Catherine's protector. Henry felt intimidated. 'To Henry it seemed intolerable that the interests of England should be subjected, through the Pope, to the will of the Emperor' (Trevelyan, 1966, 301). The origins of Protestantism in England then may not have been of the most spiritual order, but a beginning was made, and those sympathetic to the new religion seized the opportunity to capitalise on the King's actions.

The relevance of all this for Liverpool's religious history lies in the fact that very early on in the English Reformation, an attempt was made to impose Protestantism on Ireland, despite its Catholic leaning. During the Civil War, the Irish supported Charles I who they assumed would be more just to them. Oliver Cromwell however, landed in Ireland with a large army, destroyed and burnt towns and laid waste the country. He took possession of the rich midlands for his soldiers and financial patrons as a reward for their support, and drove the Irish to the poor lands of the west. Ireland however, remained staunchly Catholic, for having destroyed the native gentry, Cromwell had left

the Irish 'the most priest-led population in Europe' (Trevelyan, 1966, 423). Thus were laid the seeds of the religious unrest and bitterness which were ultimately to blight the city of Liverpool for the best part of two centuries.

4.1.2 The Irish 'Invasion' of Liverpool

From 1847, Liverpool would never be the same again. The devastating potato famine of the 'Black Forty-seven' in Ireland, caused many hundreds of thousands of Irish to flee their homeland for a life elsewhere in the world. The bulk of the emigrants passed through Liverpool on their way to other parts of Britain as well as America and Canada. Yet many remained in Liverpool, exacerbating the deep social problems already tarnishing the city. From January 4th to 9th 1847, 10,724 deck passengers arrived from Irish ports, and during the month of February they poured in at the rate of 900 per day (Burke, 1910, 83). By the end of the year, the total number of immigrants, excluding those bound for the USA, reached the incredible number of 296,231, all apparently paupers (Burke, 1910, 84). In total, some 500,000 Irish entered Liverpool before July 1848 (Waller, 1981, 7).

The Irish 'invasion' also brought into greater relief the religious divisions between Catholic and Protestant already apparent in the city. The Christian scene in Liverpool prior to the mid-nineteenth century was generally staunchly Protestant and loyal to the Protestant monarchy (Garstang, 1920, 28). Evangelicalism prevailed across Protestant denominational divisions (Garstang, 1920, 34) and was in fact the spiritual cement which bound many Protestant churches together in their opposition to Roman Catholic advancement. There was however one group of Nonconformists who desisted from any denominational partisanship. The Unitarians, with a more limited emphasis on dogma and a greater commitment to Christian action, maintained a neutrality in all of this.

A feature of this 'invasion' from the west lay in a growing sense of Liverpool's culture being altered by the incomers. It was felt that the bulk of the immigrants, being poor and uneducated, would lower the status of the city. The Irish for example, constituted over one quarter of the population of Liverpool in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but they also made up over half the paupers and criminals. 'The problem seemed less that of Liverpool absorbing the Irish, as of Liverpool resisting absorption by the Irish' (Waller, 1981, 25). Xenophobia consequently became a marked characteristic of the Liverpool consciousness at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

4.1.3. Papal Threat and Protestant Intransigence

Closely allied to the marked increase in Catholic presence, was the accompanying influence of the Papacy. Since the Reformation, the Pope had become a kind of 'bogey man' in the eyes of many Protestants. Some of this fear was confirmed more resolutely by Pope Pius IX. Up until his Pontificate in the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Roman Catholics regarded the temporal power essential for the proper functioning of the papacy as a spiritual authority (Vidler, 1961, 146). With the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1870 however, the temporal power of the papacy came to an end (Vidler, 1961, 156).

It is nonetheless to Pius that a number of Rome's most controversial pronouncements are attributed. To confirm his status, Pius pushed forward on two other courses intended to make his position as sole authority in the church all the stronger. The first was his desire to be recognised as the Vicar of Christ. Pius was a likeable man, and from his pontificate stems 'that intense veneration for the Vicar of Christ which is a striking feature of modern Roman Catholicism' (Vidler, 1961, 153). The Pope came to be spoken of as 'the vice-God of humanity' (Vidler, 1961, 154).

The second course Pius took went even further. In an article published by the Holy See in 1869, he let it be known that he wished to assume dogmatic infallibility for the sovereign pontiff (Vidler, 1961, 155). Despite a stout resistance to this by a minority within the General Council, the decree was passed on 18th July 1870 (Vidler, 1961, 156).

An earlier step was taken by Pius in 1850, which further sounded alarm bells amongst Protestants in England. Known as the 'Papal Aggression', Pius set up a Roman Catholic hierarchy and dioceses in England, and appointed an Archbishop of Westminster. It also included a Bishop for Liverpool Catholics. This created an air of apprehension, both in the press and amongst politicians, with the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell particularly promising to intervene with legislation (Vidler, 1961, 161).

Herein lay some of the reasons for the resistance of Protestants to any kind of politico-religious influence of Rome. They were well aware of the Pope's claims to temporal power, and so the standing orders of the Orange Institution stated the Protestant position; they were to 'resist the power, ascendancy, encroachments, and extensions of the Church [of Rome]' (Belchem [ed.] 1992,

196). McNeile, an Anglican vicar of Irish origin, and a staunchly Protestant protagonist, elaborated on this in a speech to the Liverpool Protestant Reformation Society in 1846. He argued that there was a statute in existence in England which rendered it penal for anyone to assert the supremacy of the Pope in this country. The Pope he insisted, claimed 'supremacy not only over the consciences of the faithful, but also over kings and governments' (McNeile, Speech, 1846). Strictly speaking this was true as noted above, but McNeile's attitude appears to display an inordinate bitterness. Neal suggests his fierce opposition to the Papacy was due to 'his firm belief that the Pope was anti-Christ' (Neal, 1988, 46). In this extreme manner, McNeile appeals not only to political loyalty, but also to royal sovereignty, as a touchstone of religious veracity. In effect, to be Roman Catholic was to declare oneself a traitor. Catholics however did not see themselves in this treacherous light. Adherence to the Sovereign and to the Pope were not in practice mutually exclusive commitments for the bulk of the faithful. The removal of Papal temporal power in Italy in 1870 however, seems to have failed to disarm Protestant fears on this score. Drinkwater even makes the derisive suggestion that 'Labour did not contest Everton in the 1918 General election, where they were still blaming the Pope for causing the War' (Harris, 1969, note 43, 269).

4.1.4. Ritualism in the Church of England

The Ritualist Movement within the Church of England had its origins in the Oxford Movement, a group of Oxford Anglican clerics who were more intent on restoring and preserving the old traditions, rather than introducing new forms of ceremony. A series of ninety tracts were written on the nature of the Church of England and its doctrines. It was around 1840 however, that Tractarianism (or Ritualism) began to have a discernible impact on the worship and adornment of parish churches, as it took a new direction. More and more churches were being influenced by an increased elaboration in worship. 'Its outward and visible manifestations can be listed as follows: altar lights, vestments, wafer bread, the mixed chalice (mixing a little water with the wine at communion), making the sign of the cross, incense, genuflexions, preaching in a surplice instead of a black gown, surpliced choirs, much singing and chanting, the use of holy water, fixed stone altars instead of moveable wooden ones, crucifixes and statues, cultus of the Virgin Mary and Saints, reservation and adoration of the eucharistic sacrament, and auricular confession' (Vidler, 1961,157-8)

Whilst part of the reasoning behind this movement was to re-introduce something of the mystery and solemnity of the faith and provide opportunity

for increased liturgical activity amongst religious communities (Vidler, 1961, 158-9), the eventual outcome was a heated debate over what was perceived to be the thin edge of the Roman wedge. A great fear was emerging within much of Protestantism that the national church was heading for Rome. The tide however was turned to some extent with the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874, though it did create martyrs too, as a number of ritualist priests were sent to prison (Vidler, 1961, 162).

In Liverpool this debate was not passing unnoticed. In a city in which religious tensions were highly charged due to the largely increased Roman Catholic presence, the move towards a more ritualistic style of worship created its own local notoriety. It started at the top in the Church of England, where the newly appointed Bishop Ryle nailed his evangelical colours to the mast and roundly opposed the new trend (Waller, 1981; 173). Ryle believed adamantly that a move towards a more ritualistic form of worship was a Romeward step. He then came under pressure from some of the more extreme Evangelicals within the diocese to take action against the Rev. Bell Cox who was practising such forms of worship. Ryle reluctantly resorted to the Provincial Court in York and had Bell Cox suspended for six months. Cox took no notice of the suspension and was subsequently imprisoned in Walton Jail. Only seventeen days later however, the House of Lords overruled in Cox's favour and he was released to continue his controversial ministry (Toon and Smout, 1976, 89). What is generally overlooked however is that the two estranged clerics were eventually reconciled and able to put the incident behind them (Forwood, 1925, 20).

4.1.5. Economic Factors

The reaction against the Irish Catholic contingent in Liverpool had an economic element as well as a religious dimension. England as a whole was going through a time of recession. Jobs were in great demand and an influx of immigrants on such a large scale created acute unrest and a feeling of insecurity amongst the resident populace. Liverpool was already a polyglot city with Welsh, Scots and others from the Midlands and elsewhere in England, inhabiting its streets and occupying many of its jobs. Even in 1841, six years before the potato famine, one sixth of the total number of Irish migrants to England and Wales was already to be found on Merseyside (Harris, 1969, 240). 'In Liverpool the docks became the battleground for jobs between Catholic and Orange equivalents of the "mafiosi" ' (Neal, 1988, 32). As will be seen later, much sectarianism does not seem to have been directed specifically against the Catholicism of the Irish, but rather against their overt threat to what

employment was available, for the Irish were perceived as strike-breakers by accepting lower wages. Waller asserts; 'Liverpudlians gained a reputation for their vicious reception of immigrants. No love was lost between them' (Waller, 1981, 5). Here is evidence that Durkheim's theory of an ideal society based on the bonds of kinship have limited scope in a divided religious culture. While Loyalist Protestantism may be bound by the totemistic principles of a determined society, the wider society was not. Rather the divisive nature of religion emphasised by Macionis and Plummer is clearly portrayed (see 3.1.2).

Competition for housing also became an increasing factor in the fight for survival amongst the poorer classes in the city from the mid-nineteenth century on. As the Irish increasingly pervaded the dockland area of the city, so the increasingly wealthy merchant classes made the demographic shift to the suburbs, selling many of their larger homes to landlords, some of whom were less than charitable with their properties. Ongoing competition for accommodation increased local hostility against the Irish immigrants in particular, who were viewed by Liverpool's residents as one of the main causes of the squalor.

4.2. MANIFESTATIONS OF SECTARIANISM

4.2.1. Political Control

By the mid-nineteenth century Liverpool was controlled by the Conservative Party which at the same time was under the spell of John McNeile the Ulster Protestant minister, who Waller claims was the real creator of Liverpool Conservatism (Waller, 1981, 11). Neal adds that he headed a 'coterie of Irish evangelical clergy' (Neal, 1988, 38). The city divided along politico-religious lines with the Liberal party sympathetic to the Irish/Catholic cause (Neal, 1988; 54). Conservatism became increasingly sectarian and strengthened its position by aligning itself with the expanding Orange movement (Neal, 1988, 71). 'Originally patriotic in conception, Orangeism shifted its moorings and became an exclusively Protestant association pledged to preserve Reformation principles'(Waller,1981, 11).This three-way alliance of Protestant/Conservative and Orangeman helped to maintain the Conservative stronghold on the city, with the exception of a few years in the early 1890s when the Liberals had control. At this time, 'religion was politics' (Waller, 1981, 244).

The effect of this marriage of Protestant/Conservative was to create a feeling of resentment and alienation within the ranks of Roman Catholics. They had little option but to align themselves politically with the Liberal Party, where

they found sympathetic Unitarian ears in men such as Rathbone, Bowring and Holt. When elections occurred, attempts would be made to find a candidate whom the priests could recommend to their flocks. This did not always run smoothly however. Burke reveals how, in an undated election contest in Birkenhead, the priests met and decided on this occasion to support the Conservative candidate. Irish Catholic voters protested they had not been consulted, and when the Conservative candidate won, the drifting apart of Irish Catholics and English Catholics began (Burke, 1910, 148). This was chiefly due to the different nature of Irish and English Catholics. The former were much more robust in their outlook as a consequence of their painful history. The latter tended to be more assimilative, wishing to be accepted more as citizens on an equal footing where possible.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the threeway alliance was beginning to falter. In 1889 Orangemen affirmed their independence from the Conservatives and nominated their own candidates (Waller, 1981, 95). Some of the more extreme Protestants then formed their own independent party in 1903 with George Wise in the forefront. It was called the National Protestant Electoral Federation. It aimed at harmonising the proliferating organisations and put into action the slogan; 'Protestantism before party' (Waller, 1981, 201).

Amidst all this sectarian clamour however, it is apparent that many of those involved were not completely devout in their religious affiliation. What instead we find is much more an identification with a community rather than an adherence to a religion. It was Archbishop Goss, the second Roman Catholic Bishop, who began to air something of this. He announced; 'Many Irish only approach nominal religion' (Waller, 1981, 25). Similarly, from the other side, the Protestant Standard wrote; 'There are two classes of Orangemen; Christian Protestant Orangemen, and nominal political Orangemen' (Waller, 1981, 76).

Here is a crucial insight to the causes of sectarianism in Liverpool. Much of the hostility and even the violence had little to do with genuine Christian belief or the practice of the church - though some of it undoubtedly had. 'Sectarian violence began as an internal Irish private battle' (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 10). Many religious riots became symbols, even rituals by means of which the individuals expressed their social solidarity within their own homogeneous group.

4.2.2. Educational Cat and Mouse

Conflict in the educational field had an air of inevitability about it. From the

outset of the 1850s, 'the provision of schools was one great all absorbing task which the Catholic body set itself to achieve' (Burke, 1910, 100). Much later, Cardinal Heenan who was Archbishop of Liverpool in the 1950s and 1960s reiterated the same note, 'You can never build too large for Catholics', with a reference to his programme of school and church building (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 102). With such high goals, it was not long before the Catholic community came up against the established Protestant hierarchy in the educational arena. Prior to 1870 religious education in Liverpool had rarely been a major issue of contention. There was however a bitter division in the two Corporation schools opened as an experiment by the Liberal administration in the 1840s for children of all denominations. Catholics withdrew their children following a requirement imposed by the new Conservative controlled Education Committee, that the children read only from the Authorised Version of the Bible (Neal, 1988, 44, 63).

The year 1870 was a watershed in the educational system in England, with the introduction of the Forster Education Act. Trevelyan refers to it as, 'a system of universal primary education without which [England] must soon have fallen into the rear among modern nations' (Trevelyan, 1944, 581). The Act made universal elementary education available by providing for the establishment of local Board Schools financed out of the rates where there were insufficient church school places (Hilton, 1994, 98). Church schools, now termed 'voluntary' would be self-financing and free to provide what denominational religious teaching was desired. Board schools however, would only be allowed to teach an 'undenominational' form of religious instruction i.e. no specific sectarian teaching would be allowed. In its place would be 'simple Bible teaching' with moral and spiritual guidance derived from it. The critical clause of the Act, around which the subsequent controversy raged was the Cowper-Temple clause. Schools which received rate aid were not to be taught 'by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination' (Bastide [ed.] 1992, 11)

The Act stemmed from good intentions and sought to make up for the deficiencies in the system prior to 1870. Dean Howsen of the Church of England however, termed it a 'grave and important crisis' (Pritchard, 1980, 105). He was not overstating the case, for during the 1880s the Church Schools all found it difficult to finance themselves. Whereas the Board Schools could levy a rate on the community, church schools would have to find a significantly larger amount of money, close, or be taken over by the Board

for lack of funds. Catholics particularly expressed their concern at having to pay twice over, for their own schools and also for Board schools through the rates (Waller, 1981,55). So committed were Catholics to the retention of their own schools, that in the 32 years between the two main education Acts of 1870 and 1902, 'no Catholic school was transferred to the Boards' (Pritchard, 1980, 107).

The main point in all of this for sectarian interest lies in the way in which the Boards were established in Liverpool. Burke argues that the Forster Bill led to the various denominations trying to 'capture' the new school Boards (Burke, 1910, 187). Members were elected onto the school Board by public ballot, and the balance between Anglican, Nonconformist and Roman Catholic was usually inequitable, with the former two possessing most control. The Unitarian presence was not without effect however. Two of the Board's three chairmen were Unitarians (Grey Edwards, 1906, 148). Being more sympathetic to the cause of Catholic freedom to educate, they were generally more supportive of their cause. Interestingly enough, Major Lester the Anglican vicar from Kirkdale, who was the third chairman of the Board for 12 years, eventually became an independent member in 1885 due to his dissatisfaction with the actions of the Anglican members of previous Boards who had united with other Protestant members in opposition to Catholics. He pleaded for equal rights for both Voluntary and Board schools (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 148, 150-1). His views eventually led to a reconstruction of the Church of England plan of campaign and a change of policy in that direction.

Pressure was continuously brought to bear on the Government to make alterations to the financing of the Voluntary schools. Not only was that pressure coming from the Catholics and the other denominations, but also from politicians. Eventually in 1897, the Voluntary Schools Act was passed aiding the Voluntary Schools to the tune of 5 shillings per head for every pupil of average attendance (Pritchard, 1980, 108). The city moved into the twentieth century with the Voluntary schools still providing elementary education for 61% of its children (Pritchard, 1980, 109).

In 1902 the Balfour Education Act took administration from the School Board and vested it in a new Local Education Authority Voluntary schools were now to be known as 'non-provided' schools, yet were to receive rate aid (Pritchard, 1980, 109). The dispute over the religious nature of education in schools persists to this day. The Education Act of 1944 and the Education Reform Act of 1988, have not altered the fact that education still consists of three main

systems, the Roman Catholic, the Church of England, and Local Authority schools.

4.2.3. The Personality Cult

The sectarian conflicts in Liverpool produced a number of protagonists espousing their own brand of 'truth' at the expense of everyone else's error. In Liverpool's case the main protagonists have generally come from the Protestant camp. From the early dogmatism and gifted oratory of Hugh McNeile, the story continues in other emerging characters who dominated the religious scene in the city at the turn of the twentieth century. The chief of these was George Wise, a native of Bermondsey. He was greatly influenced in his early days by the writings of Bishop Ryle and the preaching of Charles Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher in London. With a keen mind and a predisposition to debate, Wise became a lecturer with the Christian Evidence Society and in that capacity visited Liverpool in 1891. He remained for another 26 turbulent years.

Wise was a small pugnacious man who could also be very kind and unassuming as a private individual (Waller, 1981, 240). Yet given an opportunity to speak out against Romanism or anything associated with that 'brand' of the Christian religion, Wise could display a turn of phrase which was sure to arouse intense anger and bitterness as well as foment hostile public reaction. He had a caustic tongue, and put it to devastating use. His methods became the scourge of the Chief Constable of the day, Leonard Dunning. The two continually were at odds on the issue of Public order and Wise was jailed on two occasions for disturbance of the peace in 1903 and 1909.

Something of Wise's methods and the inflammatory nature of his speeches can be gleaned from Police reports at the time of his second arrest in 1909. In one of his speeches at the infamous Protestant stronghold of St.Domingo Pit in Everton, a local gathering place for recreation, Wise is reported by the Police as suggesting that Jack the Ripper was a Catholic, and that if he went to a Priest and confessed to two or three murders, the Priest would afterward tell the Police he had not seen the man. He further described Priests as crafty, lying, tyrannical and murderous, and accused the Catholic Church of murdering more Jews than anybody. (Liverpool Echo, June 26th 1909).

From this it can be seen that no matter what his skills were as a preacher and lecturer of the Bible, his public discourses were inflammatory and bordering on the slanderous. Here was a man of good education and keen intellect, a man

who could preach with such ability that he could command a Bible Class of over 1,000 (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 207), boast the largest congregation in the city - having founded his own Protestant Reformers Memorial Church in 1904 (Waller, 1981, 208), and draw crowds of thousands to his open air preaching in Everton. Yet this same man became a catalyst of civic and religious unrest in a city desperately needing to channel its energies into mounting social exigency.

Behind the aggressive actions of Wise, and allied to his devout Reformation faith, was a monumental ego. Two examples might be enough to indicate its proportions. Upon release from his second spell in Walton Prison following his incarceration there for civil disobedience, he was interviewed by the Liverpool Echo regarding his experience. He retorted, 'I thought my position in Liverpool, my service in the City Council, on the School Board and Board of Guardians, as well as the fact of my being Pastor of a fine church, would have saved me from this degrading experience' (Liverpool Echo, Aug.19th 1909). Then again, at the Liverpool Inquiry into the disturbances of 1909, he claimed to be 'more distinguished than Queen Elizabeth 1', and that the Sodality (a group within Catholicism) might attempt to 'extinguish him, having attempted to do so to her' (Police Inquiry Act, 1909, Pghs.12704-6). Wise certainly could lay no claim to modesty.

In 1903 he was instrumental in founding the National Protestant Electoral Foundation. It aimed to harmonise the proliferating organisations and to put into action the slogan; 'Protestantism before Party' (Waller, 1981, 201). Wise saw himself as waging a sectarian war for the preservation of a true Reformation faith. Throughout the stormy years of Wise's dominance, sectarian strife embroiled the city on such a regular scale that 'pens tired of writing about it' (Waller, 1981, 134).

Wise's divisive activities however alienated even some of his allies. The Christian Evidence Society withdrew their support from him (Henderson, 1967, 6-7). The Y.M.C.A. dismissed him as being too controversial (Waller, 1981, 175). The Rev. James McKinney, a close ally, dissociated himself from Wise in 1903 over a political difference (Waller, 1981, 204), and Maurice Darby of the Reformation Society accused Wise of 'inflated bigotry' and claimed his attitude was 'an incentive to breach of the peace and civil war' (Police Inquiry, 1909, prgh. 12304). The Bishop of Liverpool, now George Chavasse, perhaps had him in mind when he stated; 'I am often ashamed of the unwise and unchristian conduct of some who call themselves Protestants'

(Waller, 1981, 192). Albert Stones, another Protestant lecturer from the South, who had been invited to take Wise's place during his imprisonment in 1903, began to undermine Wise's authority by accusing him of being 'the pope of the north' (Neal, 1988, 225).

This internecine fighting came to a head at a meeting of the National Protestant Electoral Federation in Sept.1904. There the dispute between Stones and Wise was considered. They were requested to work together in harmony again as brothers and to shake hands. Wise refused, and after others had walked out in disgust, led his followers to expel Stones (Liverpool Daily Post Sept. 15th 1904). Stones followed this by declaring his independence from Wise (Waller, 1981, 208).

Another Protestant protagonist visited Liverpool to crusade for Reformation principles. His name was John Kensit a native of Bishopsgate. He had travelled a cyclical route in his spiritual journey, commencing in the Anglican Church, then spending time with Methodism before returning to the Anglican fold. He appears to have been sectarian from the outset, and founded the Protestant Truth Society in 1889. Later he also formed the Wycliffe Preachers to traverse the country denouncing ritualism and anything to do with Rome. Along with his son and namesake, they visited Liverpool over two years during 1901-2 with their Crusade. John junior was eventually imprisoned for public disorder. Then in one of his speeches at Birkenhead, in which he denounced Catholicism as being responsible for most of the pauperism and crime, John senior was felled by an iron file and died several days later on 8th October 1902 (Waller, 1981, 191-2; Neal, 1988, 206-7)

Following the death of Wise in 1917, Henry Longbottom took up the torch of the Wiseite cause by succeeding him as Pastor of the Protestant Reformers Church in 1919 to his death in 1962. Longbottom continued as a strong anti-Romanist, and entered local government as a Kirkdale councillor. He attained the position of Lord Mayor in 1950-1. Waller claims his political position 'always depended on surviving sectarianism, not on his adoption of radical views' (Waller, 1981, 303). By the twenties, Protestant influence was waning. Wise's death and the distinctive causes for which Protestantism had stood were no longer issues. Ritualism had been halted by Parliament's opposition to the new Prayer Book. In 1928, independent Protestantism was effaced from the council for a time when Netherfield was lost (Waller, 1981, 303).

During the inter-war years, slum clearance undermined the cultural and

community infrastructure. 'Devoid of sectarian structures, suburban estates became solid Labour territory' (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 18). Increasingly then, people were finding 'surrogates for religion' (Waller, 1981, 350), chiefly in the politics of the Left in the new Labour movement - even Communism, and gaining a new brotherhood in the powerful growth of the Trade Union movement. From here on, the Christian religion would face a completely different challenge, namely that of inertia.

4.2.4. Working Class Divisions

With the growing movement of Trade Unionism in Britain, the working man found himself not only with a leverage for improving his conditions of employment, but a fraternity of friends and associates with goals in common. This helped bond working men together in more tangible ways, and left the churches with a growing trail of men deserting their religion at the functional level. In Liverpool, Trade Unionism had become established between 1889 and 1914 (Davies, 1996, 35). Working class activity in the city took varied forms. There was the syndicalism undercurrent whose methods in solving industrial disputes were usually direct and painful. 'Politically, syndicalism in Britain involved a rejection of gradualist social reform through Parliament based on electoral politics' (Holton in Davies, 1996, 35). There was also the co-operative movement, which began amongst the better off sections of the working class and expanded steadily in the early twentieth century to the dockside areas of the city (Davies, 1996, 35)

A third strand of working class influence came from the Irish migrants who brought to their politics in Liverpool a burning Irish nationalism. This may have exacerbated sectarian and political divisions within the Liverpool working classes, but the Irish also contributed organisational ability to local politics (Davies, 1996, 36). By 1918, many individual Trade Unions in Liverpool affiliated themselves to the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party (L.T.C.L.P.), but the local working class felt it was top-heavy with skilled trade workers, for Liverpool had a much smaller skilled work force than most comparable cities. They subsequently never really looked upon the Trades Council as deserving allegiance.

From the mid-1920s, the Labour representation in the local Council increased to make them a significant force. Within that Labour group however, was a strong and influential Catholic caucus which reached its zenith in the 1930s as it dominated the politics of the city, even at the cost of splintering the Party. The catalyst for these divisions was the Council's intended sale of the old

workhouse site on Brownlow Hill. The Catholic Church wished to purchase the site for a proposed cathedral, but the effect on Labour was disastrous. The policy of the L.T.C.L.P. was that publicly owned land should not be sold into private hands (Davies, 1996, 69), but despite party policy, the Council voted in favour of allowing the purchase to go ahead, with the Catholic caucus exerting its muscle. The Trades Council subsequently disbanded the Labour group and then reformed it whilst retaining its own executive powers. Only 27 councillors were willing to accept the conditions. The party was subsequently split in the council chamber. Further to investigations by the national Labour Party, and despite protests from the L.T.C.L.P. the original Labour group was reformed in May 1930. This meant however that the Labour group became dominant and ruled supreme for a decade within the party, to the chagrin of the L.T.C.L.P. (Davies, 1996, 70). Those councillors who represented safe Catholic seats formed a numerical majority of the Labour group for most of the 1930s, and their victory over the Cathedral issue welded them into a powerful body. Yet this was not the end to the religio-political intrigue. Further divisions emerged in the Party, making it a complex piece of political machinery. The Catholic caucus formed a solid block on the right of the party. The L.T.C. became a predominantly moderate wing of the party. Then there was a left wing minority gathered around the Independent Labour Party (which disaffiliated in 1932) and a number of ex-Communists, including the redoubtable Braddocks and Sidney Silverman (Davies, 1996, 73-4). Davies sums up his analysis; 'Religious sectarianism provided a complicating dimension in Liverpool not commonly found elsewhere' (Davies, 1996, 75).

As a consequence of these activities, the religious conflicts are often given as a reason for the Labour Council's inability to cope with the legacy of poverty and bad housing. Yet it could be argued that the fragmented nature of Liverpool's politics has not changed significantly in succeeding generations, though religion now plays little or no part in them. Parkinson points out for example, that from 1974 to 1983, when no party had absolute control, the Liberal administration could never be sure of support from Conservative or Labour. He argues this resulted from a 'partisan self-interest' on behalf of the parties (Parkinson, 1985, 56). Furthermore, 'This political uncertainty created beaurocratic uncertainty' (Parkinson, 1985, 22), and the result of this 'lost decade' was the inability of local officials to carry out any medium term planning (Parkinson, 1985, 23).

Following that in the mid-1980s, the same partisan spirit was apparent during the height of Militant dominance. Instead of the Liberals and Conservatives

rallying together for the good of the city in the critical Budget of March 1984, the Liberals undermined Militant, and the Conservatives also refused to support them. On the other hand, Militant could not bring themselves to vote with the opposition parties, for fear of being treated as traitors to their cause of economic justice for the city (Parkinson, 1985, 56).

This demonstrates that the religious factor in the early decades of this century ought not be viewed as an aberration in the history of Liverpool's politics. Even when religion is removed from the political equation, the inability of politicians of different persuasions to work together at times for the good of the city has been a mark of local government. At present the differences are political and even ideological. They are certainly not religious. It may be therefore, that this dogmatic and confrontational approach to others of a different opinion, is endemic to the character of Liverpool people, and the religious expression of that in the early part of this century has been inordinately overemphasised.

4.2.5. Social Upheaval

With increased religious tensions being actively promoted amongst Protestant leaders, one further manifestation of the religious divisions was sectarian violence, already evidenced around the personality cult. This social malady had been around since the mid-nineteenth century, but it reached its pinnacle in the early twentieth century during the period of George Wise's ascendancy amongst the Protestants of Liverpool. As has been noted, Wise paid scant attention to the appeals of the Chief Constable regarding his sectarian marches through Catholic territory. This resulted in ugly scenes of physical violence and verbal abuse being hurled across streets at opposing religious factions. Neal asserts 'the sectarian conflict in Liverpool gave many people an excuse to indulge in gratuitous violence' (Neal, 1988, 37). In his report to the Watch Committee, Leonard Dunning the Head Constable delivered his assessment of the situation; 'The bad feeling between those who profess different religions has in some parts of the city, reached such a high pitch, that almost nightly crowds parade the streets to demonstrate their disagreement by playing party tunes, singing party songs, and fighting with their opponents when they get a chance. They do not demonstrate the virtues of the religion they pretend to profess....but merely their hostility to those who profess the opposite one' (Liverpool Daily Post, Sept. 13th, 1904). On another occasion Dunning described the scene in Liverpool as a 'Hell on earth' (Waller, 1981, 244).

Something of the nature of this violent aggression can be gleaned from two

newspaper reports of the 1909 religious social upheaval. It was reported that six houses were wrecked by sectarian violence in Kew Street. Protestants claimed children had been attacked by Roman Catholics, but Father George of St Anthony's claimed he was grossly insulted by a Protestant on his way from the church. Within minutes there was a tremendous uproar, and bricks, broken glass, and other missiles were thrown in all directions (Liverpool Echo, Sept. 6th, 1909). On Netherfield Road, a revolver was fired by a shopkeeper. He just missed a policeman who was helping direct an Orange Procession. The man claimed he fired the shots partly to deter the crowd and also to attract the attention of the Police. He was nonetheless fined £5 for firing in a public street (Liverpool Echo, Sept. 2nd, 1909).

The offensive did not lie with the Protestant side only. 'Catholic counter-aggression grew, and in 1904 through the Summer, the sound of a drum from one side or the other would bring out two angry crowds' (Waller, 1981, 209). Again in the Spring of 1909, the challenge was renewed as Catholics paraded the Host through the streets of Manchester, Reading and London. This was a breach of the 1829 Emancipation Act. At the same time Catholics were pushing legislation in Parliament to alter the Accession Declaration in which new Monarchs denounced transubstantiation in harsh language. 'These parallel Catholic moves, on the streets and in the legislature, gave Protestants ammunition for the outdoor campaign season of 1909. The Liverpool riots of 1909, sprang, not simply from spontaneous fury, but from Catholic assertiveness' (Belchem [ed.] 1992, 179-180).

There is some indication again however, that religious affiliation was not itself the primary source of violent behaviour on the streets of Liverpool. It appears rather to have been a conduit through which violence, endemic in Liverpool at this time, could flow. For example, Waller claims the slums 'bred a congenital urge to fight' (Waller, 1981, 12). The density of the rapidly growing populace, coupled by the limited number of jobs, facilitated this intense rivalry between Irish immigrants who happened chiefly to be Catholic, and their Liverpool counterparts who happened to be mainly Protestant. This civic disorder had a financial price too. The rate bills increased to pay for the cost of unruliness (Waller, 1981, 244).

4.3. CONCLUSION

The intense sectarian spirit of nineteenth and early twentieth century Liverpool was not something that emerged in a vacuum. Both religious and social

factors had a powerful bearing on the intensity of the hostilities. The emancipation of Catholics, and their growing offensive against the restrictions upon their religious practice, rekindled fears amongst Protestants. Pope Pius' aggressive declarations of intent to claim supremacy in his jurisdiction and personal authority, also further engendered apprehension amongst Protestants. Added to that, the Ritualist tendency amongst many Anglican clergy brought the apparent threat of Rome within the very bounds of Protestant worship.

This admixture of historical and religious developments created the fertile environment for the Protestant personality cult that emerged in later nineteenth century Liverpool. The city could possibly have coped and adjusted to the growing Catholic lobby for acceptance had it not been for the extraordinary circumstances of the late 1840s Irish migration. The Irish formed a powerful lobby in Liverpool politics, and through their nationalism and religion, sought Durkheimian means of identifying their loyalty to their country and faith. Establishing Catholic schools, forming Catholic communities, fielding Irish candidates in elections, maintaining Catholic practices (such as eating fish on Fridays), and marching on St.Patrick's Day, all combined to establish their distinct Catholic society, in contrast to Orange Protestantism. Yet they also became part of the social disintegration process. The resultant socio-economic emergency, the concentrated rivalry for jobs, the blatant shortage of housing, the fierce religious rivalry, the growing xenophobia, and the innate aggressive nature of the people, were all factors which combined to create the intense conflagration that was Liverpool at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Whilst the religious factor was certainly a powerful weapon which many used for their own ends in Liverpool's sectarian conflict, it would be too simplistic to suggest that religion alone was the cause of the sectarian violence which afflicted the city. To do so, would involve channelling the social evidence through one over-publicised conduit. Important as that is, it relegates to the sidelines those other important factors necessary for a more rounded analysis of the momentous events which marked that period of history.

5. CHRISTIAN COUNTER CULTURE

It seems evident that an attempt at a much more pragmatic approach in the interests of the people of the city, was being undertaken by many Christian people before and after the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite the prevalent sectarian fever. The public images of violence and intolerance may have stolen the headlines, but the data also suggests a more personal and sometimes less publicised work of individuals and organisations was abroad. This provides an opportunity to reflect on some of the alternative emphases of many Christians as they sought to ameliorate some of the terrible social conditions apparent amongst them.

5.1. POLITICAL LEAVEN

It has been outlined in the previous chapter just how the political scene was marred by the sectarian intolerance chiefly waged by the fearful Protestant community. Yet it will be shown how even amidst that sectarian cauldron, individuals of varied Christian persuasions were endeavouring to rescue the situation by pushing forward with programmes and legislation intended to benefit the wider community. 'The great reforms of the nineteenth century stemmed from the efforts of a relatively small number of individuals not from institutions' (Knight, 1993, 9). It also needs to be noted here that Christianity was the prevalent moral cement that moulded the thinking of much philanthropy at this time. Whilst many were practising Christians, others imbibed Christianity nominally as the spirit of the age. It has been argued however, that almost all the great humanitarian pioneers of the nineteenth century 'had a deep Christian commitment' (Knight, 1993, 12). Many were also wealthy, and viewed their humanitarian work as a 'calling' from God. This section deals with some who attempted to express their humanitarianism through political channels.

Political allegiance in Liverpool was a more complex affair than the simplistic Orange/Conservative and Catholic/Labour divide. There were for example, some Catholics who stood as Conservatives against Labour Catholic candidates, creating ill-feeling as a consequence (Waller, 1981, 318). Furthermore, Sir Arthur Forwood who was leader of the Conservative council in Liverpool for nearly twenty years from 1880 onwards, was deemed to be a man of partisan spirit by some of his political opponents. Yet although a public supporter of Orangeism, Forwood admits to being so for the sake of the party and not out of any personal preference (Liverpool Citizen, Nov.26th, 1890). In Bootle he refused to back an Orange candidate for the School Board

claiming it was outside his political jurisdiction (Waller, 1981, 94). There was more to political allegiance it seems, than partisan religion.

Forwood was also active in promoting the University College, and keen to see an Episcopal See established in Liverpool. This from a man who 'never had any pretensions.....to be either pious or philanthropic beyond going to church, because it is the right thing to do' (Liverpool Citizen, Nov. 26th, 1890). His Christianity then, unlike his more devout brother William's, was purely pragmatic and part of the spirit of the age. 'I prefer to describe [the Church] as the Ecclesiastical Department of Government', he comments wryly (Liverpool Citizen, May 13th, 1891). Like many others of his time, he was a man not insensitive to Christian ethical considerations. This is the reason for his inclusion here.

In 1864 over 14,000 insanitary houses existed of the court type (Waller, 1981, 87). Forwood himself estimated that in 1883 approximately 175,000 people dwelt in such conditions (Forwood, 1883, 9). From this time Forwood and the Council sought to undertake an extensive building programme of new council housing (Waller, 1981, 87). This was in line with other cities at the time, such as Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham, as people made the demographic shift to work in industry. 'By the end of the [nineteenth] century, the English people had become not merely a nation of town-dwellers, but one of great city-dwellers....overall, new housing was provided at a slightly faster rate than population increase' (Burnett, 1978, 141)

In his speech to the Insanitary Property Committee as Chairman in 1883, Forwood outlined the Christian principles which governed his actions. He believed the church was not just to take the Gospel of salvation to the masses but also to display 'human sympathy in the troubles that afflict mankind'. He further urged them to be 'democratic in their Christianity' as it was 'an obligation incumbent upon the small minority in the land, whom circumstances have placed in a position of comparative affluence and influence, to use these powers to afford to those in a less favoured position, the fullest and fairest chance of raising themselves and their families out of the squalor, misery and disease that too often surrounds their present existence' (Forwood, 1883, 6) Finally, he argues that this will also have spiritual consequences, in that 'Christianity will benefit as the people see that its doctrines are not idle hollow precepts without life, but that they influence men to practise what they preach' (Forwood, 1883, 6). Forwood even sought legislation which would enable working men to own their own homes and to have security in old age (Waller,

1981, 155).

He went further and advocated recreation space be extended, that the road system be reviewed, and wished an alliance forged between the Corporation, the Docks and the Harbour Board. (Waller, 1981, 163) During his deputy chairmanship of the Health Committee the streets and sewers of Liverpool were reconstructed, and Acts dealing with insanitary property and the construction of improved dwellings were obtained and put into execution (Orchard, 1893, 306). His housing showpiece however was the Victoria Dwellings. This consisted of 272 tenements and 12 shops at Nash Grove, opened in 1885. Waller reveals however that the homes were eventually given over to a 'superior class of workmen'. The poor were still unaffected. The experience sadly led Forwood to pull out of the social improvement programme (Waller, 1981, 89-90). Nonetheless his example had set in motion a movement for house building which led to new accommodation for 700 families by 1900. 'By 1907 over 2,200 dwellings were occupied or near completion. The total cost had been more than one million pounds' (Garstang, 1920, 40).

A greatly influential family in Liverpool's politics and civic life was that of the Rathbones. They were one of the better-known 'Old Families' of the city and had accumulated both wealth and status through their shipping and merchant business. They were a Unitarian family which meant they were not viewed as strictly Christian by the more orthodox churches - though most Unitarians at that time considered themselves Christian, including the Rathbones. Unitarians however have always been accommodated under the Nonconformist umbrella. William Rathbone VI was a man of many parts. His daughter Eleanor described the philosophy of life that governed him. He 'deemed it necessary that to fulfil the possibilities that he saw for himself, that he should command a fairly ample fortune. He had however, no taste for personal luxury and a strong sense of the duty of frugality' (Rathbone, 1905, 113). He retired prematurely from business in 1868 in order to devote himself more fully to politics and social reform.

More will be said about William later, but suffice for the moment to notice his political contribution. He was a longserving member of the Select Vestry, the Liverpool equivalent of the Poor Law Guardians (Neal, 1988, 177), and it was in this capacity that he began his move to improve the quality of nursing and medical care (Rathbone, 1905, 166). Here too, he brought his great business abilities to bear upon Poor Law problems, visiting other countries to study their

system of relief (Orchard, 1893, 582). He was also elected twice as a Liberal M.P. - in 1868 in Liverpool, and in 1880 in Caernarvonshire. In Liverpool politics, he was determined to reform local government organisation, and contributed £4,000 towards research into drafting legislation towards its improvement, for he could not stand inefficiency (Waller, 1981, 86).

This desire for efficiency revealed a hard streak in Rathbone's methods on occasions. His daughter Eleanor records how the Central Relief Society encouraged a scheme of sending large families to Lancashire where there was a growing demand for their labour in the mills. 'Rathbone induced the Select Vestry to press migration under the scheme upon widows with suitable families who applied for outdoor relief, and if it was refused without reasonable cause, to offer the Workhouse' (Rathbone, 1905, 379). There was also a tendency amongst philanthropists to provide relief based on an impulsive response to need. Rathbone therefore advocated strongly the necessity of a more methodical approach - 'method versus muddle' - ridding the relationship with the poor of 'emotion and sentiment' (Simey, 1992; 89, 91).

Orchard writes highly of him however; 'He is one of those local gentlemen about whom public opinion is so unanimous and emphatic, that he cannot be spoken or written of truthfully except in a tone of undiluted respect' (Orchard, 1893, 582). Rathbone's greatest influence however came through his social commitment to be considered later, and it was to his daughter Eleanor that the mantle of political persuasion eventually fell. From her father she inherited a passion for people, especially the underprivileged who had little or no voice to speak for themselves. Some may question her contribution as a 'Christian' one, yet her inclusion seems justifiable. Mary Stocks, her friend and biographer, questions Eleanor's religious perspective by claiming it was ambiguous. Yet the instruction left to those responsible for her funeral gives a clear indication that while dubious over certain aspects of the afterlife, she still felt she was 'Christian' in her earthly life. Eleanor states her own position; 'My own feeling is that whether the soul survives the body - and of that I am not sure - my body is not me and of no more importance than a cast-off garment. Do not take that to mean that I am unchristian. I do not think I am. But Christianity seems to me a guide for life, but is rather vague about the afterlife of individuals' (Stocks, 1949, 34).

Eleanor's upbringing had not only imbibed her with a robust religious inclination, but a keen social conscience. 'Indignant at the poverty and squalor which debased the lives of a great part of the population, she preferred to give

all her time and energy to help the movements already active for raising the standard of living for the people'. (Lord, 1954, 4). She not only gave herself to causes at home, but to the oppressed classes of India and Africa. She was elected an Independent M.P. for the Universities in 1929 and served till 1946. She took to the front line in the fight for women's emancipation and especially the franchise. She also was elected in 1909 to Liverpool City Council and became best known perhaps for her successful fight to obtain Family Allowances (Lord, 1954, 10-11).

Another gifted female pioneer of the period was the 'mighty atom' Margaret Beavan (Waller, 1981, 478). Born in Liverpool in 1876, she grew up in the city greatly influenced in her formative years by the Rev. John Watson, better known by the pseudonym Ian McLaren. Encouraged by him to value the civic ideal (Ireland, 1938, 17), she inquired earnestly into religious matters that she might formulate a working theology for herself. (Ireland, 1938, 7). She seems to have succeeded beyond her dreams, for she not only established an effective work in the city through the Invalid Children's' Association, but eventually was elected a Councillor in 1920 to the Prince's Park Ward, and finally achieved fame as only the second woman Lord Mayor to be elected in British history in 1927 (Ireland, 1938, 187). In her capacity as a Councillor she influenced the Health and Education Committees with her expertise (Ireland, 1938, 168,170). She urged the Watch Committee to consider the possibility of women in the Police force, though she never ever saw it achieved (Ireland, 1938, 171). Underpinning all she aimed to achieve was her vision of a Liverpool she longed for; 'That there should come a time when there should stand on the banks of the Mersey a great city - rich not only in her merchandise, but rich in her happy, able-bodied, free and independent citizens' (Ireland, 1938, 55).

Her final involvement in politics was an attempt to get elected as Conservative candidate in Everton in the 1929 General election. She was not keen to stand there for the sectarian reasons which proved to be her downfall, and preferred West Toxteth (Waller, 1981, 319). The campaign was ultimately influenced by the religious education issue. She had managed to retain the support of the Catholic Archbishop Downey on the matter by adopting a rather ambiguous attitude. 'Justice in religious training' would be her goal (Ireland, 1938, 250). When White, the Conservative leader, along with Henry Longbottom the Protestant leader of the time, persuaded her to renege on her commitment to seeing Catholic schools run and staffed at the public expense as other schools were (Ireland, 1938,250; Waller, 1981, 319), Longbottom then openly came out in support of Margaret, abused the Catholics and immediately caused

Downey and the Catholic electorate to withdraw their support. Margaret was furious with Longbottom and believed Downey would have stood by her despite her concession (Waller, 1981, 319). She lost the election, and died shortly after in 1930.

David Logan was an influential and devout Catholic Labour M.P. from 1929-64 in the Scotland division. He held powerful religious views along with an active social conscience (Waller, 1981, 323). In his first speech to Parliament he expressed his Christian principles; 'I stand for the great things that go to make the family life and to help to make the manhood of the nation great and strong, because of deep religious convictions' (Davies, 1996, 178). Logan's social conscience was evident as he championed the causes of unemployment relief and housing (Waller, 1981, 324). Writing in a local church magazine in 1949, he informs the parishioners of a breakthrough in housing policy. 'We have through the new housing director and the Housing Committee, now arrived at what we think may ease our problem. I have come to an agreement that future buildings in this area shall include houses for small and large families, thus obviating the breaking up of homes and parishes' (Beasley, 1949, 92).

Conclusion

The above examples of Christian political involvement are not intended to minimise the undoubted religious sectarianism practised in the manner shown in chapter 4. Yet this work is an attempt to demonstrate that this was not all there was to the religious scene in the city. What has been shown then is that Christian men and women were also aiming to use the political arena to improve the appalling social conditions in which many of the population found themselves. Housing was a particularly demanding exigency which was exacerbated by the influx of the Irish and the collapse of the private building boom of the 1840's (Friend, 1981, 11). Furthermore, 'the Corporation found the rents necessary to cover costs precluded it from housing poorer sections of the working class' (Friend, 1981, 12). Though it took some decades to get a worthwhile programme of building started, it was encouraged on its way by some who were Christian. The pioneering work on behalf of women too at this stage had Christian women at the heart of it. Using their acumen and feminine insight to family life, they helped gain financial support for those most in need, and promoted the cause of women's equality.

It may be argued cynically that politicians will use any means to gain public support - and votes. Some of these actions therefore might have been

undertaken as a means of political expediency. Yet it is often apparent even today, that those who are more genuinely Christian in their philosophy emerge from the other politicians, often in matters of ethics and morals, and occasionally at some political cost (as David Alton discovered in the late 1990s).

5.2. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The historical record of Christian identity with education is a matter which needs little restatement. Almost all educational provision for children at the elementary level and for higher education at university was gained through the various church denominations (Bruce, 1995; 9, 25) up until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Something of the local political and religious difficulties this presented have already been dealt with. Here it is intended to explore some of the attempts by concerned Christian people to secure the education and care of as many children as possible, not only in pre-1870 Liverpool, but also subsequent to the new Acts. Elementary education began with the provision of a number of Sunday Schools for the poor in 1784. These were rapidly followed by Day Schools provided by the various denominations or by endowment. The earliest were the Old Church School in Moorfields (1789), the Unitarian schools in Mount Pleasant (1790), and the Wesleyan Brunswick school, also in 1790 (Garstang, 1920, 54). Roman Catholic schools were also being established. In Ince Blundell, just outside Liverpool, a Catholic school had been founded in 1759 with forty 11 year olds gathered from all over England (Hilton, 1994, 68). Schools then increased rapidly between 1823 and 1870 when education eventually became enforceable. The allocation of pupils in 1870, prior to the Act's enforcement in Liverpool are tabulated below:

BODY	SCHOOLS	PUPILS
Church of England	56	19,621
Nonconformist	21	4,368
Roman Catholic	22	10,361
Undenominational	10	4,202
Private	162	4,202

(Source: Pritchard, 1980, 105-111)

There were however, reckoned to be about 30,000 children not receiving elementary education at this time (Pritchard, 1980, 105), still a sizeable percentage of the population. The Forster Act of 1870 was a brave and bold

move, but a necessary one on the evidence. Something of the improvement can be seen in the figures produced in 1902. The Denominational schools (Church of England, Roman Catholic and Wesleyan) and Undenominational schools amounted to 113 and catered for 82,313 children. Board schools amounted to 49 and served 49,765 pupils. A total of 132,078 pupils were now being provided with an elementary education (Garstang, 1920, 54), a 300% increase! The churches had risen to the challenge, despite some misgivings over the Act's apparent inequities, and sought to provide, along with the government, increased educational opportunities for the town's citizens. Yet before the Act of 1870 brought about its transformation, there was a wealth of effective educational activity being carried out by the Christian community behind the scenes and behind the statistics just given.

5.2.1. Roman Catholic Education

The Roman Catholic Church particularly has had education as one of its foremost goals since emancipation in 1829. 'The provision of schools was the one great all-absorbing task which the Catholic body set itself to achieve in the early [eighteen] fifties'. (Burke, 1910, 100) During the 1850s and 1860s in Liverpool, under the inspiration of Father Thomas Newsham and Father James Nugent, the Catholic church waged an intensive campaign to get education as well as training in some craft, to as many children and young people as possible. St Francis Xavier's School was opened in 1854 with 300 girls and 100 infants - hundreds being refused for want of room (Burke, 1910, 100-1). Newsham founded the St. Helen's School in one of the worst districts of the town. After four months the school appeared highly organised and completely under the control of the teachers (Burke, 1910, 103). The staff responsible for this amazing feat were the Sisters of Notre Dame. They had been introduced to England and Liverpool by Nugent whose astuteness recognised their real potential for Catholic educational advancement.

Apart from the St.Helens School, they established another school on Copperas Hill, followed by a school for secondary education at Mount Pleasant. It grew quickly to 30 pupils. From this sprang the first Pupil Teacher's Centre whose standards of excellence were repeated throughout the country. Quarter of a century later, the leading educationalists of Liverpool based their teacher training methods on those of the Sisters as being the most successful ever attempted in the country (Burke, 1910, 106).

The larger Catholic Institute was opened on 31st October 1853 in Hope Street and became a centre of Catholic life as well as a school. Masters with high

academic records were engaged. High class entertainments were also provided, along with a gym and reading room (Bennett, 1949, 25). There were other non-academic types of school envisaged by the churches, and the Catholic Church joined them in pursuing a more practical instruction of the population. A Catholic Middle School was opened in 1850, offering a commercial education and religious instruction. It also provided evening classes, with each term costing between two to three guineas (Bennett, 1949, 23). Its overall purpose was to provide a liberal education in the Arts (Burke, 1910, 111).

Ragged Schools were a brave attempt to deal with a frightening problem in the town. Thousands of children, orphaned or simply uncared for, roamed the streets of Liverpool scrounging a living of sorts and proving themselves nothing but a nuisance. Nobody wanted them. Ragged Schools offered them shelter, food and clothing, rather than a serious educational syllabus, though some basic introduction to the three 'Rs' was included. Their defect meant the children were turned out at night to fend for themselves (Bennett, 1949, 30). Nonetheless there were 32 of them in Liverpool in 1853, run by almost all the denominations (Bennett, 1949, 30). By 1861 Nugent could claim 7,000 children attended Ragged Schools during the day, yet despite this remarkable number, 23,000 children were still roaming the streets (Burke, 1910, 151).

At this time also, Nugent's work was developing along a more holistic approach to his 'nobody's children'. In 1864 he set up his Night Shelter and Refuge in Soho Street, to deal more effectively with his street 'Arabs'. In 1869 this was followed by his Boys' Refuge, a residential home that provided training in some trade (Bennett, 1949, 40-1)

The Reformatories School Act of 1854 authorised financial help to such groups as the Society of Friends who had established the first Reformatory to help children convicted of crimes. This was such a success that Liverpool Catholics subsequently set up Juvenile reformatories with three schools attached. They were the training ship 'Akbar', the Farm School at Newton-Le-Willows (both for boys), and Toxteth Park for girls (Bennett, 1949, 50-1). The ships proved to be more suitable for boys as training vehicles. They were more exciting and appropriate for boys brought up in a maritime city (Bennett, 1949, 53-4). A Reformatory was built at Ainsdale however, with land provided by Thomas Weld Blundell. Boys who were not robust enough to cope with the sea, were taught a variety of trades there, such as tailoring, shoemaking and joinery (Bennett, 1949, 60). By 1909, 2,044 boys had passed

through its hands (Liverpool Mercury, Sept.25th 1909). For Catholics, education was to be a means of spiritual development. A primary object of the Reformatories was, 'to get these boys to Mass on Sundays' (Bennett, 1949, 30).

5.2.2. Anglican and Nonconformist Education

Building on the long tradition of Anglican involvement in education, one vicar in Liverpool attempted to make education available to the poorer strata of society, particularly in his district of Kirkdale. Thomas Major Lester, a Londoner, arrived to take up his charge in St.Mary's Church in April 1855. He became a 'distinguished educationalist' (Grey Edwards, 1906, 148) and an active member of the Liverpool School Board, being its chairman from 1891 - 1903 (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 149). Lester was a man ahead of his times, a visionary in the same mould as Father Nugent his contemporary. Yet even though much that he sought was not immediately attainable, he set about doing what he could. And what he achieved was extraordinary. He built new schools at a cost of £7,000, beginning with the Kirkdale Child Charity, which was his great life-work and probably the first of its kind in Liverpool (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 51).

The erection of these new schools was begun in 1860. The children gathered here were some of the most disadvantaged. (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 53). These schools were residential, providing a home as well as a training. His aim was not merely intellectual improvement, but again to be practical and provide a training for both girls and boys in some trade or skill. Attached to the school therefore were a Tailor's Shop, a Printer's Shop, and a shop in which the boys produced matchboxes and the girls turned out 2-3,000 paper bags a day. Another range of buildings had a Carpenter's shop and a Shoemaker's shop built in 1884 (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 53-4).

Upon reaching a certain age, some of the boys were apprenticed to a trade and were found lodgings in the homes of respectable, motherly widows (Grey-Edwards, 1906, 57). To support this work of education, Lester wrote thousands of letters appealing for funds. He could write 50 such letters a day (1906, 75), and once broke down under the strain (Simey, 1992, 96). Sometimes the zeal of the children who collected with their charity boxes became a public nuisance (Simey, 1992, 97). Many of these children came to know 'the Canon' as their father. In a eulogy in the Liverpool Review under the heading, 'The Children's Friend', it states warmly: 'He gave his life away, and the more life he gave away, the more he had. He was a winning, gentle father to those who had never known what Father meant' (Liverpool Review;

Nov.7th, 1903).

Simey however submits that despite his generous spirit, there was nonetheless a flaw in Lester's approach; 'For all his popularity, for all the esteem in which his work was held, the Homes to which he had devoted his life had to be shut for lack of support after his death, and the schools handed over to the local education authority' (Simey, 1992, 97). Simey suggests that this was due to a common trend amongst many relief agencies at the time. They refused to submit their endeavours to organisation by the Central Relief Society. Lester provides 'a particularly apt illustration of all that was typical of those who, consciously or unconsciously, opposed the principles of organised charity' (Simey, 1992, 96).

Eventually, the Forster Education Act of 1870 provided education for all children, either through the Voluntary Schools ie.church schools, or through the Board Schools financed by the rates. Yet religious education was retained at the centre of school life. Similarly, the Balfour Education Act in 1902 which took administration from the School Boards and invested it in Local Education Authorities, retained the Christian component in the educational policy of the schools. Then finally the Butler Act of 1944 continued the denominational compromises, but established that in every State-aided primary and secondary school, the day should begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils, and religious instruction be given in all schools. Withdrawal clauses were included which enabled teachers to opt out, and parents to withdraw their children if desired (Bastide [ed.] 1992, 11). Christianity at the heart of the English school curriculum remained a prerequisite of any complete education.

Some insight into the ethos of a Protestant religious curriculum can be seen in the Syllabus of Religious Instruction for the Diocese of Liverpool in 1935. In that document, the general aim of the Christian instruction is outlined: 'That during the years of school life ie.5-15 years, the children will acquire a knowledge of God as revealed in Holy Scripture, will value and appreciate as children of the Heavenly Father's family, their privileges and responsibilities in being members of his church, and will learn the joy of worship and service' (Diocesan Syllabus, 1935; 9). Hornsby-Smith relates how Pope Pius XI intended a Catholic school to function. In his encyclical letter, Divini Illius Magistri, written in 1929, he describes the ethos of a Catholic school; 'The whole of the training and teaching, the whole organisation of the school - teachers, curriculum, school books on all subjects - must be so impregnated

with the Christian spirit under the guidance and motherly vigilance of the church, that religion comes to provide the foundation and the culminating perfection of the whole training' (Hornsby-Smith, 1978, 7). Both these approaches to education reveal the importance of values to each religious body as a means of integration. Yet values are also used as a means of social control and there are strong hints of this latter aspect within Catholicism in creating a sacred environment. Educational standards have come a long way since the eighteenth century, but the role of Church schools has scarcely diminished.

5.2.3. The Establishment of the University

One of the most notable educational contributions which the Christian community has made to the city of Liverpool is the establishment of a University in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The details of the founding of the University College as it then was, have been chronicled in 'For The Advancement of Learning' by Thomas Kelly. What is important for this work is to recognise the overwhelming contribution made by those of Christian and Unitarian persuasion to that advancement. Right from the early pioneering days when Dr. James Carson, a former Presbyterian Minister first raised the issue (Kelly, 1981, 26), through Dr.Abraham Hume the Anglican social investigator, who called for a radical overhaul of the town's educational provision in 1851(Kelly, 1981, 28-9), to the actual founding days of the 1870s when the Unitarians played such a promotional role, the Christian spirit undergirding the University was quite marked.

It was Sir Arthur Forwood, a strong and influential advocate of the cause, who called a meeting of the townspeople in his role as Mayor, and eventually set the ball rolling to its successful conclusion in the establishment of the College in 1881. From that meeting a General Committee was formed which included the Unitarian Minister, Rev.Charles Beard. Kelly submits that of all the people who made up the Committee, Beard probably did more than anyone to shape the form and spirit of the new institution (Kelly, 1981, 44-5).

Raising funds for the building was not going to be the main problem. How to finance the many faculties was. Inspiration came to the Unitarian politician and philanthropist William Rathbone VI on hearing a remarkably detailed dream recounted by the well-known Canon Lightfoot, a native of the city, at the Liverpool Council of Education in 1879. At that meeting, Lightfoot told of how in his dream, he was informed that the University's staff, whom he had seen so vividly, were financed by public subscription and the occasional

benefactor (Kelly, 1981, 46). Rathbone immediately had his answer, and speedily set to work rounding up a list of local subscribers to finance professoriates for the College. A building was eventually purchased in 1881, the Lunatic Asylum on Brownlow Hill, at a cost of £19,000, and transferred to the College in stages as was required (Kelly, 1981, 49-52).

The final step in the process of establishing the University College reveals an intriguing anomaly. In setting out the College's charter, these Christian founders of the University amazingly decided to omit any requirement of religious affiliation or conviction from those who were to teach there. The statement actually reads: 'No student, Professor, Teacher or other officer or person.....shall be required to make any declaration as to his religious opinions, or submit to any test whatsoever thereof' (Kelly, 1981, 53). This unusual stance has commonly been regarded as peculiar to Liverpool, and as reflecting the sectarian bitterness due to the presence in the city of large numbers of Irish Roman Catholics. Others however, suggest it was greatly influenced by the Unitarian, the Rev. Charles Beard. Bradley states; 'We owe to him perhaps more than to anyone else that fundamental condition of the constitution of the College by which it was placed in equal relations of sympathy with all religious denominations' (McLachlan, 1934, 155). This approach however seems to have been in line with other Colleges in London and Manchester (Kelly, 1981, 53).

5.3. SOCIAL AMELIORATION AND REFORM

Whilst sectarianism was hitting the streets and the headlines, many others in the Christian community sought to actually do something for the underprivileged of the city. Concerned citizens with less interest it seems in theological controversy, and more concern for human need, were actively attempting to relieve the pitiful reality of human suffering which beset Liverpool.

In Victorian England there was another hurdle to climb however, if the task of improving the lot of the poor and needy was to be realised. Public opinion at that time was determining society's attitude on the issue. Many Victorians were convinced that moral failure was the one overriding cause of poverty (Sellars, 1963, 232). This standpoint failed to appreciate that for thousands of Liverpudlians - and the thousands of Irish paupers joining them, there was simply no way to escape the poverty trap they found themselves in. Jobs were scarce and irregular, housing conditions and hygiene were a disgrace even by Victorian standards, and the resulting widespread diseases often decimated

whole families and robbed others of the breadwinner. Anthony Miller concludes; 'Contrary to the opinions of the Victorian charitable institutions, all the evidence pointed to the fact that the condition of the poor was a consequence of the social and economic system' (Miller, 1988, 31).

5.3.1. Temperance Movements

The sectarian conflict may have been a factor in preventing the civic leaders from advancing as quickly as they ought, but amongst those who were pushing as hard as possible for improved conditions and legislation, were concerned Christian men and women. A far-reaching amount of philanthropic activity was unleashed in Liverpool in the second half of the nineteenth century, as elsewhere in Britain. Most of it was aimed at relieving the symptoms of the affliction rather than curing the root causes - a criticism sometimes levelled at the Victorians, but the latter were not totally overlooked and shall be considered in due course.

One of the first areas of concern to be tackled was that of drunkenness. The issue must have been one that beset Liverpool some time before the coming of the Irish in the 1840s as there had been a Temperance Society there since 1830 (Waller, 1981, 109). Temperance in fact became one of the most influential of Victorian charitable movements (Waller, 1981, 108). Its two chief aims were reform through education and prevention through legislation (Waller, 1981, 22-3). Certainly something needed to be done. Drunks were reared young in Liverpool, and in 1876, 352 convicted drunks were aged under twelve, 1,523 from twelve to eighteen, and 3,183 from eighteen to twenty one (Waller, 1981, 24).

Many Liverpool people were deeply concerned over the correlation between drink and crime. Although an Act had been passed in 1872 which restricted drinking hours to between 7am and 11pm, this was patently still inadequate to deal with the problem. An attempt was made in 1875 by a Vigilance Committee organised by leading men in the city, most of whom were Christian men, including some leading clergymen. They demanded an inspectorate, the rescission of licences following convictions, shorter hours of sale midweek, and Sunday closing. Householders were circulated and out of almost 69,000 respondents, 51,000 answered most favourably (Waller, 1981, 23). They duly informed the Council and Government of their findings.

The process of altering legislation is a timely one and therefore numbers of other Christian people persisted with the charitable approach, attempting to

ameliorate the suffering and squalor whilst the political means of attack was being pursued. Two of the main prongs of charitable assault on intemperance were the Church of England Temperance Society (C.E.T.S.) and the Roman Catholic League of the Cross. The latter was founded by the ubiquitous Father James Nugent on the 8th February 1872, 'to seek and to save that which is lost' (Burke, 1910, 107). A hall was built at the corner of St.Anne Street and Rose Place in 1875 (Burke, 1910, 108). On Monday evenings, his equivalent of Alcoholics Anonymous was held - a perseverance reunion. Regular concerts as a form of entertainment, provided an antidote to the Pub. It was deemed by some to be the most important work of his career (Catholic Family Almanac, 1906, 115).

The Church of England's attempts at tackling the 'demon drink' were channelled through its own Temperance Society, founded in 1862. It came into existence for 'The promotion of temperance, the reformation of the intemperate, and the removal of the causes which lead to intemperance' (C.E.T.S. Annual Report, 1939). On a smaller scale its Firewood and Mat Factory opened in 1887, employing just under 300 (Waller, 1981, 23). It also encouraged a variety of counter-attractions such as free libraries, sports clubs, friendly societies, savings banks and instruction in domestic science and sanitation (Waller, 1981, 22).

One notable experiment, the Police Court and Prison Gate Mission - a forerunner of the Probation Service, was opened in 1879, the first in the country. Its aim initially was to appoint an agent to visit the Police court daily, meet discharged prisoners, and then follow through with a home visit, prevailing upon them 'to give up their intemperate habits'. An iron mission room was later erected near Walton jail where free breakfasts were provided for prisoners on the morning of their discharge (C.E.T.S. Annual Report, 1929). They were also invited to sign the pledge cards, meet relatives and friends, and receive clothing such as ties, socks, scarves and hats. (C.E.T.S. Annual Report 1927). Bands of Hope for promoting temperance were established for children, and a female refuge for young women opened in 1887 accommodating up to fifty (C.E.T.S. Annual Report, 1927; Waller, 1981, 23).

Both Temperance groups, along with others, eventually saw some reward for their labours. In 1889 there had been 16,042 drunks convicted, but by 1895 there were only 5,305 convictions. Despite the Head Constable crediting the improvement to better education, sport and benefit societies (Waller, 1981, 167), greater encouragement was to come for the Temperance societies.

'During and after the first World War, the alcoholic content in beer was reduced, and punitive taxation imposed upon spirits' (Waller, 1981, 271). Licensing hours were also restricted. In such tangible ways, through both reformation and legislation, the Temperance movements made their distinctive contribution to the social life of the city's populace.

5.3.2. Missions

Another form of social relief came about through a more overtly Christian enterprise, the introduction of 'mission' work. Missions became a popular adjunct to many Anglican and Nonconformist churches as a means of reaching the working classes, especially in the years 1875-1900. A mission could be a room in some commercial premises, a dwelling house, or specially built hall. 'The mission was not merely a religious agency; it served in many ways as the Victorian equivalent of a social club' (Sellars, 1963, 29-30). It provided free breakfasts, hotpot suppers, workmen's penny banks, and Saturday evening entertainment.

Unitarianism brought its own distinct contribution to the use of missions. Following upon Rev. Joseph Tuckerman's approach in America, Unitarians made no attempt to proselytise like the other denominational missions. Rather the Unitarian Mission became chiefly a form of social support to the poor. Unitarian Missioners were not to dispense alms, but rather get alongside the poor and assist them 'by revealing to them their own hidden resources and neglected abilities' (Sellars, 1963, 230). Providence, clothing, Benefit and Book societies, were to be the Missioner's first aim. His mission was to become that of 'lawyer, insurance agent, amanuensis and friend' to the poor, as well as their spiritual comforter (Sellars, 1963, 230).

John Johns was the earliest of Unitarian ministers to promote this kind of thinking amongst them. He arrived in Liverpool in 1838, and as its first Missioner, quickly influenced the newly established Domestic Mission to adopt these ideas. He condemned private charity as a 'great source of despondency and degradation among the lower classes of the poor' (Sellars, 1963, 231). He further shocked his Unitarian fraternity by countering the prevailing Victorian outlook that spiritual aid would help the poor to alleviate their poverty. Instead, Johns argued for involvement from the ranks of the better-off. The Report of 1850 quotes him contending; 'None but those who have mingled with the poor can form any idea, either of the sullen discontent generated in their too suspicious minds,.....or by the brightness and joy which the occasional visit, so that it be made with delicacy and respect, of a sympathising friend from the

wealthier classes casts athwart their gloomy hearths' (Domestic Mission Annual Report, 1850).

The arrival of Bishop Ryle in 1880, and his strong advocacy of this form of Christian involvement, gave a wider respectability to the concept of missions. Ryle's aim was to establish a church for all the people, and for him that included the use of missions to communities who would not otherwise come to a church. His form of mission, in contrast with the Unitarians, was to be overtly evangelistic. 'Before all things, Ryle was a preacher of the Gospel, and one would imagine his motto was something like John Wesley's; "Church or no church the people must be saved" ' (Lancelot and Tyrer, 1930, 241). He even postponed the building of the Cathedral in order to achieve his aim. (Forwood, 1925, 20-21).

During his first ten years he saw the establishment of 27 churches and 40 missions halls (Toon and Smout, 1976, 81). To manage this size of operation he also recruited and employed what he termed 'living agents'. Fifty Scripture Readers and 580 Lay Helpers were engaged to organise and help in the multiplicity of Sunday Schools and visitation of the sick, while thirty or so Bible Women worked in the poorer areas caring for both body and soul (Toon and Smout, 1976, 80). By 1890, nearly 100,000 children attended Sunday school in the diocese (Toon and Smout, 1976, 81). Caring for the poorer people through missions became an established norm for the churches.

5.3.3. Recreation and Entertainment

There are many other ways in which the Christian and Unitarian communities attempted to influence the thinking and improve the lot of its people in these tormented days of the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To begin with, the many parks which give 'lungs' to the city (Sellars, 1963, 244) owe much to the generosity of the 'Old Families' of Unitarians who donated large sections of green space for the teeming masses to enjoy. The Yates family were the pioneers here, purchasing Princes Park from the Earl of Sefton in 1843 and gifting the hundred acres of land to the city in 1849 (Kelly, 1981, 29). Others followed shortly. There was Wavertree Park in 1860, Stanley Park in 1861, Sefton Park in 1872, and Roby Hall estate in 1907. George Melly also donated a playground with gym and full-time gymnast in 1858 (Sellars, 1963, 244).

The churches also attempted to bring light relief to the citizens of the city by introducing Saturday evening entertainments. The two prominent figures in

this enterprise were Canon Major Lester and Father James Nugent. Nugent was putting on concerts of quality in the Catholic Institute from 1853 onwards for a more select audience (Bennett, 1949, 25), but also introduced the People's Free Concerts for a wider audience in the Picton Lecture Hall. The entertainment was still of the highest standard, with amateurs of ability and distinction giving their services (Catholic Family Almanac, 1906, 115-122).

Lester introduced a similar form of concert in the Archer Street Schools. Prominent citizens were invited to take the chair and a number of artistes made their first impressions on the public at these concerts. The idea caught on with other clergy (Grey Edwards, 1906, 143-4). Rev. Richard Hobson was one of the most successful of Anglican vicars in working class areas at this time, building his church from a handful in a cellar to a sizeable parish congregation. He too used entertainment as part of his holistic Christian approach (Waller, 1981, 27).

5.3.4. Family Welfare

The caring programme persisted in a number of other ways also. Particularly concerned about the wretchedness of many women, Father Nugent opened a number of refuges. There was his Home for Fallen Women opened in 1891 at Limekiln Lane, the Home of Providence in the Dingle for single mothers, and his Maternity Home. Finally he opened a Night Shelter for homeless and distraught women at 22-24, Soho Street in 1864 (Catholic Family Almanac, 1906, 115-122; Bennett, 1949, 40). Previously the Sisters of Mercy had set up a house in Liverpool in 1843, and spent much time visiting the sick. During the Typhus epidemic, the Sisters continued their devoted work of nursing, clothing and feeding the poor (Bickerton, 1936, 202).

In 1883 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in Liverpool by T.F.A. Agnew, the Bank of England's agent in the city (Waller, 1981, 210). His interest in philanthropy sprang from his strong Christian commitment. He was a member of the Free Church of Scotland Committee for its College, and also a member of the committee for the Bible Society. He became concerned over the religious welfare of others while in Madras, India. Having worked with children in Sunday Schools and in the Church of England Sunday School Institute, the eventual establishing of the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children in Liverpool was crystallised by lessons he had learned from the United States (Orchard, 1893, 126). In this concern for children, Liverpool was 6 years ahead of the rest of the country, with the national Society being constituted in 1889. In the first fifty years of its

existence, the Liverpool Society dealt with close on 300,000 children (Waller, 1981, 416, note 11).

A final way in which Nugent and Lester, sought to alleviate the social mayhem of the nineteenth century was in their emigration programmes for children. Between 1850 and 1860, emigration was part of Trade Union policy to relieve the unemployment problem (Bennett, 1949, 95). Lester became chairman of the Self-Help Emigration Society. He felt the need for emigration was becoming more pressing for the relief of working class districts in crowded cities (Grey Edwards, 1906, 139).

How this worked in practice is more evident in the contribution of Father Nugent. In August 1870, Nugent set sail with 24 children to pioneer resettlement possibilities in Canada and America. It was one of a number of journeys he made, but the process would continue another 60 years. The measure of his success in settling the children is evident in the establishment of the Liverpool Catholic Children's Society in 1881. This became an agency for the migration of destitute children (Burke, 1910, 247). The 'Catholic Fireside' claimed in 1896 that, 'many of those whom Father Nugent found homes for years ago in the U.S.A. and Canada, are now owners of homes, cattle and land, besides being persons of position in the town or city in which they reside' (Bennett, 1949, 98). Yet there was also a downside to this whole enterprise. Many of the 'Home children' sent to Canada became stigmatised as waifs and strays, and would refuse to talk of their past to subsequent generations. Birth certificates disappeared and were difficult to recover, if they ever were. Other records were falsified. It has even been suggested that some of the children were used as cheap labour, replacements for the recently abolished slave trade ('Daybreak', Radio Merseyside, 14th June, 1998). It seems that despite the good intentions of these pioneering clerics, the emigration to America and Canada for many of these children proved to be a mixed blessing. For a recent study of this issue see Sherington and Jefferey (1998).

5.4. HEALTH CARE

Just as education was very much the preserve of the churches prior to 1870, so the work of caring for the sick had fallen chiefly to the churches down through the centuries until relatively recently. They not only contributed funds for the administration of the task, but provided the numerous compassionate individuals who gave themselves to the exacting role of actually doing it. This is the pattern we see emerging in Liverpool in the middle of the nineteenth century, as medical provision for the poor especially, was accentuated by the

squalid conditions prevailing then, and above all by the two outbreaks of cholera in 1832 and 1847.

5.4.1. General Health Provision

The provision of Hospital care became a growing concern during this period. Major Lester was the moving force in the establishment of Stanley Hospital in Kirkdale in 1872. Prior to this, Kirkdale had no hospital accommodation. Lord Derby was persuaded to grant a site, an annual gala in Stanley Park raised between one and two thousand pounds, and the project finally got off the ground. As the years went by, the original benefactors died and Lester had to resort to his unflagging pen in order to raise the subscription level by appealing to the practical sympathy of the wealthy (Grey Edwards, 1906, 138-9).

The Unitarians played their part in this crucial area of health care too. Henry Tate in the 1870s gave the Hahnemann Hospital to Liverpool, and Alfred Booth rebuilt St.Paul's Eye Hospital (Sellars, 1963, 244). Some however dismissed these charitable efforts as secondary to the real issue. 'There was still little provision for the amelioration of the root causes of poverty', chided one critic (Miller, 1988, 38). This was partly true, but until the political will was stirred enough to tackle the problems of poverty and housing, some Christian people, along with their Unitarian counterparts, were attempting to do something with their money, talents and time, to minimise its effects.

Margaret Beavan also did something through her notable contribution to the development of care amongst sick children and distraught mothers. Motivated by her Christian compassion and sense of civic obligation, this 'little mother of Liverpool' (Ireland, 1938, 100) lit the torch for needy families, and began by founding the Child Welfare Association, which co-ordinated several voluntary bodies in the city (Waller, 1981, 478). Then with the backing of Dr.Hope the Medical Officer of Health, the Invalid Children's Association presented a case to the Government for the establishment of a hospital in Liverpool. Having persuaded the local authorities as to its viability, the School Hospital was eventually opened at Leasowe on 21st July 1914. It was to concentrate on T.B. treatment (Ireland, 1938, 70-1).

More was to follow. A Home for Girls was opened at Hoylake in 1916 where girls could stay for a month on convalescence (Ireland, 1938, 80-1). Then a Babies Hospital followed in 1924 to accommodate up to 60 babies (Ireland, 1938, 97-8). Finally she established a Home for Tired Mothers in Allerton to provide a holiday for those who could not afford one (Ireland, 1938, 110-111).

Margaret Beavan however, believed in both State and Voluntary involvement in the community, for she believed personal voluntary service was both the duty and privilege of the individual (Ireland, 1938, 152). She epitomised her own philosophy by immersing herself in both politics and voluntary work, and by these means saw many of her goals achieved.

Dr. James Duncan played a central role in improving the city's conditions as the first Medical Officer of Health, not only in England, but in Europe. He aroused the concern of the city's populace by publishing a pamphlet advocating radical sanitary reforms. It was desperately needed. 'No town in England is so densely..... peopled; no town in England is so unhealthy', denounced Ramsay Muir (Quoted in Glasgow, 1990, 81). Following his appointment in 1847, Duncan set about closing 5,000 cellars unfit for human habitation. Another 10,000 were measured, registered and cleansed at the owners' expense (Garstang, 1920, 39). Yet even these steps would be of limited long-term value unless the problems of overcrowding and bad housing were faced - something Forwood later attempted to address.

In 1851 Duncan further reported that the root cause of cholera was bad sanitation. With the passing of the Sanitary Amendment Act of 1864, Duncan was able to improve matters greatly. Mortality rates were very significantly reduced. 'The average general death rate of Liverpool has been reduced by probably at least a fourth part of that which prevailed forty years ago', was the verdict of Sir John Simon many years on (Frazer, 1951, 151). Duncan's memorial tablet in St.Jude's church in Hardwick Street however, claims he reduced it by a third (Gibson, 1895, Vol.4, 229). Buildings, water supply, street cleaning and sewerage were all improved. After 1860, Liverpool never again had epidemics on the scale previously experienced (Glasgow, 1990, 81). Duncan's tombstone at Elgin Cathedral, hints at one of the moving forces behind his actions, when it simply declares; 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God' (W.Bennett, 1949, No.7).

5.4.2. Nurses Training School

A major contribution to the health of the Liverpool people came through the efforts of William Rathbone VI, the Unitarian philanthropist and politician. His name has occurred before, but suffice to say that underlying his charitable efforts, lies the faith of a gifted visionary. With a strong 'Christian' philosophy motivating him, Rathbone set about involving himself with the poor at all levels. He used his political muscle to effect legislation which would lift the status of the workers and the poor. He would visit the homes of the needy

collecting their provident moneys, and he interested himself in the education of the city's children (Rathbone, 1905, 140). Yet his greatest monument to Liverpool lay in the establishment of a Training School and Home for nurses.

There already was an organisation in Liverpool for the training of nurses which opened in Soho Street in 1855. The standard of nursing at this time however was woefully inadequate. Drunkenness and uncleanliness were commonplace amongst them (Bickerton, 1936, 199f). Rathbone took a deeper interest in this cause in 1859 following the death of his wife. During the demanding period of her illness, he had engaged a nurse called Mary Robinson to attend her. So successful had she been, that he employed her to do something similar amongst the poor. Within three months he claimed 'she had helped prevent the moral ruin.....and the crime which so often follow upon helpless misery' (Bickerton, 1936, 206). With help and advice from Florence Nightingale whom he had befriended, he made a tentative beginning at training nurses, using 12 from the Nightingale school along with 18 probationers and 54 workhouse women. He also provided the funds for the building of the training school from his own pocket.

In charge of the whole exercise was Agnes Jones, a devout Irish Protestant Evangelical, who had trained at the Nightingale School. She was reluctant at first to take on the post, questioning Rathbone's Unitarian doctrine (Rathbone, 1905, 170; Agnes Jones, by her Sister, 1871, 291-2). Even after her arrival she had much foreboding about the immensity of the task. She writes; 'May no fear of man hinder me in His work, but may He so give wisdom and prudence as to keep me in the middle path in 'His causeway' with a single aim for his glory, and that I should not turn aside to right or left' (Jones, letters; Aug. 3rd 1864, 122). Having eventually had her fears allayed, Jones put her shoulder to the task, and against great odds made speedy headway in improving the standard of discipline and training amongst the students. She died tragically of fever just three years into the task. Florence Nightingale summed up her achievement; 'In less than three years she had reduced one of the most disorderly hospitals to something like Christian discipline' (Bickerton, 1936, 210).

Some years later, others became involved in advancing the work of nursing. Changes were made to the governing body, and subsequently in 1897 the Liverpool Queen Victoria District Nursing Association was formed and registered on February 1898 (Hope, 1903, 72). Rathbone's radical programme of training nurses had been formally recognised, and a further valuable

contribution made to the health provisions of the city.

5.5. UNITARIAN NEUTRALITY

Amidst all the religious disruption of nineteenth century Liverpool, Unitarians persevered with their firm resolve not to be embroiled in sectarian behaviour. The position of the Unitarian fraternity needs to be considered here as a distinct entity, because of the unique role some of their number played in the development of the city economically, politically, socially and religiously.

The origins of Unitarian religious expression appear to be traced back to the early seventeenth century, and are closely allied to the Quakers who were formed at that time also by George Fox. Both groups are less doctrinaire than other denominations, and tend to draw their allegiance from those of a higher social class. They are also strongly disposed to tackling social concerns such as slavery and human rights (Stocks, 1949, 32; Bosse, 1991, 59).

The seventeenth century was a period in which it was dangerous to express contrary views to orthodox religion, then dictated by the Church of England. Unitarians claimed to be Biblical in their religious beliefs, but emphasised rational thought over and above tradition and creeds. John Biddle (1616-62) is often called the 'father of English Unitarianism' (McLachlan, 1934, 13). It was through his reading of the Bible that he came to express his first doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity. He was subsequently imprisoned for his heterodox views, but Cromwell had him released. Yet later on, following Cromwell's death and the Restoration, he was imprisoned again on the Scilly Isles where he eventually died (Holt, 1938, 76).

One of Biddle's disciples, Thomas Firmin, embraced the principles of Unitarianism, but refused to leave the Church of England. His desire was not to found a separate religious society, but for a national church broad enough to embrace the Unitarian understanding of God (Holt, 1938, 77). Furthermore, from Biddle he learnt 'to distrust the efficacy of mere almsgiving for the relief of the necessitous, but rather to make it his business to fathom the condition of the poor by personal investigation, and to reduce the causes of social distress by economic effort' (Gordon, quoted by Holt, 1938, 76). This became an unwavering social policy amongst Unitarians, later enshrined in the work of the Liverpool Domestic Mission founded in 1836.

The name Unitarian itself, is not one with which all of that persuasion are comfortable. Holt refers to the term as a 'novelty' (Holt, 1938, 77), and claims

it first appeared in England in 1672. Many adherents of Unitarianism however, came to see the term as restrictive. It suggested to them doctrinal uniformity, whereas it was chosen originally to unite people of different creeds provided they agreed on the Divine Unity (Holt, 1938, 78).

In the nineteenth century, there were three Unitarian Chapels functioning in Liverpool at Hope Street, Renshaw Street, and Toxteth. Renshaw Street became the hub of the main work done by the wealthy Unitarian families in the city. There they enjoyed the ministries of John Thom, William Channing and Charles Beard in the halcyon years of Unitarian philanthropy. This was also the congregation which earlier in 1828 petitioned parliament to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts which prevented Unitarians from holding any Municipal Office (Holt, 1938, 183). The Acts were subsequently repealed, and Dissenters were for the first time able to take their place beside Anglicans in the service of the community. Not content with this victory however, Unitarians were in the forefront of Roman Catholic emancipation, for in the following year they also petitioned Parliament on their behalf (Holt, 1938, 186), and saw that too succeed.

It was this burning desire for their own religious freedom that gave Unitarians some empathy with Roman Catholics in their struggle for the same freedom of religious expression. The Emancipation Act of 1829 was a beginning for Catholics in law, but to change the hearts and attitudes of people is a much more daunting task. So whilst many Nonconformists and Anglicans engaged in sectarian stand-offs with the Catholics, the Unitarians, by remaining neutral, channelled their energies into the social exigency which was dishonouring the city. The ways in which they went about this have been detailed earlier, but their unique religious outlook, their general lack of dogma, their pragmatic interpretation of Biblical ethics, and their financial muscle, all combined at this point in the history of Liverpool, to make the Unitarians a powerful force for sound common sense amidst some irrational and often unchristian conduct.

5.6. CONCLUSION

The legacy of the Christian community through its pioneering individuals, and the subsequent organisations they founded, is a story of individual and corporate resolve. Whatever limitations and hindrances the sectarian dimension imposed upon the city, some measurable social improvement was achieved. Here and there in the political sphere, laws were being passed and policies adopted which sought to ameliorate conditions for a suffering populace. Sanitation, housing, education, Poor Law reform and temperance issues were

all confronted, with mixed success. Entertainment and leisure facilities were being provided, often freely by men of means, for the cultural improvement of the people who came. This was more than Christians displaying a philanthropic spirit. It was their attempt to achieve what Berger later came to describe as a process of nomisation. His belief that religion enhances a sense of human significance is reflected in the thinking of those Christian philanthropists and reformers who committed themselves to improving the whole person and the conditions in which they could prosper. In Berger's words it was 'a world building enterprise' (see 3.1.2).

Furthermore, the state of health care was significantly elevated with the financing and building of hospitals, the improvement of sanitation and housing, and the establishing of the Nurses Training School. Day Schools were founded and promoted by the Christian churches, and despite government involvement, many still retain a Christian input. The law still supports a Christian education - though greater diversity is now encouraged, and the popularity of church schools even at the present, indicates ongoing parental support of their ethos.

The University still has pride of place in the city as a bastion of sound learning, yet retains to this day its distinctive avoidance of a Theological faculty. Care for the socially disadvantaged still continues, despite the growth of the Welfare State, through some innovative voluntary and paid work being achieved by individual churches and groups. The benevolent spirit of Father Nugent persists to this day in the Catholic Care Society bearing his name. Differences of doctrine and practice there may still be, but Christianity with its ongoing social ethic, has nonetheless left a distinguished, if less pronounced legacy. At present, the defective substitute of sectarianism has been all but vanquished from the Liverpool scene.

6. *LIVERPOOL: AN EXAMPLE OF CONCORDANT CHRISTIANITY?*

6.1 INTRODUCTION: METHOD OF APPROACH

The following chapters will begin to evaluate the religious scene in Liverpool at the close of the second millennium. The intention is to assess the church's contribution as well as contrast the style, strength and emphasis of the Christian community with that of the previous generations covered in this thesis. An attempt will be made to answer questions which tie in with the conceptual themes in the introduction. For example, how well has the Christian faith been able to sustain its vibrancy? How far has the church influenced or been influenced by the changing society around it? What future is there for an ordained ministry as it has been traditionally understood? Has the destructive spectre of sectarianism finally been exorcised from Liverpool religion? How far is ecumenical partnership viewed as being the way forward for the church on Merseyside? These are just some of the main issues which will be considered in the following chapters, based on primary data, chiefly from interviews.

It is important here to emphasise the procedure in the collecting of data. The writer felt that it would be preferable to hear from those 'inside' church life with more detailed knowledge, rather than attempt to disentangle the speculations of those outside. Interviews were arranged with some in the forefront of Christian work and ministry in the city, on both a professional and lay basis. The data collected reveals that many of those interviewed did not lack objectivity, and were critical of the church in specific contexts.

6.2. THE PRESENT CHRISTIAN SCENE IN LIVERPOOL

6.2.1. Initial Perceptions

At the outset of the interviews the respondents were asked to give their initial perceptions of the religious scene in Liverpool, before undertaking to give more detailed answers in the subsequent questions. This enabled the interviewer to gain from the respondents their first impressions of the state of the church and religious life in the city and then note if the detailed answers given later confirmed the impression. These initial responses proved how varied individual perception is, for there was significant divergence on this which allowed some valuable analysis. A brief explanation of the naming of the respondents is necessary here. Each respondent is given a synonym, with a few exceptions. Where a name is a synonym, only the Christian name is used. When the name is genuine, the full name is used (See chapter 2 and Appendix

1 for fuller details).

First of all there were those who viewed the religious scene in an optimistic fashion. Most of those who took this view based their optimism on what they felt was the vibrant ecumenism now at the heart of much of Liverpool Christianity. At this initial stage in the interview, 10 out of the 26 mentioned with some approval the importance of partnership between the denominations, though others also indicated their support of an ecumenical approach later in their interview. Alan, a Roman Catholic priest, reflects the mood of many; 'I do feel there is a groundswell of opinion in favour of what the two Bishops and other church leaders have done. So relationships have changed and understanding of each other's position and our different denominations - that has changed'. The co-operation evidenced in many of the churches and the strong leadership of the two Bishops and Free Church Moderator, were for many, indicators of the churches taking a new step into the future on a more united front.

Yet this note of ecumenical approbation is not a completely unanimous one, for there are voices of dissent still being raised. Three out of the twenty six respondents, in their early perceptions of the city's religious life, expressed their apprehension at the present ecumenism. The Orange Movement as might be expected, finds this trend untenable. Behind the religious scene are, they claim, dubious political motives intending to take the church Romeward. Ken, a Free Church Minister, is also sceptical here; 'I think the Mersey miracle is resting on its laurels, of something that did happen and was wonderful, but it's in the past'. Tom, an independent church worker, actually bemoans the fact that the lines of demarcation are thinning. For him there is no doctrinal substance to the unity. He feels there is 'a tendency to say we are all one when we are not all one'. It is noteworthy perhaps that no Roman Catholic respondent displayed any scepticism over church co-operation when giving their first perceptions of church life. Yet it was recognised by one Catholic respondent Simon Lee, Rector of Liverpool Hope University College, that any change of church leadership in Liverpool would be a testing time, and queried whether the momentum could be sustained.

Other perceptions emerge however, and reveal a greater breadth to the scope of Christian work in the city. Together For The Harvest (TFH), a movement chiefly representing many of the charismatically inclined churches of varied denominations, is attempting to forge effective networks amongst themselves, and share gifted people and ministries. Douglas, who has been involved in

this, describes the initial thinking behind the movement; 'Their [the leaders] prime aim initially was to meet together once a month for some teaching from someone outside the city; shared support and worship. It's more recently developed into a prayer base where they also meet together to pray at least once a month'. This is not a group actively engaged in ecumenical co-operation, even though they are attempting to unite the charismatically inclined churches in the Mersey region into a kind of 'city church' which will enable them 'to permeate and influence every sphere of public life within the region' (TFH Booklet, undated, 1). Instead of a group of individual churches operating independently, they wish to function corporately, and thus combat the weaknesses of independence. This however sounds like the formation of a denomination, in which individual sect-like groups become more organised and established, with a professional ministry and executive body. Yet it represents a significant association of Christians functioning outwith the formal ecumenical process.

It also emerged that Evangelicals in the city were far from united. Another of the TFH group William, a Free Church minister, stated the position when he arrived in Liverpool in the late 1980s; 'There was much division. Lots of groups within the city came out of splits and schisms. People had tried before to get the leaders together and it just hadn't worked, whereas now there is a real and great unity amongst quite a good number of folk – eighty to ninety folk'. He was referring here chiefly to charismatic groups within Evangelicalism, for he believes there is more to be done in uniting the diverse Evangelical groups.

Changes in church structures, particularly within Catholicism, are viewed as being radical. Many of the Catholics interviewed referred to the Second Vatican Council as being pivotal in their outlook and practice. Robert, a long-standing Catholic priest, referred to this change with the pertinent observation; 'I've lived in two different churches virtually'. He goes on to outline some of these changes which have affected him and the wider church. To begin with, 'the Catholic Church was community based'. At the heart of this was a school into which the local priest would go every day to teach a religious lesson. Next, 'Catholics had very clear rules they knew about'. Attendance at mass, fasting, and abstinence from meat on Fridays, were requisites. Catholics too were specialists in sin, and confession had to be made regularly. Mixed marriages were also frowned upon. He sums it up this way; 'We knew we, the Catholic Church, had the answers. We had the true priesthood, the true Eucharist, so we were very self-confident, even though we lived in what might be looked on as ghettos. We had our own parish clubs so it provided a

complete community'.

Robert describes some of the changes introduced by Vatican 2; 'A new emphasis was placed on scripture....the mass was moved into the vernacular....they redesigned the liturgy of the word at the beginning of the mass....the priest doesn't preach a sermon; he preaches a homily'. It appears that the spirit of the 'ecclesiogenesis' which emerged in the Brazilian Catholic Church following Vatican 2 (see 3.2.2.1) is also evident in Britain. The Catholic Church has become less distant from its members by introducing a more contemporary and participatory liturgy. Alongside these functional changes however, it was felt a lot of the old imperatives died. Out of 80 baptisms which Robert had carried out the previous year, four fifths were for couples who had not been married in church or were single parents. Reluctantly he admits that many Catholics are now technically 'lapsed'. It will however be argued later (8.3.2), that this kind of situation, which is not uncommon, may point to a kind of 'semi-detached' church in which many in a community still retain a sense of belonging to the parish church.

A former Catholic social worker Doris, relays some disaffection with Vatican 2 voiced by some of her fellow Catholics. 'There are the people who did not like John XXIII and Vatican 2, for they always felt that if we stuck to Latin we could go to any church in the world, and we lost a lot of that universality'. Whilst many Catholics appear to embrace the changes inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council, there is still some disquiet being voiced in Liverpool over the loss of a distinctive liturgy and authority.

There was an almost united agreement that sectarianism was on the wane. Virtually all respondents (Orange Lodge excepted), felt that while it had been sidelined, there could still be latent divisions waiting to be ignited. Ralph, a former police superintendent, described the scene this way; 'There is less suspicion these days; there is more openness and more acceptance between the Protestant wing and the Roman Catholic wing of the religious community in this area'. Finally, there were a few who mentioned the numerical decline of churches, though it needs to be noted that this was not one of the major concerns on the minds of the respondents in their initial perceptions. It would arise later in more detail however. The following comments were made at this early stage in the various interviews. Firstly Ralph; 'I've seen a decline in worshipping tradition....When I used to get on buses - and I'm talking now about forty years back - as one drove along the various roads and passed a Roman Catholic Church, particularly along Scotland Road, you would see

people sitting on the bus crossing themselves as they passed the church'. Roger, a Catholic priest, was able to give some present insight to that very situation on Scotland Road; 'The community element has been dissipated and we need to get it back again. I think there is a certain sense of "elsewhere". Everyone has been scattered and put back again and they still haven't established themselves in a proper community'. Inner city clearance seems to have been detrimental to the strong Catholic community in that area. Some evidence of unevenness in numbers is witnessed in the corresponding growth in other styles of church worship, something confirmed by the latest statistics from Brierley. He reveals that charismatic Evangelicals are growing at the fastest rate, from 370,000 in 1985, to an estimated 432,100 by the year 2,000 (Brierley, 1997, 2.17). Similarly, the New or Housechurches will have grown by 125,000 members in 2,000, since their inception in 1980, a staggering increase of approximately 1,300% (Brierley, 1997; 2.11.4). Esther, an educationalist, describes the phenomenon in this way; 'I think there's been a growth, certainly in the Housechurch movement.....That seems to be meeting a need that perhaps the more traditional churches haven't met'.

Whilst there is no running from the facts of decline in more traditional forms of worship, something stressed by Luckmann (see 3.2.1.2), many Liverpool Christians are heartened by the improved relations amongst the churches, whilst a number of Evangelicals remain suspicious. There is a hard realism at times amongst the respondents, in recognising some of the social shifts that have taken place and how this has affected churches and neighbourhoods. Yet there is also encouragement taken from the phoenix of the newer charismatic Housechurches.

6.2.2. Social Commitment

For a number of decades during the middle part of this century many of the churches moved away from social action as a backlash to the 'social Gospel' which appeared to many to blunt the Evangelical cutting edge of the faith. Emphasis had been placed at the beginning of the century on improving the lot of the poor and disadvantaged by social action in contrast to the moral and spiritual emphasis of eighteenth and nineteenth century Evangelicals, and nineteenth century Unitarians. The move away from this may have been partly due to the rise of the American Evangelist Billy Graham who had such a profound affect on the churches in Britain, America and across Europe, from the 1940s to the 1980s, with his emphasis on personal conversion to Jesus Christ. Pollock for example, claims that by 1966 he had made a significant world impact; '[He] has already preached to some fifty million people in

person. Countless millions have heard or seen him by radio, television or film....his opinions are quoted across the world. His actions, motives, and achievements have been debated, attacked and defended as those of few contemporary religious leaders' (Pollock, 1966, 5)

Yet in the last three decades or so, the church has been recovering its community role, realising again that it has a holistic mission to body and spirit. This may also be partly due to a rediscovery of the reality of poverty following the complacency of the 'never had it so good' 1950s. From the 1960s 'the Voluntary sector was marked by a new energy, fuelled by ideas about self-help and self-determination' (Knight, 1993, 23). Elements of this can be seen in the church of present day Liverpool. As a consequence the church at times appears to have more in common with its Victorian forefathers than with its more immediate predecessors.

6.2.2.1. Christian Welfare

The Christian community appears to be as concerned in caring for the well-being of its citizens as it has ever been. Churches, along with other voluntary agencies, have found gaps in the provision of care and support, and sought to fill them in a variety of ways, mainly on a voluntary basis. But what is voluntary? Johnson defines it as follows; 'A voluntary organisation is a non-statutory body; it owes its existence.....to the decision of a group of people to join together for purposes of mutual aid...to protect or promote their own interests...to provide services for, or campaign on behalf of particular sections of the population...or to promote causes' (Johnson, 1987, 94-5). Knight focuses more on motive. For him voluntary action is 'a form of energy, stemming from free will, having moral purpose, and undertaken in a spirit of independence' (Knight, 1993, 67). Johnson lists the range of voluntary provision as follows:-

(1) Neighbourhood organisations
(2) Self-help or mutual aid groups
(3) Organisations for providing services for groups of 'clients'
(4) Pressure groups
(5) Groups primarily concerned with medical or social research
(6) 'Umbrella' or intermediary organisations concerned with the co-ordination of other groups and the provision of resources for them

(Source: Johnson, 1987, 95)

Since the emergence of the Welfare State however, significant changes have come upon voluntary organisations, which have not always been seen to be

advantageous. For example, many voluntary organisations have no qualms about employing full time workers, some as professionals. Whilst this brought obvious managerial skills to the group, others felt it was simply another means to a career, and put the volunteers off (Knight, 1993, 50). Funding, which used to be sought and given on a charitable basis, is now largely sought from Government or Trust sources, necessitating a great deal of skill and know-how in applications. Funding also implies a loss of independence, with the voluntary organisation answerable in varied degrees to the donor (Knight, 1993, 30). Some feel as a consequence that voluntary organisations have become institutionalised, and have lost their vision and energy (Knight, 1993, 49-50). Their moral authority was also weakened as their dependence on statutory funding grew (Knight, 1993, 31).

The church's voluntary contribution has also been greatly influenced by the changes outlined above. More and more they too have become dependent on applications to Trusts, the National Lottery and statutory funding. It may be questioned whether they have on occasions lost their moral authority, particularly those churches applying for funds from the National Lottery, a source based on gambling. Increasingly churches have to face the dilemma of either receiving funds from secular bodies, sometimes questionable bodies, or being severely restrained in their work.

Some of the voluntary work being achieved by the churches in Liverpool will now be considered. It follows the pattern outlined above, in that some of the larger voluntary agencies receive statutory funding and have paid employees, whilst others depend purely on voluntary giving. One of the largest caring agencies in the Merseyside region is The Nugent Care Society. This was formerly known as the Catholic Social Services, but changed its name in 1992, adopting the name of the famous nineteenth century Catholic priest and social reformer, Father James Nugent. In 1996, there were 850 employees, 200 volunteers, and a 15 million pound turnaround. Every week, 80-90 people go through their training course. Nugent Care functions within the Archdiocese of Liverpool, which includes the Isle of Man, Preston, and parts of Greater Manchester.

Una, the respondent interviewed on this Society, outlines the ethos of its work; 'Without sounding flippant, we are involved in specialist residential care from birth to death'. The range of care is far-reaching; 'We have children's homes, homes for young people with special educational needs. We work and care for people with disabilities, be it mental or physical, and at the other end we are

involved in caring for people who are elderly - severely mentally infirm...and also an adoption agency'. All in all, there are about 600 persons being cared for. The funding of the work is more organised and tightly controlled, compared to the nineteenth century approach of charitable giving and occasional sponsorship. At the close of the twentieth century, the work is supported financially by a cross-section of agencies, 'partly through fees from those who refer people to our care - health authorities, education departments, social services departments, local authorities....and we raise some money voluntarily through our charity shop just opened'.

Una believes the Society has something distinctive to offer in social care in that, as part of their working principle, they 'go where other people won't go'. On occasions, she claims they have entered situations which the market would have turned against; 'For example, we established our project for elderly severely mentally infirm....but also in terms of the faith base....we will help people who may be extra marginalised'. The Society attempts to offer the highest professional standard, even though the fees as a consequence may be higher than the norm. They know they can be undercut by the private sector, but she reiterates their working principle; 'Nothing but the best will do'.

Here is a major area of difference between the provision made by Nugent himself in the nineteenth century and the present 'Nugent Care'. Nugent's social welfare was offered almost entirely free of charge, and paid for out of Catholic funds and other sponsorship. On the other hand, standards of health care with accompanying legislation and accountability, and the increasing cost of specialised equipment, means that the economics of caring today are on a completely different level. Health care today therefore has to be more structured and professional, with regular levels of income being guaranteed. Voluntary giving is no longer able to sustain such a project, and therefore statutory aid is essential. Furthermore, the highest of standards required by caring agencies has also to be met by Nugent Care. Una explains how stringent these standards are. Both internal and external audits are regularly taken to monitor standards, with their own Internal Inspection Unit, the Local Health Authority, Social Services, Ofsted and Government Inspectors involved. Una confirms; 'To stay in business, these inspections have to be passed'.

Although Nugent Care has a Roman Catholic basis and ethos, the religious side is not intended to be overt. Rather it is conveyed in more indirect ways. For example, the plaque on the wall will indicate the establishment has been

opened and blessed by the Archbishop. The very name Nugent associates them with the priest who gave so much to the children of nineteenth century Liverpool. Mass is celebrated too on occasions, and is open to all who wish to participate. The Society cares for everyone of any faith or none. No set of beliefs are required, 'but hopefully we live it', affirms Una. There are also those who come to Nugent Care because they know it is a faith based organisation. 'We are back to the mystery, to the spiritual dimension', she maintains.

The National Christian Council on Ageing is a much smaller caring agency which functions on Merseyside through its local branch. With its limited resources, it works for the greater recognition of elderly people to have rights and to have a life. Doris, who works with this group, had long experience in the Catholic Social Services, but is now retired. She saw an advert in the Catholic press appealing for someone who viewed, 'elderly people as people with souls'. The movement sprang from a working party of Age Concern who recognised that much of their work was done in churches and by church people. The Council is a nationally registered charity with a membership of around 500. There are also however, a hundred affiliated organisations which might include a whole parish. The Council survives financially through its publications 'which tend to spirituality'. If the elderly are in residential care, they are often looked after by the church. Many however may have lost their church connection, but Doris believes 'they are basically Christians, and believe with anybody else in God as their Creator and in Jesus their Redeemer, and that they are going somewhere after this world'.

The Council also runs conferences encouraging the view 'that if God gives you length of years he expects you to do something with them....to pray is to do the most'. They also have a peer group known as 'Arise', 'which is an acronym for activity, recreation, inspiration, service and education'. There are at present two of these groups that meet in Liverpool on a monthly basis and is cross-denominational. Membership is not large, 12 and 24 respectively. Through these groups they learn about each other's denomination and attend services. They also raise sums for charities.

Then again, there are a number of people involved in established Christian counselling agencies set up with the intention of helping, not only Christian people, but others find a way through their problems. One such counselling group is 'Reach'. This ministry has been functioning in Merseyside for just over twelve years. Douglas, who has been actively involved in this work,

describes its beginnings; 'We didn't know primarily whether [it] would be through accommodation or support, but we felt it would be something to do with counselling, and it's the counselling side of the work that has developed'. The Centre has a staff of 18 volunteer counsellors, 3 administrative volunteer staff, and 2 other non-counselling volunteers. All the counsellors are qualified, but at different levels. They have all completed the 'Reach' basic training course, but over and above that, 'some of them work as professional counsellors, because other qualifications they may have, have a secular authentication or accreditation'. Some, for example, work in G.P.'s surgeries. The Association of Christian Counsellors, a national organisation, also offers accreditation. Each counsellor has the freedom to develop his/her own approach, 'but we are indebted to secular counsellors in terms of their focus on listening skills'. Douglas feels strongly this is a skill the church has lost over a period of its history.

Those counselled come from a mainly Christian background - about 70%, and the reason for that is primarily financial, with little money for advertising more widely. Most of the promotion comes by word of mouth through the churches. They also get referrals from GP's, psychiatrists and the social services. Another fact Douglas disclosed was that 'Reach' is often the last point of referral for a number of the clients. Many had already been to more specialised centres for treatment. The main problems dealt with by the counselling team are chiefly to do with the stresses of society. Depression, marriage difficulties, and child abuse are some of the prominent difficulties counselled. Douglas and the team are encouraged by some of the feedback they get from evaluation forms, which indicates there has been a change of outlook and perception within some clients. He reveals; 'I personally, and many other counsellors, wouldn't be able to keep going if we didn't at some time see some remarkable and very encouraging progress that people and couples are making'.

The work of the Centre is run on a shoe-string. Douglas laughed when questioned on this and quoted his accountant who had just recently stated they had no money in the accounts. Primarily, funding now comes from individuals who use the service, individuals who give financial support on a regular basis, along with churches and other groups. The largest Trust Fund donation of £1,000 came from the Prince's Trust, and a number of years ago Barnardo's supported an employee for two years. One of the main sources of funding at present are the training courses and seminars for which the respondent is chiefly responsible. Yet finance is 'an area we need to address

with some urgency', he acknowledges. Douglas is employed in a full time capacity, and gets paid for the training he does, but his counselling work is done on a voluntary basis.

Douglas feels the main beneficiaries of the 'Reach' Centre's work are primarily the churches, although two types of counselling are provided - pastoral counselling, and community counselling. The first deals with those who are professing Christians; the second with those of any faith or none. The main benefit to those who are counselled is the offer of a 'safe place with safe trained people'. Altogether 'Reach' dealt with approximately 1,000 clients in 1996, and provided training courses for around 200 people.

6.2.2.2. Housing Provision

On the housing front the church still plays a role in helping and supporting those who find themselves on the streets. The scale of homelessness may not be comparable to that of the late nineteenth century, but it is still a social scar marring the city. In tackling the problem, the church works, where appropriate, in conjunction with local government. The Salvation Army is a renowned Christian movement caring for those in need. In Liverpool the Army provides support for the homeless in two main ways. Firstly through their two hostels, one each for men and women. Each hostel has forty places on sight. The men's hostel on Prescot Road however, also has a re-integration programme. One officer Harold, reveals the Army has 'houses outside of the hostel where they can put men as a step to re-integration'. These houses are owned by builders, but the Salvation Army is the management agent for them. There are three of these houses, all subdivided. The intention is, 'that residents - I think it's four in each - can live independently but be part of a community with the support of the hostel staff'.

Liverpool City Mission, the oldest City Mission in England established in 1829, has also been engaged over the years in the business of alleviating some of the housing problems faced by the homeless. Tom, a long-standing worker with the Mission, responded confidently to the accusation that all they were offering was charity, and not really dealing with the problems. He argues they 'were more instrumental than any other group in getting men, women and couples into flats, and getting them back into society'. Working hand in hand with the social services, he asserted the Mission provided the food, bedding, and clothes for those who were destitute. The homeless were also encouraged to put their names on the housing list. Tom even went so far as to assert; 'There is no cardboard city in Liverpool, as in Manchester....and even in

Chester. This is largely due to the work of the City Mission'. Yet this is disclaimed by a Christian leader with Frontline, a relatively new Evangelical church in Wavertree. They run a soup kitchen, along with some general support for those on the streets. With local government help, and not a little danger at times, they can if necessary, find immediate short-term accommodation for any who wish it. In contrast to the previous respondent in the City Mission then, this leader, who gives two nights a week to this work, claimed that 'many of those on the streets want to be there' (Connolly, 11th June, 1998). He believed that many prefer to opt out of family or society, for life on the streets.

6.2.2.3. Race Relations

The ecumenical arm of the church 'Marcea' ie. the Merseyside and Region Churches Ecumenical Assembly, established an agency for tackling race issues within the churches and also within the city generally. It is called 'Care', an acronym for the Church's Action for Racial Equality. The Black community on Merseyside has a chequered history, and still finds difficulty in being fully integrated in the city. The Director of 'Care' Frank Anti, expresses this in his criticism of a past government for breaking its promises to the black community on Merseyside. He believes that the promises made to get black people working on a project like the Albert Dock have failed. He recognises too that the churches need to be educated on race matters, because churches are like any other institution where the issue of race cannot be avoided. He indicates something of the reaction amongst the churches; 'Some will put up a wall immediately and you can sense and detect it, and you think, well I'm not going to get very far here....Some are very supportive and sympathetic. They can identify with the issues to a certain extent and even some people in the congregations have adopted black children'. An extension of this project involves him in visiting many schools in the region, as half the schools are church schools. This involves him in 'meeting with the teachers, leading 'in-service' training in the school, doing assemblies, classroom work with the kids on race issues, helping to develop the curriculum, looking at the....human resources as well as materials, because a lot of schools don't have black teachers, and students do need role models'. He has also helped schools develop a policy on race, as a number of them have black children. 'They need to look at this seriously because they want to affirm there is black as well as white in this school'.

'Care' also gives itself to immigration issues. The respondent confides; 'Where there's been abuse - police abuse even - people have been physically attacked'.

Other immigrants are in need of financial assistance. 'Minority communities don't tend to come forward with their problems about benefits, but will deal with it within their own communities'. Allied to this is an agency also set up by the churches known as 'Support For Asylum Seekers'. A worker has also been sponsored by the Health department to look at race and health issues.

Undergirding his commitment to race issues is a biblical, caring, and evangelistic ethos. Bible studies are prepared by the office, drawing on the experience of clerics, lay readers and those people with a particular bent towards spirituality. Language and purpose are important so that those who engage in the studies understand what is being taught, and are aware of the centrality of Jesus Christ in all that is being done. 'The whole issue of doing things and preparing the work of 'Care' is to bring people to Christ', he confirms.

How far then has the church in Liverpool managed to draw the black community into church life? Frank revealed that many former black churches do not wish to be identified as such, and now prefer to be known as black led churches, in which both black and white can be integrated. He revealed there were a number of these in the city, and three particularly in the Toxteth area. He personally was attached to one such church in the Kensington district. The writer also attended one of these churches, the Toxteth Community Church, on a Sunday morning in 1997, and discovered a black pastor leading a congregation of about forty, of which two thirds were black. The congregation consisted almost totally of young couples, children, and youths. This one visit at least confirmed Frank's assertion. If this is representative of church life in that district, then the emphasis appears to be on the black community in Toxteth drawing white people into their congregations rather than vice versa.

6.2.2.4. Skills School

This is a project undertaken by Toxteth Tabernacle Baptist Church and its Minister Terry Jones, who arrived in Liverpool in 1989. He began by listening to what people were saying about the area, along with making his own assessment of the city's needs. From that initial survey there commenced a journey, which in Terry's words, took them 'slowly through an ongoing and expanding process of building bridges, of caring practically for need within the community'. This began with a playgroup which has now developed into an N.V.Q. training centre whereby parents can be taught how to become playgroup leaders. Terry comments on this move; 'That sets us up as someone

to be listened to in the community'. Another major move has been the opening of a restaurant which is now packed with mainly local people. Many local gang members actually come in and sit to have a meal. By this means, the gospel is communicated even to them through literature or stopping at tables to talk.

Over and above these initial projects, the Church has created a Skills School and has been in the vanguard of this work nationally. The expertise for this comes through members actually getting trained themselves in proper qualifications, and then interpreting them for Christian use. Terry recounts the experience of his playgroup leader, who 'for a year took a secular playgroup leadership course, re-wrote it from a Christian perspective, and had that accepted by the verifiers of the N.V.Q. course'. She has used this course on a number of occasions already. The administrator of the Skills School came to the project as a result of God speaking to her following some time helping out at the Church. He continues; 'Eventually after a year of praying she came to be our administrator, so God has given us very gifted professional people from different places to come and serve us'.

The Skills School attempts to meet the needs of youths between 14 and 16 who have been excluded or expelled from school. Through this school, N.V.Q. courses are offered, but there are other elements to it. 'We run youth award schemes; we run our own achievement awards, and we link in with the Techs also and try and get them places when they leave us at 16'. The school began with four primary skills; pottery and ceramics, woodwork and electronics, information technology, and textiles. Now there is also French, Religious Education, English, Maths, regular cooking, and work placements where the youths go into the playgroup and see whether that is the kind of work they would like to consider training for. There is more however; 'They do outward bound courses - personal development skills. They do a 'Build your Skills' course which has local youth leaders coming in and sharing life skills with them in a group setting'. Terry also has links with a number of training agencies so that when the young people are ready to move on, they can be given work placements which may lead to full-time employment. All in all, there is at present a staff of 13 paid workers, and a number of volunteers, full or half time.

Terry is not satisfied however, and is still pushing for more opportunities to use the building. 'We are looking to develop, in terms of our classroom space...and to look at the whole possibility of having a medical centre on

site....and we can look at the wholeness of a person's life, and not be prohibited from praying for them which might cause them to lose their job in a secular world'. Already the church has started little groups where mentally distressed people come and help in the coffee shop, and then have a therapy group afterwards, where they receive help and prayer.

Terry reveals the response from local authorities to these initiatives has been mixed. Those working at ground level have always been supportive, but those operating at a higher level, behind slightly bigger desks, have only brought frustration. 'They are looking in terms of pounds, shillings and pence rather than people'. The church however, put its support behind the scheme, and was willing to move forward with the dual goals of social compassion and evangelism, rather than just being a preaching centre as in the past.

6.2.2.5. General Social Provision

There are innumerable ways in which the churches are offering support to the different age cohorts and others within their communities, like children, teens, families, and pensioners. Groups working with men, women and special needs are also prevalent too. In an attempt to find the proportions in which this kind of provision is made by the churches in the Liverpool area, a brief questionnaire was sent out to 172 clergy and other church leaders across the major denominations, with the exception of the Church of England who were unable, on a matter of policy, to do this (See appendix 3 for details). A fraction short of 28% were returned, a total of 48. Three questions were asked of the participants; which groups were they working with, how many volunteers and paid personnel were there, and how many cumulative hours were contributed?

To begin with the total number of volunteers from the 48 churches amounted to 1,567, with children and youth receiving the largest input, 31.4% and 15.6% respectively. Special needs had 13% of the volunteers, amounting to 204 people. The total amounts of time spent on voluntary work each week in these churches amounted to 4,173 hours. Here children and special needs came top of the list, with 42.8% and 15.4% of the hours given to these areas respectively. A paid worker was employed on 69 occasions across the varied groups - on 19 occasions with children, on 16 occasions with youth, and on 14 occasions with Senior Citizens.

Of the 48 churches who replied, 87.5% of them worked with children in some capacity, 72.9% of them with youth, and 62.5% of them with senior citizens.

This would therefore seem to be an indicator of the groups which take priority in the churches programmes. 35.4% of the churches however, put time into special needs and the same percentage into other community projects. These figures allied to the percentage of volunteers in these two areas, reveal that churches are far from insular, and relating practically to their local communities.

Finally, if the figures for hours worked are divided by 40 (the average working week) this amounts to just over 104 weeks, and thus the equivalent of two full time social workers approximately. If this were extrapolated to include all churches, including the Anglicans, it could amount to some considerable input by the churches. The quality and outcome of that input of course cannot be accurately assessed because of its voluntary nature, but it is there as a significant part of the wider voluntary sector. Katherine Gaskin of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations however, applied the national average wage to survey data to produce a figure of £41 billion as the economic value of volunteering, making it the third largest component of Britain's Gross Domestic Product (Gaskin, 1997, 1). Somewhere amidst that substantial amount lies the contribution of the churches.

6.2.2.6. Social Services

There are a large number of other areas in which various Christian groups are busy attempting to identify with their communities to offer practical as well as spiritual help. The Salvation Army is again one such Christian body. Its Director of Public Relations Ray Collings, claims it is 'the largest non-government provider of social services within the U.K.'. In Liverpool, this is evidenced in its renowned Strawberry Fields Children's Home, the two Hostels already mentioned, and two Community Centres in Childwall and Wavertree. Harold is an Officer in charge of a Centre, and his goal was clear-cut; 'First and foremost to take the Gospel to the community'. He works in a 'very low housing estate' built in the late nineteen fifties and early sixties, which is quite run-down. The programme undertaken by the Centre caters for all ages, 'from the cradle to the grave', but even then, many elderly seem reluctant to come. He suggests this may be in part due to over-supply, as there is other social provision made for them in the area. Amidst all the effort being exerted, Harold conveys a resigned attitude; 'We are not seeing the spiritual results we would want to see'.

6.2.2.7. Church and Police Liaison

The churches too maintain close links with the police, both locally and at

regional levels. Since the Toxteth riots of the early 1980s, this has become a feature of Liverpool's church/police relations. A Police/Clergy Advisory Group was set up to facilitate ease of communication between both institutions. Various representatives of the churches across the denominations, sit on this Group and ensure link clergy in each Police Division are established. Ralph, gives a police view on the beginnings of this liaison with the clergy. He confirms the Toxteth riots, and also the Church of England report 'Faith in the City', as the springboard to closer police/clergy relations. The Chief Constable at the time issued a brief, asking subdivisional Commanders to get something off the ground. Yet this was not readily welcomed by some of the police. Ralph reveals; 'Within the force there was some antipathy to this due to some clergy being unsympathetic to the police during the Toxteth riots'. Ralph didn't adopt that view however, and felt he should make a contribution. He established the first police/clergy meeting in the Force in Bootle, and the writer was and remains part of that group.

Ralph also believes there must be a continuous dialogue between the police and the church, 'with an acceptance that the viewpoints of the two representative groups will always differ slightly, because at the end of the day....the police service is an arm of government'. The job of the police force is to maintain the peace and allow society to have a normal stable life. The way this is done however will frequently lead to conflict between the police and the church. He sums up the present role between church and police rather negatively; 'I don't think the church has either the influence or the clout to bring substantial changes there. What you've got to do is put in place people who have a more holistic approach'.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this account of Christian involvement in the city, that there is an attempt under way to tackle some of the social issues in a two-pronged manner. Firstly, the churches play their part in local communities, providing facilities for the various age-groups, and attempt on occasions to encourage community where it may be lacking.

Yet added to that there are the multiplicity of Christian voluntary organisations - some with statutory backing, who work with specific groups, and attempt to support and care on a more professional basis. They may have to negotiate between groups who have different values (eg. social services and housing agencies), yet which in turn appreciate the Christian input to the overall aim of a goal or project.

The contrast and continuity between eighteenth and nineteenth century Christian philanthropists and twentieth century social care is also of interest. Christians in the nineteenth century appear to have done a lot more at a personal level because the State was doing little. The Poor Law was an exception, though its harsh administration revealed little compassion. By contrast the twentieth century has seen the introduction of the Welfare State, with both statutory and voluntary support. Yet the churches and Christian organisations still see areas of need which need plugged. Whereas in the nineteenth century, Nugent founded a far-reaching social work, reaching the uneducated, the inebriated and the poor, today the Nugent Care Society provides care for the elderly, and both the mentally and terminally ill. Whereas the nineteenth century provided shelters for 'fallen women' in which they could find some practical support, today the churches provide a multitude of nurseries and toddlers groups in which many single parents can find some respite as well as some friends. Whereas some notable eighteenth century Christian citizens fought the slave trade, like Roscoe, Currrie and Rushton, today some tentative steps are being taken by the church to improve race relations and offer some support to ethnic groups within the city. In these ways the involvement of Christian individuals and groups in the past is continued in the present as the Christian church rediscovers its social role within local communities throughout the city.

A lot of Christian care today seems aimed at making individuals, where possible, more self-sufficient and less dependent on others, though this is difficult to assess. Here also the functional process of religion as providing a sense of personal identity is evident (see 3.1.1). The offer of practical help accompanying the Christian message of forgiveness and hope, is intended to be the means whereby individuals are given a sense of self-worth. Even Evangelicals who remain keen on personal conversion to the Christian way, are often proactive in providing resources to help support those in need. As long as any judgemental moralising is removed from Christian care, individuals may discover a deeper meaning to life and even attain aspirations for the after-life.

6.2.3. Political Engagement

The cohabitation of religion and politics no longer dominates the Liverpool scene, but it would be wrong to assume there was little or no connection at present in the city. From 1955, when Labour gained control of the Council, political ideology, particularly of the left, began to replace religion as the prevailing force for change. This came to a head in the nineteen eighties with

the emergence of Militant as a powerful political force. In the process, as will be shown, Liverpool became alienated from national government, and the Council was also in danger of being estranged from its own national Labour party. Intervention from the top of the party expelling some of the local leadership, ensured the city's continued government by a Labour Council at that time. This period of political extremism gave the church a renewed opportunity to demonstrate it still had an important role to play in civic affairs. The church leaders in Liverpool have sought in recent decades to avoid ideological/political association with any one party and it will be shown how this provided the basis for playing the role of mediator in the ideological struggle that emerged in the 1980s. This will feature particularly in the interviews with Bishop Sheppard and Archbishop Worlock's chaplain (see 6.2.3).

Out of the 26 respondents interviewed, only two felt that the church's engagement with politics was undesirable. Yet even here one of these two, Tom, tacitly acknowledged the importance of gaining the ear of politicians; 'If you've got an M.P. in your district...he'd appreciate the fact you've come round to see him and get to know him.' Ralph on the other hand, felt that the church had a more important function; 'To tell what the Christian message actually says to people and how we should relate to each other'.

Another five respondents stated they felt any party political involvement by the church was unwise. Two examples will suffice. Fred, an Anglican vicar, pointed out one danger; 'You find that if you get engaged in party politics, you get engaged in the party by definition, and you've got to follow main rules'. Esther shared an example of engaging in party politics in the pulpit; 'I heard of a Minister who actually said from the pulpit, and upset quite a few elderly people, "You can't be a Christian and vote Conservative". She felt it was wiser for the laity to get involved politically, rather than the clergy.

Other respondents however, underline the importance of distinguishing principles from conclusions. Sam expressed it this way; 'My perception about Christian ministry is about teaching the spiritual and moral principles of the Christian faith'. Stephen however, an Anglican vicar, underlines some limits; 'I think the church sometimes falls into the temptation of giving clear definite answers, which may sometimes be right, but may sometimes be one way of seeing things, but not the only way'. Here is a strong notion amongst some Christian leaders, that whilst it is necessary and often inevitable that the church has a political voice, it must not be constrained by party labels or even

theological dogmatism.

How the churches and Christianity in general ought to engage in politics exercises the minds of many of the respondents. A number of approaches are championed. For example, two respondents expressly advocated supporting their local politicians. Sam states; 'I think Christians ought to be involved in speaking to the Councillors about issues in society which they think are important'. Robert added the church should support them whether they were practising Christians or not. Another four respondents concentrated on the importance of lobbying M.P.'s. Richard, a Salvation Army officer, advocated a slightly more aggressive approach locally; 'I think what we have to do is make sure we have people who are sound in their beliefs in God to want to rattle a few cages'. Emma, an Anglican priest, focused on the need to attend local meetings with politicians and show an interest in local issues.

A further approach to political engagement advocated by some, was to use the church's social teaching. Ralph commended Roman Catholic social teaching as being 'profound and influential'. Una however reflected on the hysteria when the Church of England report 'Faith in the City' (1985) came out. 'There is sometimes the wish to slim down and keep church people, Christian people, in a very definite furrow'. Even here however there are dangers, for Ralph felt the church has at times stepped crudely into some areas of politics and not done itself a great deal of good. David Alton commended the Catholic Bishops' statement on 'The Common Good', as 'a good attempt at trying to focus on principles'.

One of the most public of ways in which the church displayed its engagement in the political arena was by means of the two Bishops, David Sheppard and Derek Worlock, along with the Free Church Moderators, particularly John Newton. As a corollary of their ecumenical partnership, they displayed some practical concern for social justice. This desire to be involved in active politics caused the Anglican Bishop Sheppard a dilemma on one occasion. He was attending his Diocesan Synod one morning when Derek Worlock informed him he had agreed to them marching with the Dunlop factory workers to the Pier Head that same morning. This was a public demonstration against the loss of 5,000 jobs. The Bishop explains what happened; 'I told the Synod halfway through that I was going, and why I was going, because I felt the need of the community actually came before our church'. His reason for doing so is clear. The Kingdom of God, he avows, is not merely a theological concept, but has a sociological imperative. Another 'Kingdom' issue he believes, was the

establishment of a Law Centre in Liverpool 8 by 'Marcea', particularly for the Black community. The Bishop wanted them to discover the law was a friend. 'It seems to me that God's concern for justice has made it very important that such a facility should be there'.

The Church Leaders have also exercised a conciliatory ministry in two political crises which engulfed the city in the 1980s. The first was the Toxteth riots of 1981. Added details are given in the Bishops' book, 'Better Together' (1989). Following the first two nights of violence and rioting, both decided to visit the scene. They had already been in consultation with the Deputy Chief Constable and the Black community leaders (Sheppard and Worlock; 1989, 166). They also attempted to familiarise themselves with the social scene by talking with a local priest who had lived and worked in the area for many years. It was felt they could do a lot by simply being around. The Archbishop's chaplain John Furnival, describes their response; 'So each night they did walk the streets to try and calm any situation that they could - for about a week'. In fact the Bishops state they did this for several weeks (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 168). John Furnival concurs with the Bishops' account in claiming they were liaising between the police and the community leaders in Toxteth, 'trying to get the police to hold back and not go in with their vehicles'.

This interventionist strategy was not popular with everyone. The police were sceptical about the church being involved and angered by some of the attitudes of the clergy towards them. The Bishops specifically were attacked by the police for their association with the black community, and one senior police officer of the Police Federation even alleged that the Bishops had given money to those who had attacked the police. Each allegation was answered and eventually the Chief Constable and Police Committee in Liverpool had to dissociate themselves from the charges (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 174-5).

The second occasion in which the Church Leaders intervened in Liverpool politics, was in the matter of Militant, a group of left-wing councillors who seized control of the Town Hall between 1983-85. The city's politics lurched further to the left and very quickly came into conflict with national government, headed by Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister. 'By the mid 1980s, the Conservatives saw Liverpool as the power base of the Militant Tendency. And they wanted to defeat it' (Parkinson, 1985, 18). The Bishops kept regular contact with government ministers during this period, which included them travelling to London. They write of how they saw their role as communicators rather than negotiators, and this was especially important at a

time when 'particular groups [were] unwilling or unable to meet' (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 227). There was even a minister for Merseyside at that time, Michael Heseltine, and they consulted with Margaret Thatcher herself. Relations broke down eventually between the local Council and the Government. John Furnival tells how the Chief Constable informed Bishop Sheppard, that 'no single Government minister came to Merseyside for twelve months, as they were afraid'. At occasional low periods, the Bishops were approached to mediate. Bishop Sheppard explains; 'There have been times when the City Council asked me and Derek particularly....if we would make an approach to the Secretary of State for the Environment'.

The Prime Minister arrived one morning in Liverpool, almost under cover of darkness because of the opposition in the city to her. She asked Derek Worlock why there was such hatred. The Archbishop responded by saying something about feelings running very high over the way Liverpool had been treated, and said what was needed now was reconciliation. John Furnival elaborates; '[Reconciliation] wasn't a word she ever used, but it came back in other guises later, that there was a certain amount of conciliation going on and things began to improve a bit, especially after Militant was removed'. Bishop Sheppard gave an amusing anecdote on one incident which hastened that removal of Militant. It was the occasion of the Labour leader Neil Kinnock's speech at the Party Conference in Birmingham, on 2nd October 1985, in which he laid into Militant. The church leaders of Liverpool had a letter in the Times that morning, criticising Militant, and Kinnock read it. The Bishop recalls Kinnock's words to him afterwards; 'I saw it there early in the morning and I put it aside and thought I must read that. I came back to it and worked at my speech and read what you had said - and then I was filled with the Spirit' (David Sheppard interview).

Others were involved in this wider conciliation process too, but the church leaders helped particularly at that time. John Furnival suggests a reason; 'They were probably one of the few groups who could speak for both sides; who were acceptable to both sides shall we say'. Bishop Sheppard however, rejects any notion of being a mediator. Rather they were attempting to be 'interpreters' to and for both national and local government. Parkinson makes the pertinent observation; 'Their contribution was subtle but undeniable' (Parkinson, 1985, 53). Bishop Sheppard sums up his approach to politics as a Christian leader in language suggestive of Weber (see 3.1.2). Religion for Sheppard is a source of social change. He states; 'I believe the prophetic ministry properly calls to account those who are in power. If there is a change of Government in this

country, there is no question that church leaders will be more critical of another party in power....because it is power that needs to be called to account'.

Liverpool has had two outspoken politicians in recent years who have publicly announced their Christianity. The late Eric Heffer was the Labour M.P. for Walton and conveyed his views on Christianity and politics in a book before he died, entitled, 'Why I am A Christian', (Heffer, 1991). He takes a similar theme to the Anglican Bishop, underlining the central role of the Kingdom of God in Christianity. 'If one studies the New Testament carefully, then clearly it is God's Kingdom here on earth we have to work for, and that surely means the liberation of mankind from the evils of the society in which we live' (Heffer, 1991, 13). This has a logical conclusion; 'My Christianity and my Socialism are synonymous' (Heffer, 1991, 16).

The second outspoken local politician of Christian persuasion at the time of interviewing, was David Alton, who was equally passionate about some of the moral and social issues into which he poured his energies. His inspiration and motivation come from some of the better known Christian M.P.'s who brought about change in their day. He argues that Wilberforce 'fundamentally changed the shape of political life and introduced one of the greatest reforms ever in this country by championing the abolition of slavery'. Shaftesbury, Gladstone, and Keir Hardie are similarly extolled as paragons worthy of emulation. Seeing himself as following in such grand footsteps, Alton sums up his politico/religious philosophy; 'Faith is not to be privatised; it's not about religiosity or pietistic practice, but about engagement in the life of the nation'.

The big politico/ethical issue which has put David Alton on the map is that of the right to life. His outspoken stand on this matter is governed overwhelmingly by his Christian perspective on life; 'I passionately believe that each person is made in the image of God; that they are of unique importance and are not expendable raw material'. Taking this position has caused division in his party. It has also divided public opinion and the Church. What this does is expose the Church's inability on occasions to 'take a moral lead' in society. Some Christians quite legitimately take a different stand from Alton (and the Catholic Church) on this, for ethical opinions are often based on an interpretation of principles.

Alton however, is keen to point out in his book, 'What Kind Of Country?' (1988), that his stand on this matter is not based purely on religious grounds; 'For me this is a human rights issue. I do not come to the question from a

moralistic or censorious position. I have made the same mistakes and have the same regrets about my own life as the next' (Alton, 1988, 175). He claims this stance also has the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights behind it (Alton, 1988, 175).

David Alton however, has also been involved in other less publicised moral debates. He has challenged the Government over their Sex Offences Bill - wanting something done about sex tourism. He has also been influential in some small way in the Sunday Trading Bill. He claims in interview; 'I did get some successful amendments through - a trivial amendment....to exempt Christmas Day and Easter Day from the legislation. So at least shops are still closed on these two days of the year'. Finally, he was not so successful in his opposition to the National Lottery. He stood against it, 'partly because to build up a whole society on the principle of gambling and chance, rather than on merit and hard work, is wrong'. He further argues that the Government takes most of the money and charities only get 5%.

David Alton is also the co-founder of the Movement For Christian Democracy, a cross party and interdenominational Christian force within politics. Having experienced the different denominations and Christian groupings working together on his Abortion Act, he built upon this good will for more co-operation. So in 1988-89, the Epiphany Group was founded. It was felt however, the Group had to be seen to be more than just an anti-abortion lobby. 'We felt the phrase should be pro-life; we were in favour of life, not just against something'. This led to the Westminster Declaration, which in 1990 was endorsed by 2,000 supporters at the Central Hall, London. The Declaration contains six principles which form the basis of the Movement: respect for life, social justice, reconciliation, active compassion, empowerment, and good stewardship. The Movement now has around 10,000 supporters and 6,000 members. Alton believes that just as the Green movement brought about an awareness of the environment in others, so his Movement can do the same for what he terms, 'the human ecology'. He retired as an M.P. on 30th April 1997 prior to the May General Election.

Conclusion

The Church in these last three decades seems to have had more of an advisory and prophetic role in local politics, than an executive one. Whereas in the earlier phase of the period being researched, clerics identified strongly with one particular party, and occasionally became politicians (eg. McNeile and Longbottom), the present position in Liverpool reveals a reluctance on the part

of the majority of respondents to have the clergy identified with any one political party. For many of the respondents then, the choice is that of being either a Christian politician or a clergyman, but not both. This perhaps indicates something of the shift of emphasis in the role of clergy over the century. Pastoral and community involvement, along with the freedom to challenge social trends and offer Christian alternatives, is part of that prophetic role which many Christians prefer to adopt at present. It has also replaced any identification with a specific political stance, enabling the clergy to channel their ministries to all shades of political opinion, and none. This would also be in line with the ethos of ecumenism, in which there is a greater acceptance of political and religious pluralism.

Here it can be observed how the church's role in social control, much more noticeable before and after the turn of the century, has now become severely constricted to the extent that it is almost non-existent. The church's value system is almost exclusively restricted to its active members. Yet even amidst a sea of opinions and self-made morality, the church is still blamed on occasions for not taking a stronger moral stand. Wallace declares; 'The Church must always be prepared to accept responsibility when there is a decline in moral standards and social structures' (Wallace, 1994, 42). He acknowledges that society is probably not listening to the church anyway, but that does not absolve it from its obligation. According to the respondents, it is in this area the church now has to be more prophetic. Perhaps a more politically independent church can also become the conscience of the politician. The two Bishops seemed to have achieved that status. The removal of the church to the private sphere therefore, is not total. As has been shown (see 3.2.2.1) there is emerging a steady deprivatisation of religions throughout the world as they engage the political, social and economic conditions which afflict them.

Nonetheless, the churches in Liverpool are now more dependent on politicians for major social change when needed. Despite losing ground here, there does not appear to be too much regret from the respondents. Perhaps the gain of social harmony far outweighs the lure of political power.

6.2.4. Church Relationships

One of the changing features of Christianity in Liverpool (and elsewhere) in recent decades has been the shift of emphasis amongst the denominations in their relationships with other church groups. As has been noted previously on occasions, both Protestant and Catholic churches tended to align themselves

according to their historic positions following the cleavage of the Reformation. Intransigence and intolerance were marked features of this kind of religious culture, with the exception of the Unitarians who have always endeavoured to treat Christians of any persuasion with evenhandedness.

The growing move towards co-operation and partnership, whilst having some localised roots in previous decades (eg. the Granby Street area), was catapulted into the public arena in dramatic fashion by the two new Bishops arriving in Liverpool in the mid-seventies, within a short time of one another. Despite both of them claiming to have been warned off any kind of high profile collaboration, they chose to ignore this advice and took up the challenge of tackling sectarianism.

Bishop Sheppard came to Liverpool believing he had a dual function in the proclamation of the Christian Gospel; 'The church is here as a serving church, both witnessing by its worship - proclaiming Christ, and its concern for justice in communities'. When Archbishop Worlock arrived in the city shortly afterwards, John Furnival reveals his goal was to 'bridge the gap between religion and life'. They both quickly struck up a close friendship and discovered a common goal in wishing to tackle the sectarian bitterness in Liverpool. Bishop Sheppard suggested their friendship became the basis of the friendships which developed amongst other clergy in the region. Further, they both resolved that should there be any disagreements between them, they should be shared privately. Bishop Sheppard explained; 'We always tried to say there's nothing we wouldn't discuss'. Some of the clergy in the old green and orange hard line areas were also challenged by their obvious friendship. They told him; 'The fact that you two seemed to be friends helped us; gave us sanction'. This fraternal spirit seems to be one of the crucial elements of the new ecumenical mood which became such a focus of church life in the city from the late seventies to the present day.

Despite such an upfront ecumenical partnership, it has not all been plain sailing. Bishop Sheppard believed that the impact of ecumenism over the past twenty years has been patchy; 'There are certainly areas where we are simply being polite and a bit frosty and getting on with our separate development, but there is no question....there is a movement that is happening, shot through the churches'. He had witnessed 15 signings of covenants between groups of churches in different parts of the area however, many of which are strong. He believed Ecumenism was also the answer to the problem of poor church attendance. He suggested a lot of people had switched off Christianity and

God, 'and saw religion more as part of the problem than the answer'. The Bishop was also convinced he had begun something worthwhile in Liverpool that cannot now be stopped; 'It's been marvellous to have had a share in shifting the ground, I think irreversibly, regarding the ecumenical relationships between the communities here'.

John Furnival gives some insight to the thinking of the Catholic hierarchy as it too attempted to usher in a change in religious relations. 'He went full pelt in terms of ecumenism'. The radical changes in Catholic Church polity following Vatican 2, enabled them to participate more overtly in the new strategy for Christian relations in the city. Furnival also detects a positive response to this throughout the churches. 'There is a groundswell of opinion in favour of what the two Bishops and other church leaders have done'. Some of the groundwork in shifting opinion was accomplished in the late 1970s when ecumenical youth groups would go on holiday together. They shared everything they could together in worship, whilst acknowledging their differences. Furnival concludes; 'If that kind of imaginative action had not been taken we would have been the poorer for it. It led to an appreciation of one another's views'.

One chief barrier to a closer unity remains the Eucharist. This is rather paradoxical as it is the very sacrament which is intended to demonstrate the unity of Christian believers. John Furnival gives a Catholic perspective on this difficulty; 'The church feels that communion would be a sign of actual communion in terms of our unity together in belief and so on. But since we haven't got that, to go ahead with communion would be a countersign'. A few other respondents felt strongly that this was one of the primary issues to be tackled by the churches. Emma for example, expresses their sentiments; 'If we can get unity on what the sacraments are; what the Holy Communion is; what actually happens to the bread and wine, and we get a united altar; it's solved isn't it?'

On the sensitive role of the Pope as head of the church, some Catholic thinking has become more flexible. Alan believes in the necessity of a visible head, but not necessarily an authoritarian figure. He concludes; 'I don't see authority as power; but at best, service'. Roger believes a recognised church head is crucial for the church's credibility to the outside world; 'If you speak with one voice you should have an authority system that speaks'.

Finally, there is another relevant strand interweaving this predominant trend

towards unity, and that involves the strong Evangelical force which still permeates the city's church scene. The writer gauges that at least ten of the respondents would fit this category, which was a purely arbitrary outcome. Four of these are actively sharing in the ecumenical impulse, whilst others are prepared to stand on the sidelines and commend its achievements. Sam for example, whilst acknowledging he has firm doctrinal views is quick to recognise the achievements of the two Bishops; 'I think the position that Sheppard and Worlock have taken for instance, in seeking to work together and communicate friendship and understanding, is good and right and proper'.

There are however, a considerable proportion of Evangelicals who are still extremely dubious about the motives and legitimacy of this movement. At the root of this stance is a belief that ecumenical religion is being manufactured. Two evangelical respondents give their reflections. William, an independent minister, believes the origins of ecumenism are merely human; 'I see the ecumenical movement as a man-made organisation. It is men trying to work certain things together'. He indicates real unity would involve those with a conversion experience, or who had been 'born again'. 'There is a unity that exists there, and I believe that's the unity that I actually find the greatest level of expression for me personally'. Colin too is looking for something spiritually tangible in those with whom he associates; 'I look for my relationships in terms of those who are in Christ, and who are moving biblically and spiritually in Christ with a vision'. Whilst William is prepared to be stretched to incorporate Roman Catholics within his sphere of fellowship groupings, he is determined not to be pushed into anything; 'It will be on the basis of sitting down and getting to know one another's heart'.

Interestingly, both these respondents are at present engaged in furthering Evangelical unity - one across the denominations, and one primarily within charismatic circles. Colin is a member of a group of ministers and leaders who are theologically like-minded. William has given much energy to establishing greater co-operation within the charismatic genre of churches in the city. From this has sprung the 'Together For The Harvest' movement, mentioned earlier. William is enthusiastic in his appraisal of what has been accomplished; 'Amongst the Evangelical arm of the city, there's a coming together and recognising that it isn't a case of our denominational tag that counts'. Yet, as evidenced in the initial perceptions, there remains a significant chasm between those Evangelicals of a charismatic persuasion and those who are still reluctant to embrace the charismatic emphasis on the Holy Spirit's gifts. Many traditional and independent Evangelical churches still form a

noteworthy group, who neither embrace the ecumenism of the Bishops, or welcome the exuberance of the Charismatics.

Evangelicals in the meantime, are sometimes able to sustain meaningful friendships with those of other persuasions at a private level, despite being unable to do so at a public level. Both William and Colin told of friendships developed with Catholic priests who had been influential in their ministry. William felt he learnt more of the scriptures from a priest, showing him things he had never seen before. Colin revealed how he was made to feel ashamed over his prayer life when a Catholic priest prayed at his College; 'I knew he lived in heaven at a place where I did not, and that was just a learning process for me'. Here is a tension yet to be resolved within Evangelicalism. Whilst they are able to recognise spirituality in individual Catholics, the implied dismissal of their denomination as unchristian, remains a barrier preventing many Evangelicals from decisive involvement in ecumenism.

Conclusion

Whilst most churches appear to be carrying on business as usual, something has been going on which has, for many of them, altered their thinking quite dramatically. Despite denominational labels still being strongly adhered to, there is a cross-denominational understanding slowly growing and producing less intransigence. Many wish to be part of the work of the two Bishops. Even though there remain disagreements on the Eucharist and ministry, preconceived views are slowly being dissolved, opening the way to greater understanding. As has been noted however, this is not an all-encompassing view. Many, though not all, Evangelicals and others remain on the outside, sceptical, perhaps cynical, and resolving not to compromise their principles. Getting them on board is perhaps one of the most immediate challenges facing the Ecumenical church leaders, and could yet anticipate a real measure of religious and social harmony for the new millennium

7. CHANGING RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PATTERNS

Of great importance to the main purpose of this work are any evidences of changing social patterns amongst practising Christians in the Liverpool area. The churches in the city, mainly due to the religious partisanship in the past, have generally remained unwavering in their doctrine and practice until recent decades. Catholicism, as has been shown, changed significantly in the 1960s. The Protestant churches too have undergone very real changes due to the influence, not only of a strengthening ecumenism, but the charismatic renewal of the 1970s onwards.

This chapter then will attempt to examine something of the shift in approach and thinking of the Christian community within the churches, as well as in Christian organisations. For example, how far have Liverpool churches been secularised? Is faith now predominantly a private matter? Has the sectarian past been subsumed in ecumenical enthusiasm? These questions raise the wider issue of Christian impact on society. Changes in the actions and attitudes of Christian people would be expected to impinge upon the moral and spiritual trends of the communities in which they live and work. It is to such matters this chapter is committed.

7.1. A SECULARISED CHURCH?

One of the arguments advanced for the strong Christian presence in the U.S.A. is that of a secularised church. The church, so the argument runs, has internally adapted its belief-system to suit the post-modern world. By this means the chameleon church survives to maintain its social and spiritual Durkheimian function within a more secularised society. The writer's knowledge of the strong Evangelical branch of the church in the United States however, would seem to counter such a blanket view. Christian Fundamentalism remains exceptionally influential there, particularly in the Bible Belt. The secularisation analysis alone is inadequate as an explanation of the degree of American religious practice. Has secularisation then permeated the churches of Liverpool? There are two areas of church life here in which this can begin to be assessed: the increasing community-mindedness of the churches, with the corresponding wider use of church building, and the area of doctrine and practice.

7.1.1. Community Churches

With the numerical decline in church attendance during the twentieth century, many churches have had to make critical decisions as to how to finance their

sizeable plants. The respondents indicated a number of very practical ways in which their buildings were being put to use, apart from the usual round of church activities.

Firstly there are the many Parents and Toddlers groups run by church volunteers. Here parents have a place to bring their children and meet other parents from the community. Ken, a Free Church minister, is so keen to use his buildings to the maximum, that he anticipates having a full time administrator within the next year or so. He has a church which runs a disabled group and an Age Concern Club luncheon once a week. He also wishes to develop the performing arts within his church as a link with some great men of the arts in the past. His church is a Grade I listed building with a notable Liverpool heritage. 'Taking that as my cue....I've tried to open it up for musicians, dancers and actors to come in and use the building'. Further, he has already held numerous art exhibitions, whilst at the same time getting people in to view the beautiful building and ask questions about the faith behind the people. Yet he is adamant that no proselytising takes place in the process. 'It would be contrary to our faith....where we believe each individual has the right or duty to determine his or her own faith'. Good public relations are his goal.

Stephen follows similar lines. His church runs a dance and drama club as an alternative inner city activity. 'It uses a lot of religious or Christian material.....that seems to carry it in a way that's acceptable for a lot of youngsters who might struggle a bit with more traditional approaches'. A lot of youngsters have opted into that opportunity which has surprised those engaged in the work. His church however has much larger goals in the use of their building. They wish to offer their building as a resource to the community to meet its own needs, particularly in promoting health care. He envisages the provision of a small fitness suite, even though 'Slimming World' already uses the building. The church's aim is to 'contribute to the improvement of the health of this community'. Sadly for Stephen, the church has been unable to obtain financial backing, despite attempts at doing so from the Millennium Commission.

Sam allows his church building to be used for a mentally handicapped group. The members of the church get involved too by attending the club and visiting them in their homes. Harold uses his buildings for a wide variety of projects. He too runs a Playgroup as well as a Parents and Toddlers group. Added to that is Day Care three days a week and Lunch Club facilities. William, whose ministry is in the city centre, adds yet another dimension to the growing

communal use of church buildings. His church has a food pantry for those who may need sustenance. The church established Merseyside's largest baby equipment store to serve one-parent families and offer clothes and equipment on a second hand basis at low prices. This is now rented off as a business, but the aim is still to keep the prices lower than anywhere else and to make the Christian gospel available to people.

What is noticeable here is the overall desire amongst all these respondents, with the exception of the first, to use their buildings for socially useful purposes, yet with a spiritual end in view. For them, the building and the specific use it is put to, are a means of expressing God's care. To gain the trust of people in this way, appears to be one of the more accepted approaches to church evangelism at the present. From this evidence it would be difficult to claim these churches in Liverpool are secularised, if by that it is meant the churches have compromised their spiritual raison d'être. Motivation is crucial here, and the majority of respondents are clear that Christian 'agape' involves social concern as well as the proclamation of the Christian gospel.

7.1.2. Doctrine and Practice

The doctrines and practices of the church have generally been a minefield for those who have sought to engage in debate over them, and if there is to be any evidence of secularisation in the churches, then it has to have invaded the holy sanctum of theological absolutes. This is what is claimed for much of the American church scene, but is it evident in the churches of Liverpool at the close of the century? An initial glance at the responses to questions on this issue reveal the difficulties the churches have in achieving doctrinal concordance. Answers on the place of doctrine and practice range across the spectrum, from one respondent who felt it was all a hindrance, to others who felt the loss of distinctive doctrine and practice was a backward step for their church.

There are those then who believe certain doctrines have a negative effect on churches and others outside the church. The most extreme on this stance is the Unitarian minister Jeff Gould, whose church polity is quite distinct from that of the other respondents interviewed. This position of the Unitarian Church as a consequence, has prevented them from being accepted into the mainstream of Christian tradition. It is something which affects Jeff Gould quite deeply. He has a definite feeling of distinctiveness, yet exclusion, which emerges in the interview. 'We are not allowed to join in on certain efforts and projects because of our rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity'. Part of the problem he

faces is evidenced in the Unitarian view of God. 'There isn't a single definitive Unitarian concept of God. It's up to the individual to decide'. Doctrine is replaced by action in his list of priorities - a trait previously noted in older Unitarians. Perhaps it is this open-endedness of doctrine which is at the heart of the problem. Whilst Gould can assert; 'In my tradition we have absolutely no structures or set teachings; everything is wide open', many Christians might be aggrieved that Jesus' divinity is still not acknowledged. Gould further affirms; 'We do not believe the role of Jesus in our faith is any higher than say Ghandi'. Here then is the difficulty for Unitarians. Their strong adherence to Christ and much of his teaching, whilst impressive, is offset by their inability to acknowledge his uniqueness. Unitarians therefore still remain outside the parameter of Christian orthodoxy, and in the process appear to display some post-modern relativism.

Some other difficulties emerged with doctrines of specific denominations. The Salvation Army is confronting an ongoing doctrinal issue within their own ranks, to do with the role of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, and Baptism. Since their foundation in the nineteenth century, the Army has not practised these two sacraments in the way other churches have. For some this is a difficulty which needs to be resolved. One Army officer Harold, was defensive on the matter however, claiming their Love-Feast, held occasionally, was the equivalent. The issue remains however, because the actual practice of such a Love-Feast is rare, whilst the Eucharist is a regular event in other churches. With the practice of Baptism, the same respondent has his own rationale. 'The Salvation Army recognises that it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is essential for one's Christian experience to grow and develop'. Here the sacrament of baptism, normally an external act (though having internal implications), is replaced entirely by the inner baptism of the Spirit. Another Army officer, Richard, felt this failure of the Salvation Army to practise the sacraments might be a barrier to people joining. He indicated the Salvation Army is looking at this issue. Despite the struggle here to update the Army's appeal on these two issues, there is no suggestion of secularising influences.

Doctrinal difference is one of the chief factors dividing Protestant from Catholic. Despite great strides being made to come together in recent decades, doctrinal difference still keeps the two sides apart. Nowhere is this seen more palpably than in the Orange movement. Other factors overlap doctrine here, such as tradition and cultural insularity, yet much of that centres on distinct long-standing doctrinal posturing, some of which has been eased somewhat.

Doctrinal rhetoric however, is still evident today amongst Orangemen. One of the Lodge's respondents Grant avowed; 'They'll [The Catholic Church] never concede the infallibility of the Pope; they'll never concede the Eucharist; they'll never concede Mariology'. Some movement has been made by the Catholic Church on all of these matters however, and the two main church groupings are not now as far apart as they once were. For example Roger, a Roman Catholic priest, believes his church has been mistaken in using the concept of infallibility in relation to the Pope. 'What that was all about was the church speaking with one voice'. The Pope, he re-affirms, simply speaks with the authoritative voice of the church. He acknowledges the fears of Protestants and wishes to work at allaying these.

Finally there are those respondents, particularly amongst Evangelicals, who view doctrine as central to their position of being Biblical Christians. It may therefore mean that certain unpopular doctrines have to be proclaimed or taught, as part of Christian revelation in the scriptures. So Tom bemoans the fact that many churches have just become social clubs, and suggests the lack of teaching on hell as one of the signs of doctrinal dilution. Two other respondents of Evangelical persuasion, Sam and William, mentioned sin generally as an issue having to be squared up to. Doctrine is seen here to be more than an argument over theological niceties. It has also to deal with real people and the spiritual condition they find themselves in. These respondents are arguing that a negative response to doctrine may be reflective of a negative response to God. Evangelicals, it seems, have also refused the road to secularisation here.

The practices of the church likewise may give some indication of secularisation, should that be happening. Yet here again we find the opposite. Respondents rather fight to retain some core beliefs within their own denomination. Doris relates how her daughter felt the loss of distinctively Catholic practices such as fish on Fridays and fasting at lent, destroyed the individuality she liked. Alan is equally concerned over the practice of communion, particularly in ecumenical involvement. For him, the Catholic mass is still quite distinct from other Protestant forms of communion. Doris verifies this strength of feeling; 'I think there's a strong split over this intercommunion. These [certain Catholics] would not receive the sacrament from another denomination'. Again there appears to be no indication of secularising influences here. The church may be willing to work at ecumenism, but not at the cost of conscience or secularisation.

Conclusion

It would seem from this evidence that not only in their use of buildings, but in certain beliefs and practices, the churches in Liverpool display little which suggests they are undergoing an inner secularisation. What is indicated here is an ongoing attempt to re-interpret the faith and practice of the church for contemporary society, whilst refusing to compromise on any issues which are seen to be crucial to their faith and tradition. Yet this assessment is not the full story, and later (9.1) it will be demonstrated that there are some areas of Christian belief which are being re-evaluated, exposing a hint of inner secularisation at work.

7.2. A PRIVATISED FAITH?

For some sociologists the faith which was once a corporate necessity for the stabilising of societies, has become increasingly privatised, particularly in the West (though see arguments for deprivatisation in 3.2.2.1). Luhmann's segmentalist approach views society broken into various autonomous environments which the church can no longer service in its traditional role. Its inability to make the necessary changes quickly enough has led to a progression towards a more privatised religion (see 3.2.1.2). Luckmann similarly argued that a process of institutional differentiation was taking place and the church again has been unable to legitimate and integrate this new social order of industrial society (3.2.1.2).

This view claims personal preferences in lifestyle now proliferate to the point where previous obligatory beliefs and practices have become optional. So is there then any evidence of this privatised faith being practised amongst the Christian communities of Liverpool? How far has the need for personal worship drifted into a more autonomous religion? The difficulty here is that many of those interviewed are professionally involved with the established churches. It may be in their interests to support the notion of 'belonging' to the recognised churches. Yet some are not so constrained. With that in mind, the responses can all be considered.

7.2.1. Levels of Religiosity

Seventeen of those interviewed responded to the question on religious attitudes and practices at present. All of these were positive, and reflected an optimistic mood about the public's attitude to the sacred. One set of respondents (Orange Lodge) however were rather pessimistic. One of their number, Grant, felt the reason for the decline in the sacred was simple; 'Basically our society has moved away from the Christian way of life'. The respondents who were

optimistic indicated their hopes and fears over the present trends. Three respondents declared they thought people were becoming more religious. Sam felt there was a move back to spiritual and religious things. He actually claims to have seen this marked improvement over his eleven years in his area. Tom also acknowledges an increased desire for religious experience, but does not ally that merely to an increase in Christianity, but to psychic trends and New Age religion also. For him then, an increase in religious interest has both worrying and challenging features to it. Yet it is an indication perhaps that choice in religion is becoming more widespread. Bishop Sheppard compared the religious scene in London to Liverpool, and affirmed; 'Liverpool is a very much more religious place than London; not necessarily more church going, but more religious; much more aware of the Christian language'.

Amongst the respondents there was a distinct belief of a growing pluralism in the religious outlook of many. Harold acknowledged there was a continuing religious search going on, and this was evident in varied spiritualistic practices, some of which were being encouraged close to his church. Other respondents indicated the same, citing Islam and the New Age movement, as further examples of this search. Yet it was also sadly acknowledged that whilst people may be searching, they are not knocking on the church's door. Jack put it this way. 'If you start talking to people they are looking for something, but it is not to be found in the churches'. This is reiterated by a number of the respondents (6 in all), and their reasons for the church's inability to attract people will be dealt with in section 8.3.1. Una however, suggested the 'mysterious' was a dimension of religiosity which became apparent in the Hillsborough disaster of 1989. 'Something like that twanged something very deep, and for weeks after I actually worked on a help line and you could feel there was a need for something'.

It can be seen there is a very real awareness amongst the respondents that the influence of the church is waning, but not at the cost of primal religious longings. Luhmann's and Luckmann's views of a less corporate form of religion may not have been delineated in a detailed manner by the respondents, but there would appear to be enough evidence to indicate something of it is appearing. If people are no longer attending the institutional form of Christian religion in the numbers of previous generations, then it may be these other variables of religious expression, such as spiritualism, New Age, and the awareness of mystery, are indicators of a non-institutional expression of religious life emerging in Liverpool. They may also reflect the growing consumerism emerging in religious choice (see 3.2.2.3.1). The ability to hand-

pick a spirituality to satisfy inner longings is increasingly an option for many in the West.

7.2.2. The Importance of 'Belonging'

Grace Davie has argued the case for 'belonging' being separated from 'believing' in the religious practice of present day Britain (Davie, 1995, 5). Twenty-one respondents gave their views on the place of congregational gathering in present day Christianity.

At the outset, fifteen of the respondents indicated they felt belonging to a congregation or church was important for being Christian. A wide range of answers were given as to why this was so, perhaps indicating different perspectives respondents have of the church. The most common reason given for 'belonging' to a church was a theological one. Four respondents gave this as the main reason. The church is 'the body' of Christ, and that by implication means its members are interdependent. The respondents have their own way of relating this view. Stephen describes it in sociological terms; 'I think all Christians need networks; need fellowships....at the end of the day, people together will achieve more than individuals charging around doing their own thing'. Emma is adamant about 'belonging'. 'You've got to belong.....I could never be a Christian without actually belonging to a body of people who express in their lives the living Christ'. Mutual support and encouragement were the underlying reasons for this strength of feeling. David Alton uses vivid imagery however, to convey the frailty of this spiritual 'body'. 'We are the disabled body of Christ, and come with all our disabilities, and we have to share those in some body with which we have a close affinity'.

A multitude of other reasons were given as to why 'belonging' to a church was desirable. Sam claims 'belonging' enables the Christian to be part of a spiritual family. Another purpose in people 'belonging' lies in their having a common aim and purpose. This is central to Harold's understanding of the church; 'If that does not exist, then you are going it alone and the danger is when you are going it alone, that something happens and you are immediately knocked off balance, and you've not got the support you need'. Una further stresses the importance of 'belonging' for personal development. 'Part of growing in faith and works comes from social interaction, as well as private meditation'.

Some other responses indicate the intellectual and spiritual benefits of belonging to a worshipping community. Ralph felt it helped develop an understanding of God; Norman believed it was important for reasoning,

communion and fellowship. Grant claimed belonging was necessary for giving credence to the message. Here the element of ecclesiastical authority is seen to play an important role. Individual faith might easily be believed or rejected, but a communal faith is thought to have more authority to convince. In these ways the respondents assert their conviction that a communal faith is as essential as a personal creed.

There were however some areas of disquiet amongst the respondents, which revealed that evidence of a privatised faith was not something unknown. Jack claimed many people he knew refused to belong any more because they had been hurt in the past. Only Doris actually claimed 'belonging;' was optional, as it depended on individual personality. Finally, it was suggested by Simon Lee that 'belonging' was not something popular amongst middle class people. Speaking of his experiences in Belfast and England, he admits; 'I sense in a middle class parish you don't want the hassle of knowing other people. They want to be in there, out there, wash the car, get the papers and so on. That isn't my understanding of the church, but that's the way it is'.

Finally, two of the respondents themselves indicated they were irregular in their 'belonging'. Una was exploring alternative styles of worship, and was therefore not linked to any specific church. Esther however, felt bad about it, and claimed weekends were the only time she could see her parents who lived at a distance. These were the exceptions though, and as far as the majority of the Christians interviewed are concerned, 'belonging' is still an essential element in the practice of their faith. This has social relevance for the maintenance of the institutional form of religious practice. It may be that other social changes like Sunday trading and greater leisure options limit the levels of institutional religion, but according to this sampling, most Christians still value highly the notion of collective worship.

7.3. CONSENSUS RELIGION?

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how far the ecumenical experiment so vigorously pursued by the Christian leaders of the city, has brought about a consensus of religious belief and practice. When Pope John Paul II visited Liverpool in 1981, he stated the position of the Catholic Church on this issue. 'The restoration of unity amongst Christians is one of the main aims of the Church in the last part of the twentieth century, and this task is for all' (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 69). In the last three decades, Liverpool has become a focal point in the U.K. for the way in which the churches have attempted to bring about this restoration of unity.

Ecumenism in Liverpool had never really made serious progress until the arrival of the two Bishops in the mid-nineteen seventies. The immediate predecessors to Bishops Sheppard and Worlock were friends, as were others before them, but little impact had been made on the actual thinking and practice of the churches. Some localised experiments had been attempted, such as the Granby area 'ecumenism on the ground' experiment in Toxteth in the 1960s. This centred on issues such as housing, youth work, community relations, kerb crawling and racism. A number of church leaders saw these matters as relevant to the local quality of life, and in association with others in the community, attempted to take action to improve or remedy them. Margaret Simey, who became part of that group, describes the pivotal role this embryonic ecumenism had on these matters. 'Looking back I realise that what distinguished the church from the welfare agencies operating in the area, was that the churches openly and bravely took their stand on the side of the people' (May and Simey, 1989, 17). These experiments were rare in the Liverpool of the sixties, a city in which there was still a Protestant Party in local government. Today the picture is quite different, and now many other church groups throughout the city have bound themselves in local covenants to work together much more closely where possible, in their communities.

7.3.1. The Two Bishops

From their arrival in the 1970s, both Bishops attempted, along with the Free Church Moderator, to promote the cause of ecumenism in some of the most practical of ways. One particular event is looked on by Bishop Sheppard as kick-starting the process. In 1975 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, issued a 'Call to the Nation'. The Bishop reflects; 'It sparked off a whole number of ecumenical meetings at which members of different Churches sought ways together of bringing Christian principles to bear on English public life and morals' (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 52). Soon after his arrival in Liverpool, he received an invitation from the Lord Mayor to discuss what sort of response could be made to this 'Call to the Nation'. After an encouraging start, it seems the initial enthusiasm was dampened by political bitterness, and no other meetings followed (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 53).

It was only after the arrival of Archbishop Worlock in 1976, that the two men began together to plan inroads to the religious sectarianism which had so beleaguered the city's politics and religious life. To begin with, both men attempted to relate their religion to the lives of the ordinary people of the city. John Furnival declares; 'Under his leadership he took the Catholic community

to understand the fact that the Gospel was as much to do with the social needs of people's lives, as it is to do with preaching on Sunday'. Bishop Sheppard had spent twenty years working in an inner city situation in South-East London, and believes that in the inner city, the church is in 'a missionary situation'. The Bishop felt a direct link between his calling to work in London and his calling to ministry in Liverpool. Like the Archbishop, he related his ministry to social issues; 'God is concerned to change both human hearts and social structures'.

Their participation in the political life of the city has been developed elsewhere, but their wider social involvement has also been far-reaching. Marching with workers from the Dunlop and British Leyland factories to protest at the loss of jobs, or visiting the Minister of Agriculture over the closure of Tate and Lyle, became a practical demonstration of ecumenical partnership at grass roots level, attempting to convey the concern of the whole church in the everyday affairs of the men and women of the city. Another of their involvements was in the housing sphere, with the establishment of the Eldonian Village in the Vauxhall area of the city. Threatened with demolition and the decanting of the residents by the local council, the people of the area resisted the proposals and were determined to have a say in their future. They asked the two Bishops to help gain the support of national government. Archbishop Worlock assured the leaders of his personal support. John Furnival gives the detail; 'He said he would stand with the people in their efforts...not just to be re-housed, but have a say in how they were re-housed'. They succeeded in getting government support, and in 1985 the proposals were passed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The work commenced in 1986 (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 211)

Another area in which their concept of the gospel moved them in a social direction, has been in the establishment of a Law Centre for the Black community in Liverpool 8. Bishop Sheppard wanted the Black community to 'find the law was a friend...It seems to me that God's concern for justice has made it very important that such a facility should be there'. The further establishment of 'Care', the Churches Action on Race Equality, was an attempt to introduce the race question to churches, and help inform Christians of the issues.

Sharing the burden of concern they had over the social issues of the city became imperative, and two particular bodies were set up. The Merseyside Churches Unemployment Committee was established in 1984, consisting of a

strong group of people involved in public and private sector of employment, Manpower Services Commission schemes, and education (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 153). A second group known as the Michaelmas Group, was formed in the same year, consisting of Merseyside businessmen in senior management who attempt to use their contacts in the south for obtaining financial backing for schemes in the area. By this means they hoped to surmount the barrier created by false images of Merseyside (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 162)

If both Bishops were concerned with relating the gospel to society, they were equally concerned at relating it to their own divided religious communities. In the mid-nineteen seventies, a Merseyside Churches Ecumenical Council had been established, and the two Bishops inherited a structure in its infancy. Regular church leaders' meetings were arranged, and twice a year evenings were put aside for discussion on more controversial topics, which were followed by devotions and a meal. Throughout these evenings, an ethos of respect and trust was built, in which none was placed under threat or compulsion (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 78). This Council of Churches was the springboard from which the two Bishops began to operate in an ecumenical setting, supported ably by many of the Free Churches, and networking with the different denominations. John Furnival sums up his Bishop's overarching concept of ecumenism. He 'always used to talk about a threefold ecumenism, which was social, spiritual and doctrinal'. This blending of the spiritual with the social appears to be one of the chief hallmarks of the two Bishops' ministry.

7.3.2. The Wider Church View On Merseyside

The views of the wider Christian community, whilst being generally in favour of the work of the Bishops and Free Church Moderator, also contain contrary opinions and alternative strategies. What is different about this from previous generations, is that there appears to be little or no malice between the two groups, with the exception of the Orange Order. Friendly co-existence seems to be the acceptable way forward for most church leaders who cannot yet imbibe the ecumenical rationale.

Those favourable towards the Church Leaders' approach range across the denominational spectrum. This also reveals that both the advocates and sceptics of ecumenism, find their support from the same denominational stock. This is a relatively recent development of the last twenty-five years or so, and a commentary itself on the influence of the Bishops. It also makes the lines of

demarcation all the more difficult. A man or woman's opponents could be those of their own spiritual household.

7.3.2.1. The Substance and Goal of Ecumenism

For some Christians in Liverpool, the ecumenical drive of recent decades is viewed as the only way forward. Jack puts it this way; 'I don't believe there is any other way of taking Christ's work seriously'. He indicates the response to his own ecumenical approach is a positive one; 'The people who see that it is sensible are the non-churchgoing Christians, but increasingly I find it being accepted by churchgoing Christians'. He has a high regard for the two Bishops who he believes have set down a marker for the way the churches should go. He also discloses that those who have followed the Bishops have attempted to set up structures that will be independent of them. This was evidenced in the way the new Archbishop Patrick Kelly was selected. A cross-denominational group was involved in the decision. For Jack, the ecumenical bandwagon has gone so far now, that while it may be hindered, it cannot be stopped.

Stephen believes that had Liverpool not followed the path the two Bishops had mapped out, then the city would be more like Belfast today. Roger enthused; 'Most of the barriers are gone - much of the sectarian activity - is still there, but I think we've got rid of a lot of nonsense that was there'. He has his own personal experience of ecumenism, working closely with the local Anglican vicar from whom he receives a lot of support. 'In some ways I've got more in common with him than a lot of the Catholic priests'.

This attitude which sees unity as something functional rather than structural, is one which emerges again and again in different guises. Emma relishes the varied contributions each denomination could make to a united church; 'I want to see the friendliness of the Methodists coming in here, and I want perhaps to have the dignity of the R.C. church'. Fred expresses again something of the contribution of different denominations to the unity process; 'I think we can teach the R.C. Church a great deal about family services and the engagement of lay people, and they can teach us a lot about aspects of spirituality - about silence, contemplation'. Doris similarly paints a vivid picture when describing her concept of ecumenism; 'I'm very pro the rainbow idea, that we don't mix the colours up on the pallet and end up with khaki'.

The ecumenical dictum of Liverpool Hope University is also very expansive. The Rector and Chief Executive Simon Lee sums it up; 'We are fully Anglican, fully Catholic, fully ecumenical, fully open to all faith groups, instead of the

mishmash somewhere in between'. For Una, one of the benefits of Christians working together is that 'faith goes even deeper than ... traditions, practices and organisations of our churches'. She does not believe the goal of ecumenism should be another denomination. 'Putting into action our faith and our witness and being prepared at times to let go and to share', is for her real practical ecumenism. Keith Hobbs stresses how ecumenism is much wider than church unity and ought to focus on Christ himself; 'I would want to change the phrase "Christian unity" into "unity in Christ", because that then centres where our faith belongs'. Stephen sums up his approach succinctly; 'It's about recognising, evaluating, and affirming each other's different approaches rather than being frightened and fearful and prejudiced about them'.

For other respondents however, ecumenism at grass roots level is what matters. What do ordinary people think about it? For Richard, involvement with the Salvation Army band at Liverpool's football ground, following the Hillsborough disaster, was a meaningful ecumenical experience; 'To spend a week up at Anfield and sharing in that way may have been the only thing that some of us could do - to play our instruments and console people in that way'. This he felt, combined with the James Bulger aftermath, brought churches together in counselling and support. Stephen sees ecumenism being worked out in everyday relationships; 'There is a kind of street ecumenism which ignores all the differences. There are Christians who live alongside each other, who are even married to each other, for whom the church differences are irritating and painful'. He believes the day will come when ordinary people will have had enough, and force the church on the issue of worshipping together. Fred too believes the greatest ecumenism going on at present is the intermarriage between Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

7.3.2.2. Successes of Ecumenism

How successful has the recent ecumenical experiment in Liverpool been? This is a question which provides a rich response from those presently engaged in Christian ministry within the city. Success comes to mean different things for different people, as will become evident. Douglas claimed to see it in the changing spirit of the people generally; 'A very definite softening in terms of that historic and religious divide'. He viewed ecumenism as a vehicle of church co-operation, whilst appreciating the need for churches to retain distinctiveness.

Others see success in the fact that the churches work together much more than in the past. Keith Hobbs enthuses; 'What thrills me more is what is happening

locally in churches, which doesn't go under the name "ecumenical", but who nevertheless see a common mission and are engaging in a common mission with the other churches around them'. Robert, though frustrated at the slowness of the approach to ecumenism, has developed friendships across the churches. He claimed to have said mass in the Methodist Central Hall. When queried further on this, the practice became clearer. The occasion was Maunday Thursday at Easter. The Anglican and Catholic clergy stood at the same altar at the commencement of the Eucharist. They conducted the beginning of the service together, but at the distribution of the Eucharist, they separated - Catholics received from the priest, the Anglicans and others from the vicar. Despite the achievement of this act of common worship, for him the restriction on eucharistic unity is 'a great sadness'.

For Jack, engaged in the Ecumenical Team ministry in the city centre, success is in being able to 'relate God on Sunday to mammon on Monday'. Jack is a chaplain to the stores in the city, and spoke at length on his role. The Ecumenical Team's mission statement, shared by Jack, gives their aim; 'To show God's love to those who live, work, and take their leisure in the city'. The Team are conscious however of the multi-faith context in which they function, and are keen not to take unfair advantage. One factor to emerge from this ministry, according to Jack, is the number of Christians working in Liverpool. 'Not many of them go to church of course, but there are an awful lot of Christians. In many cases, the church has come between them and God'. It seems some had experienced bad relationships with the clergy and had ceased to attend church. He spends time going round the floors of the department stores, attempting to talk to people without preventing them doing their job.

Finally, throughout the city, there are continuous cross-denominational meetings of clergy, annual Easter marches between churches, and a growing tolerance and respect between individual leaders, even if not actively engaging in ecumenical practice. All the respondents, with the exception of two, welcomed the softening of attitudes and easing of tensions as a consequence of the growing ecumenical partnership. The present Free Church leader Keith Hobbs, expressed it this way; 'More significant in the long run is the quality of relationships that have been built up. People trust each other and will talk to each other, and I don't think we ought to underestimate the effectiveness of local Ministers and clergy knowing each other in a way they have never before'. Measured against the hostility and divisions of the past, this would probably rate as success in anyone's language.

7.3.2.3. Limitations of Ecumenism

Most of the respondents did not express too much dissatisfaction with the principles of ecumenism. Only two were unhappy with the actual concept of ecumenism, whilst most of those who were not actively engaged in it, were sympathetic. Some small concerns were expressed on a number of issues, whilst one overriding area of ecumenism claimed more attention

Two respondents were afraid that the desire for unity might lead to unnecessary compromise. Douglas for example, was happy to support an ecumenism which helped understanding and aided dialogue. Yet he had other doubts; 'I think there is a danger of ... fudging a sort of agreement'. Tom believes that nothing but damage can come from saying we all believe the same thing. He understands this to have partly sprung from the growing charismatic influence across the denominations. Doctrinal differences have been blurred by the common ability to speak in tongues, which itself can become a uniting factor. He concludes; 'There's been this sad coming together in this false unity, a man made unity, instead of a spiritual unity'.

Of greater concern to a number of respondents was the static nature of the structural arm of ecumenism in Liverpool, the 'Merseyside and Region Churches Ecumenical Assembly' (Marcea). Keith Hobbs acknowledges that the structure set up by the two Bishops and others, was right for the time. It had brought about the support of 'Care' and established the Churches Anchorage for tourists at the Albert Dock. Some parts of it now however are moribund. Yet he is optimistic. He stresses how the 'Churches Together' agreement has already brought a change of direction in the present 'Marcea' set up; 'The process has been changed from top down to bottom up'. He further views the changes as being both evolutionary and revolutionary; 'Marcea's structures will have to be reconsidered, and we shall see how all of the churches both locally and nationally, respond to the "Called to be One" process which is going on at the present time'.

Ken is far more pessimistic in his appraisal of 'Marcea'. 'I think the Mersey Miracle is resting on the laurels of something that did happen and was wonderful, but it's in the past'. His dream is for the churches to enable people of different backgrounds to work together to achieve common goals, mostly the elimination of obstacles to equality, like the Evangelical Anglicans and Unitarians of the nineteenth century in fighting to eliminate slavery. Norman, who is active inside the 'Marcea' structure, is sceptical of any long-term worthwhile impact of ecumenism on the city. Whilst acknowledging the

important role of the two Bishops, he considers much front-line ecumenism is cosmetic; 'You've got to look at the rest of the Marcea set up. In what way is it lending support to race? Are the departments represented well in the numbers of people on them...are black people on them?' His experience of ecumenical meetings is also scathing. According to him, they are totally boring. 'There is no real discussion of the questions....it seems to be talking very much to itself'. He implies further that the language used at such meetings may not be understood by some present who come from different backgrounds.

Finally two respondents, both Anglican vicars, revealed some underlying suspicion over the motives of the Catholic Church regarding ecumenical participation. Both vicars are engaged in ecumenism through their local churches and at a personal level, but have some lingering doubts about Roman Catholic motives. The first of these Fred, expresses his desire for the churches to be together, yet recognises real difficulty; 'I don't think we are ever going to agree on a common creed...we have basic doctrinal differences between us and the Roman Catholic Church'. He then expresses his scepticism; 'I think the Roman Catholic agenda is still to bring us back to the fold, and always will be'. The second vicar Emma, whilst very enthusiastic about the ecumenical movement as a whole, also shares some reservations about Roman Catholic involvement. 'The hierarchy wants us to go over to them as a package. We won't be going over as a package'.

7.3.2.4. Contrary Thinking

Besides the many Evangelicals who are sceptical about ecumenism, there is one remaining sector of the religious scene which resolutely stands opposed to all ecumenical engagement, namely the Orange Order. Three of the Everton Orange Lodge were interviewed together, and did not pull any punches in their answers. The Lodge's anti-ecumenical stance appears to spring from their inability to face up to present day Catholicism, with the changes ushered in by Vatican 2, and an inbred fear of what other members might say.

The members are quite adamant about what they perceive as the damage inflicted on the city by ecumenism. Grant expressed it for the others; 'As far as I'm concerned, the ecumenical movement has ruined the Christian outlook on Liverpool'. Bishop Sheppard is rebuked by Joe for his emphasis on community ministry alongside Archbishop Worlock. 'He should have been spending his time on his flock and not this so-called joining together of the two churches in this social aspect'. Even the decline in bigotry cannot be

attributed to the present emphasis on ecumenism. Bill claims; 'The diminishing side of bigotry is put down to people's...awareness of other people's views'. The Orange Order's desire is for everyone to be free to worship as they please, and be exempt from any pressure by the religious hierarchies to put them all in the one melting pot. Grant protested; 'If that's the way [a Catholic] wants it to be, so be it, but don't ram it down my throat because he wants to be brought up in a Roman Catholic faith. In the same way I'm not going to ram it down their throats'.

The Lodge continues to protest against the view they were anti-Catholic in any vindictive way. They have shared a radio interview with a Catholic priest, they have lived alongside and been allowed to play with Catholics as children, and Grant has even engaged Catholics to work for him. Yet their opposition to formal Catholicism persists, and is reflected in their attitude to the visit of Pope John Paul II to Liverpool in 1981. Grant claimed they would have agreed to him coming had he given an undertaking to recognise the Queen as head of the country, though they seemed sure of the outcome; 'There was never any chance of that happening. The R.C. church is quite firm that the Pope is King of Kings, and Prince of Princes, and everybody, irrespective of who they are, are subservient to him'.

Conclusion

What we find in Liverpool at the present then, is a diversity of religious practice and contrasting outlooks on how the city should engage in its religion. The predominant strand is ecumenism, headed up by the hierarchy of the two major denominations, the Anglican and Catholics. This is also broadly supported by Christians from other traditions, as personified in the Free Church Moderator. The ecumenical approach is further bolstered on occasions by politicians at local and national government level consulting the Church leaders on relevant civic matters.

Many Evangelicals in the city however, are either attempting to forge a way forward independent of any associating, or as some are, endeavouring to form a body of believers united in a common doctrine and practice - chiefly charismatic. This group is not necessarily anti-ecumenical; they are simply not for it. The impression given by the respondents in this category is that while they respect the Bishops and their achievements, they are still reluctant to commit wholeheartedly to something they feel is soft on doctrinal content. At the opposite end of the scale from Ecumenism is Orangeism, attempting to justify its existence and relevance by continually criticising the work of the

Bishops, and denouncing Catholicism at any opportunity. How much support does this movement now have? Is there anything resembling a politico-religious alliance as in the latter part of the nineteenth century? Is sectarianism a thing of the past? This is the one of the issues faced in the next chapter.

8. RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS REDEFINED

The rapid changes in outlook taking place in the Western World have not only challenged the Christian ethos that characterised much of public life, but also confronted directly the institutions which shored up that life. This is evident in the data from Liverpool. This chapter focuses on some of the Christian institutions like the church, the clergy and Christian schools which have played a large part in the life and direction of the city. It will be shown that a considerable re-think has had to be undertaken by the Christian establishment in Liverpool, whilst the Orange Order, though remaining entrenched in its rationale, is pragmatic about its present influence.

8.1. A SECTARIAN GRAVEYARD?

The Orange Order began with high ideals, aiming to support the monarchy and the British constitution. Yet it soon became a sectarian movement intent on defending the faith of the Reformation, and allying itself to political power where possible. The present Orange Order in Liverpool seems hardly to have moved from this position, though their political involvement is much less radical.

8.1.1. Orangeism Today

When the three respondents from the Orange Order were asked to define a Protestant, they acknowledged this was now a difficult matter. Bill claimed that to be a Protestant was 'a bit taboo' these days, but ventured a definition; 'Being a Protestant is accepting that I'm free-born; I'm free-born in that I accept the word of God in the open Bible'. He linked this back to the Reformation because he believed that reformers like Knox, Calvin, Luther, Latimer and Ridley all died to obtain an open Bible for the masses to read, and the freedom to interpret it. Only to Latimer however, could this probably be attributed. He further added; 'Salvation is through faith alone, and not through a priest or vicar; not through a church or Pope; there's no rich or poor'. When asked what their contribution was to the religious life of the city, Bill replied; 'A Protestant witness...and we make sure we stand for Protestantism with the open Bible'. Being Protestant by definition then, requires Catholicism's existence as something to protest against, along with religious liberty. Yet what is being suggested here is that Catholicism disallows freedom of expression, denies the reading of the Bible, and claims salvation is in the church. These positions which Catholicism did once hold, have subsequently been modified since Vatican 2, and are no longer the bones of contention they once were. The respondents seemed to be unwilling to recognise this, and therefore are in

danger of being driven chiefly by dogma and prejudice, with little desire to really explore the changes which have occurred in Catholicism.

The Orange Institution in Liverpool is spread over four corners of the city, and each Lodge makes its contribution to the city in different ways. Some support the Blind charity and have social evenings to raise funds. Some support certain local churches; all encourage people to join up for the sake of Protestantism, and not just to have a good time. The kind of support churches are given is illustrated in two ways. When Wellington Road Baptist Church had difficulties with its building, the Orange Order offered alternative accommodation. Again St.Michael's Church of England in Garston is supported by the Order along with the church school. Support has also been given to Alder Hey Hospital through the endowment of cots for babies.

As a movement, the Orange Order still upholds the Crown and Constitution of the country. This entails supporting the Government, whatever its colour. Political affiliation does not prevent someone from joining the Order, with one exception. Communists are disallowed. Despite this general neutrality in national politics, there was an acknowledgement that the old Protestant Party in Liverpool used to invariably side with the Conservatives who held the political power in the city at the time.

This raised the issue of the Orange Order's present political involvement. The respondents made it clear that while they supported the Crown in principle, they did not always support the individual monarch. Bill illustrated this with a reference to the present Prince of Wales; 'We are totally opposed to Charles' lifestyle....he's not announced anyone's Christian beliefs'. Similarly, when the politics of the town lurched to the left in the early 1980s, the Order challenged that regime. Grant gives the reason; 'Basically they were non-Christians; they were Communists under the Labour banner'. At this time the Order threatened to remove any Red Flag flown from the Town Hall and replace it with the Union Jack. When the Deputy Leader of the Council challenged them as to what they'd do when they ran out of Union Jacks, Grant's response was uncompromising; 'When we run out of Union Jacks, you'll go up the flagpole'.

The Order also objected to the City Council attempting to twin the city with Dublin. They argue they did not make the objection on religious grounds. They felt the time was not right for twinning whilst the peace process was at a delicate point. They are convinced no twinning should take place until there was peace in Ireland. Bill also object strongly to any accusation that this was

done on religious grounds; 'There are Orange Lodges in Dublin; there's Protestants live in Dublin. Does any sane individual feel that we as an organisation, as part of Liverpool Orange Institution, are going to say that because you come from Dublin we don't want to know you?'. The Council reassured them the twinning was to be undertaken only for financial benefits.

The outlook of the Orange Order in the city is an optimistic one. While numbers are not what they used to be, the percentage of young people in the movement is high. Bill provides an estimate; 'Under twenty now, you are looking at thirty or forty percent'. The Junior Branch organise football or netball games between the Lodges of Scotland, Ireland and England. Scripture examinations are also held across the three countries. The Movement refuses to divulge precise numbers on membership, but claim they are rebuilding from their position of ten to fifteen years ago. Over the past few years around the country, Bill claims the Order has opened 'something like five or six new Junior Lodges in parts of the country where they haven't had any for many years'. It was felt too that while the Order was less visible these days because of new laws, they could not conceive of the Order ever becoming extinct. In Liverpool however, foundations have been laid for Christian unity in a way that has never before been achieved in the city. This, coupled with a growing religious pluralism, may make sectarian religion, particularly of the Orange type, much harder to re-ignite.

8.1.2. Perceptions of Sectarianism

In reply to the question; 'Is sectarianism in the city dead?', there is a reluctance on the part of almost all the respondents asked to answer in the affirmative. The responses are brief and therefore samples of the comments made are given in short phrases. Some view the sectarian scene more hopefully. It is 'on the wane' (Una), 'dead' (Emma), 'almost non-existent' (Douglas), 'a 'ghost' (Simon), 'broken down', (Sam). Others express it less positively and claim it is 'still an issue' (Harold), 'still there' (Jack), 'not dead' (Norman), 'under the surface' (William), 'still present if you scratch the surface' (Roger). Richard's view perhaps sums up much of what is thought at present; 'I don't think [sectarianism] is dead and buried. I think it's possibly latent. I think they're [Orange and Catholic militants] probably waiting to see what happens next....When I first came to Liverpool....there would be some right old go's right at the beginning, very, very strong. Now it seems to be dwindling'.

What these views appear to express is a reluctance within the Christian community of Merseyside to accept yet that the hostilities of the past are gone

for ever. Ultimately for many, Christian unity is the goal, but meanwhile the control and final eradication of sectarianism would be warmly welcomed.

8.1.3. Sectarian Experiences

Almost all Catholic respondents had a story to tell of sectarian expression, either in the past or in the present. Only three respondents from the Protestant side made reference to sectarian experiences. Reciting these events may help in assessing sectarian strength in present day Liverpool.

There are those who have been at the receiving end personally of sectarian hostility. One Catholic priest Roger, recounts occasions when he has been shouted at by Orange Lodge marchers. He tells how the minister of the Ian Paisley Church will not even speak to him. Some have called him 'antichrist', and others have even claimed a Catholic conspiracy against them. Yet he is magnanimous in his response; 'Obviously they feel they've got something that's been taken away from them'. Margaret goes back a long way with her story; 'When I was at college, I remember we were invited to a school over Everton way to a concert, and the Sisters couldn't go to that school because of their being run out of the place. They just couldn't have gone near it. When it came to tea, they wouldn't let us [students] in. Somebody had got wind we were Catholics - that's what we thought at the time - and we just came back to college. It was very, very bitter'. Doris relates a memory from her father's school days, again many decades ago; 'My father and his brothers went to St.Francis Xavier's School, and they were literally pelted with horse manure by the Prody-dogs. There was the stone throwing; the window breaking'. This was in the north end'. David Alton was confronted by sectarianism in his early days in local politics; 'In 1972, I was shocked as a young councillor, to see members of that party [the Protestant Party] opposing applications for the extension of small Catholic primary schools'. Robert recollects events on St.Patrick's day many years earlier; 'All the windows on Everton heights, the orange windows...it was quite like Belfast actually. There was literally physical fighting'. Simon Lee simply mentions how he was blocked in his car by an Orange march, one recent July 12th. For him it was a reminder of strong sectarian feelings present in the city.

Three Protestants told how they had witnessed sectarian animosity. Ralph reflected on his young days as an engineer; 'I have to tell you in the locker rooms, when I was in my mechanical engineering, there would be days when I had next to me a Plymouth Brethren, and there would be arguments in that room on the scriptures and all the rest of it. I was fascinated then - there

would be Roman Catholics - it was amazing'. Esther recounts how she had never come across the Protestant/Catholic divide until coming to Merseyside. She was confronted by the sectarian spirit on approaching a school one day, when she saw a Union Jack painted on the pavement outside a Catholic school. She also relates a rather unusual way in which the religious divisions present an unfair advantage to some teachers applying for posts. Those wishing to apply to a Catholic school, for example, would very often have to possess the Catholic Teacher's Certificate. When that job is advertised, it may state 'Practising Catholic preferred'. She elaborates; 'Now there are a lot of teachers in normal county primary schools who feel their promotion prospects are not as great because of the high proportion of church schools. They could not get a post or promotion in one of those Catholic schools. However, a Catholic can apply for, and get a promotion post in one of their schools'. Jack relates how even at the present, at joint Pentecost services in the two Cathedrals, 'you will get the Ian Paisley mob and a few others walking round and shouting abuse'.

Conclusion

It appears from these accounts that whilst the worst experiences of sectarianism are mainly taken from the past, there is enough evidence that sectarianism is by no means lodged there. The insults are still being felt by Catholic clergy, streets are still being daubed by slogans, and some jobs are still being unfairly allocated according to religious affiliation. A deep emotional scar continues to mark a number of Catholics particularly, in spite of which they optimistically continue to work for a more united church. Here we note the limitations in the theory that religion produces social control (see 3.1.3). Complete control can only be exercised if there is religious hegemony. The Protestant groups at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries attempted to achieve this – and with some success (see 11.1), but a combatitive religious culture is severely limited in its ability to retain such control due to competing loyalties and values. Liverpool religion could be explosive.

Further inroads however, will have to be made with the Orange Order to alleviate the fears still felt within that movement. More thought also needs to be given to teacher selection in Church schools, if sectarian feelings are to be removed even further to the boundaries of religious life of Liverpool.

8.2. CLERICAL ROLE-CHANGE

An important area of research arising from this work is the role the clergy now play in present society. A proportion of the clergy interviewed, claimed they are having to reconsider their role and status. Within the churches rapid

changes have taken place. Styles of worship, a greater need for administration, an increasing egalitarianism, and even the complexity of technology, have invaded the realm of the clergy. Now they are being forced to re-evaluate their function and skills within the congregation. For example, the Church of England 'Faith in the City' report of 1985, found that for clergy in Urban Priority Areas (U.P.A.'s) 'there is a greater involvement in community work' and in 'counselling and training' (Report, 1985, 38). How then have the clergy of Liverpool coped with change? Is there any resistance to it? Has modernity influenced their role, and if so, how far?

8.2.1. Clerical Functions

Towler claims that one of the ways in which our society has changed, 'is in its shift from a structure in which social status was based on ascription, to one in which social status is based on achievement' (Towler, 1968, 76). He believes this change in society lies at the root of the present clerical crisis of identity. '[The clergyman] does not have a job at all in any sense which is readily understandable today, and today, more than ever before, a person must have a job in order to fit into society. As a result, the clergyman finds himself marginal to society' (Towler and Coxon, 1979, 53-4). Even earlier, Trevor Ling was noting; 'It is possible that what we are witnessing...is the gradual disappearance of a once familiar figure, the full-time parochial clergyman' (Ling, 1967, 142-143). How far is this still the case in Liverpool?

The data on this divides into two broad categories; those who wish to retain a traditional role for clergy as the preachers and teachers of the Bible as well as leaders of worship, whilst others acknowledge the necessity for other roles to be forged. This however would need a broader training, an issue some respondents touched on. Those who feel the ministry should retain its traditional pattern with the clergy taking the lion's share of the load, are in the minority. Tom sums up this approach approvingly with what he claims are the words of Bishop Ryle; 'A man is bound to be successful...if he is humble, if he is prayerful, if he preaches the word of God, and visits the people'. This respondent is very wary of committees and fears these can replace the working ministry of the clergyman who should be going round the homes, loving and caring for people. In fact, visitation was central to Tom's ministry. Esther also has a traditional view of the ministry. For her it is chiefly pastoral. She states; 'I think it's important for a ministry to have someone who is gifted as a pastor...serving, ministering to people, listening, counselling, visiting, all these things'. An emphasis on preaching and teaching is particularly desirable, for preaching is 'not just content, but contact'. She also acknowledges the value of

team ministries in situations in which those gifted in preaching are freed to do so. As might be anticipated, the Orange Order retains a traditional view of ministry, based again on the teaching/preaching model. Bill sums it up this way; 'I think he should do Bible studies and try to open people's eyes....they should try and encourage more people into church by preaching the word'.

Other respondents are caught in a dilemma over their ministry, because whilst they have seen the need for changes of approach, they still have a longing for the more traditional pattern. Colin has had to adapt to a more administrative mode of ministry, but is also rediscovering the traditional role. 'I still in my heart of hearts retain a slightly older model of ministry - the minister in his study for the morning.....and in many senses, seven years down the line I am much freer to go back to that than I ever was'. Keith Hobbs also retains a more traditional pattern of ministry, whilst acknowledging the need for change. He has noted a move away from the 'servant ministry' to a leadership model of ministry, and one of the symptoms of this is in the change from ministers talking about their study, to the office. He further comments; 'There has been a decline in the standard of preaching, and perhaps a feeling that preaching is not effective; doesn't fit in well...with the [music] groups and worship leaders'. Keith however believes he is beginning to see a reversal of that trend. He welcomes the move away from the one-man style of worship in many quarters, and is glad to see more congregational participation. Yet he acknowledges even here there are dangers; 'Whilst it could be said it was a good thing to break away from the rigidity of the hymn/prayer sandwich of the past, there is a new rigidity in the music and approach which is every bit as confining as the old, and every bit as predictable'.

Within Catholicism there are also those who retain a preference for a more traditional pattern of ministry. This is perhaps more understandable due to the different perception of ministry. Catholicism, far more than Anglicanism even, views its clergy as priests. This is closely allied to the greater emphasis on the sacraments within Catholicism, and the priest's central role in all of this as the representative of Christ. Perhaps this enables the priest to retain an authority and respect less apparent amongst non-sacerdotal clergy. Lena endorses this primary position of the priest; 'He's all important because most of the liturgy you can't have without him....the priest has to have consecrated the species and it is reserved in the tabernacle'. Others may be able to distribute the sacrament, but they can't consecrate it. Simon Lee believes firmly that each person has his role within the church, and the priest particularly should retain his. He reasons; 'I think the dwindling numbers of priests in the Catholic

Church have to concentrate on what they can do that I can't do - the sacramental role, and not try to do things which I can do'. He further elaborates on the exact role he understands them to have. It is to do with 'prayer, liturgy, the worship, counselling and pastoral help'. David Alton argues for priests doing what they are called to do rather than engage in other matters; 'I think that too much responsibility is placed on ministers to do with temporal things'. He therefore regrets the sad lack of house visits which used to be a mark of the priesthood.

Closely allied to this traditional role of the clergy was a view that the minister/priest ought to be a leader of the church. Two respondents particularly developed this line. Harold reflected on his younger days when the minister was looked upon as someone 'a step above everyone else'. He believes this has all changed, and now people don't have the same respect for ministers and clergy. He however, strongly adheres to the special role of the clergy; 'A minister has a special purpose, a special responsibility which is God-ordained....and in that respect, a very specialised ministry'. Norman also considers leadership crucial to ministry; 'A minister should be a leader; should be able to give guidance and motivate the parish - not just the people that go to church'. He doesn't mind how the clergy dress, be it a T-shirt and jeans, or the dog-collar. They are representatives of God in the community, and should be supporting people in their struggles, for he reflects; 'I don't think it's a master/servant position; it's more of a servant position'. For him, clerical leadership involves service both within the church and in the wider community.

Despite a number of respondents wishing to preserve the traditional roles of the clergy, the changes in society, accompanied by declining communicants, have forced many churches and clergy to reconsider their function, and where necessary, introduce change. For example, four respondents expressed how the clergy now often function as facilitators, enabling others to do their jobs. Jack relates how one clergyman told him he felt called to minister, yet not to preach. For Jack, 'the role of the minister will be as a facilitator and leader, rather than doer'. He does however acknowledge the difficulty of getting churches to accept this view. Doris feels much the same way about the priesthood within Catholicism. She believes the people of her local church have changed their opinions on this matter quite a lot. She sums it up this way; 'I think we must see the priest of any denomination as the facilitator; the people who encourage people'. Colin describes his own role in ministry as facilitating others. For him this has spiritual ends; 'Most weeks we will have an individual or group of people on the premises....just encouraging them into what it is that God is

doing in their lives and in their church'. Here the role is not so much facilitating the congregation, but others who come from outside to view what is happening. Stephen links the facilitating with administration. 'I think more and more I am servicing a vision and becoming a facilitator, and very often an administrator if I'm honest, in order to enable the kind of vision that we've talked about with the building'. He proceeds to reveal how he spends more of his time dealing with bits of paper or phone calls or forms which hopefully will enable other things to happen. Sadly he reflects on the downside of all this; 'I'm spending less and less time actually supporting, enabling, resourcing people, and I'm not particularly happy about that'.

While a number of respondents shared ministry with others in a clerical team, only William specifically talked of it in any detail. Possibly as a Free Church minister, this was a relatively new departure for him. He speaks of the days when the ministry used to be a one-man band. This has now changed to more of a team effort. 'No man has got it all...we need one another'. For him, this team style of ministry is biblical, in that gifted people always did work together for the nurturing of the church and advancement of the gospel.

The Unitarian respondent Jeff Gould, stands out from the rest insofar as he claims his church has no set role for ministry. Each minister and congregation has to decide which way they are going to travel forward together. Despite this background, he views his own ministry in traditional terms, as 'a parish priest'. He draws his approach from the Presbyterian roots of his church which was very broad and sought to serve anyone in the community. The reality is different however; 'I have a gathered congregation. Sixty odd souls come every Sunday and drive great distances some of them'. Although open to anyone in the community, he admits to drawing from certain sectors of society. Particularly he draws those who are HIV positive, because of his openly 'Gay' orientation. He also engages in same-sex blessings and has served in Aids related chaplaincies. He reflects; 'I am basically where the outcasts come; the last resort for problems'.

Three other expressions emerge, revealing individual perceptions of clergy life-style. For David Alton, the minister's sanctity is of prime importance. He says; 'I would like to see more holy men and women ministering in society'. Alan describes the role of the clergy in relation to others as being 'a companion on their... journey', those who can be looked to as friends on the same road of faith. One final expression requires the clergy to reconsider their occupation. Una declares they should be 'worker priests'. By this she means that clergy

should have a job like anyone else. 'I'm not sure we need full-time distinctive persons', she concludes.

8.2.2. Lay Ministry

A particular change of emphasis mentioned by the respondents lies in the growth of lay ministries within both Anglican and Catholic Churches. Lay ministry within the Free Churches has been practised down through their history, and made respectable by John Wesley and the Methodist movement in the eighteenth century. It is within Catholicism however, that the movement to introduce lay ministries has had most impact amongst respondents. Six Catholic respondents made reference to this, whilst only one Anglican and one Free Church respondent did so. The relative novelty of this innovation probably lies behind its prominence amongst Catholic respondents.

Margaret viewed ordained deacons as a great help to the priest, in that he can conduct a eucharistic service. The host is blessed by the priest, and can be distributed later by the deacon in what is known as a paraliturgy. The deacon can also perform funerals, weddings and baptisms. She reveals too that one of the Sisters of Notre Dame conducted a eucharistic service when the priest was away. She further relates how this broadening of ministry causes tensions, as some members of the church prefer the priest to conduct the eucharist and will only receive the sacrament from him. Alan goes so far as to state; 'The saying of mass is not the only way of being a priest or leading people in worship'. He suggests the Catholic Church is finding a greater variety of ways of celebrating in church and therefore the mass is not the only way of worshipping with people. This variety opens the door to different ministries, 'like eucharistic services led by other commissioned people, properly prepared people in the parish'. Even preparation for baptism and marriage is also something lay people share in.

Simon Lee makes the involvement of the laity almost a statement of faith. He admits; 'I am a great believer in the role of the laity, being a lay person and also a lawyer'. He reveals how in England and Ireland he has been constantly critical of Bishops and priests who don't know the first thing about law and regard themselves as experts in it. He has even advised the church about that kind of issue at times. Another advantage of lay ministry is that it makes up for the declining numbers of clergy. Married deacons enable the house visitation scheme to be practised again much more effectively. David Alton is convinced that the ordination of married deacons in Liverpool has been one of the biggest things that has changed there in the last twenty years.

Doris speaks favourably of the married deacon within her own church. This man is permanent and not moved on in the way parish priests often are, thus establishing stability. She views this as a development of traditional Catholic ministry; 'Catholics always did have seven ministries, working up from the doorkeeper, right through to the priest at the very end'. She also mentions ministers of the Eucharist officiating at mass, and has experienced the comfort of being visited by one of these ministers, given the Eucharist, and prayed with twice a week. Finally, Robert is quite radical in his thinking regarding the future of ministry. He sees the possibility of an ordained person, man or woman, in the streets or districts, depending on the distribution of Catholics. Smaller groups of Catholics, 20-30, would appoint someone to preside over the Eucharist. 'Now that's a scenario that's really crystal ball', he exclaims. Committees would be needed however, to provide coherence to these smaller bodies.

Two respondents outwith Catholicism simply reiterate the importance of the laity in supporting the clergy. Ralph reflects; 'I think there's been a greater acceptance of the ministry of the people'. He mentions this particularly in relation to the Anglican and Catholic churches, whilst acknowledging its role in the Free churches. Jack believes strongly there has to be a greater lay awareness, as the minister cannot be expected to go on doing everything.

8.2.3. Training

Training for ministry needs to be reshaped. This is the conclusion of the four respondents who mentioned it. The reasons given have to do with the changing role of ministry and the changes in society. Una believes theological training has a lot to answer for, but doesn't specify why that is. At most she indicates it has to do with the way the role is put into action. Alan endorses the importance of training. He is not convinced that lectures about church history, philosophy, and theology are ideal subjects for those who come from broken families, backgrounds of unbelief, or a society which has very different values today. He prefers another way; 'We need to get the priests to train with the people they are going to serve; people from different walks of life. This in-service training must go on after ordination as well, so as to keep people with their feet on the ground'. This further will reflect a change from an authoritarian model of priesthood, to a more sharing one.

Douglas believes clergy these days need to have 'a combination of preaching skills, of management awareness, P.R. understanding, a whole package of

things'. He compares the minister's role with that of running a small company, and therefore the ability to run a team of people is also important. This requires the training of the ministry to be kept up to date with the changing needs of the people in the church. He adds; 'I'm certainly aware that .....ministers....are saying they wish they had themselves more counselling training in their own background'. Fred is critical of the kind of training at present given in colleges for ministry. He believes the approach is too academic and needs expanding; 'Who else would be given two years academic training....and then after a three year apprenticeship, be put in charge of a medium sized company of people who aren't even paid for their work'?

From these wide-ranging views, it seems apparent the role of ministry is changing, and has already changed, despite the longings of some to retain more traditional patterns. Whilst preaching and teaching may remain central in Evangelical churches, there are different emphases elsewhere. For some clergy, there is a resignation about the changes, and despite a lack of training, they are taking on an administrative or facilitating role, at the expense of the pastoral role. Yet others are facing up to the changes. Team ministry is emerging in some churches, whilst others advocate part-time ministry. Within Catholicism, there remains a desire to retain the distinctiveness of the priest's function, even though he may be supported by others. Gone now are the stereotypes of ministry, with each denomination discovering the role for ministry which fits their situation. Towler views all this as part of the change evident in the ministry of the church; 'An increasing proportion of parishes will have among the laity persons admirably trained to teach the Christian faith; better trained in fact than the clergy' (Towler, 1968, 75). Clerics and churches, it seems, need to reconsider the kind of training necessary for ministry in the next millennium.

8.2.4. Gender/Sex Issues

One of the areas of ministry which has changed considerably in recent years has been the shift in attitudes towards gender and sex issues within the clergy. This has not been without controversy. Anglicans find themselves divided on their historic decision to admit women to the ministry, Catholicism is continually embarrassed by sexual scandal within the priesthood, and 'Outrage' campaign vociferously for the acceptance of 'Gay' clergy within the Church of England. Perhaps more in this area than in any other, the churches find themselves being influenced and buffeted by the society around them. This set of issues is one of the biggest challenges to the present church, for the relaxing of sexual constraints in Western society, and the increased lobby on sexual

equality, are bringing continual pressure to bear on traditional morality so identified with the church and Christian teaching. How then is this affecting the present day church in Liverpool, and particularly the clergy themselves?

8.2.4.1. Women in Ministry

Whilst this has been a recent dilemma for Anglicans, and remains a future issue for Catholics, it has to be remembered that the Free churches have used women in ministry for the best part of this century. The Unitarians were the first to do so in 1904, and even here the Unitarian minister Jeff Gould regrets it was that late.

Within the group of respondents however, there is a significant consensus of approval for women in ministry. Out of the 26 interviewed, 17 were sympathetic or strongly in favour of this move. A further breakdown of the responses across the denominations is also revealing. There were 3 Anglicans and 9 Free Church members supporting this step. There were 5 Catholics who were dubious though none opposed the move. There were only 3 Free Church members and 1 Anglican however, who were hesitant about it. From this it will be shown that in Liverpool, there is a growing acceptance amongst those in ministry and other positions of influence, of equality of choice in both entering and exercising ministry.

Amongst the most prominent of those who were supportive of a move to admit women to ministry, was the Anglican Bishop David Sheppard. He reveals just how the ordination of women to the priesthood within Anglicanism was very important to him. 'I believe and hope that we have been trying to handle sensitively the disagreement that that meant, and try to keep people who disagreed with that as honoured members of our church, but I do think it was a very important step forward for our church to release God-given gifts to be fully at the service of the church'. Harold a Salvationist officer, has become aware of more women involved in ministry. 'It is something I have seen developing in other denominations over the years of my ministry'. Fred admitted his wife was now training for ministry. Initially he had not been happy with the thought, but discovered after some self-examination that it was a cultural objection. 'Well it's only because I don't like the idea of a woman with perfume and painted nails and things.....and thought, well what the heck, what's so special about us'? Norman stated that inequality of any kind was evil. Another approving comment on women by Douglas, was based on the value each individual can give to leadership; 'For the church to be more representative of the God they are intending to display, it needs both men and

women involved in the leadership and direction of that church'. Keith Hobbs also recognises an increasing acceptance of women in ministry, though he has noted something else; 'One of the humorous sidelines is that the greatest resistance to women in ministry comes from women in the churches'. He personally is supportive of women in ministry.

A woman's perspective on this comes from the first Anglican woman priest to be ordained in Liverpool, Lena Prince. She acknowledges the struggle continues for recognition, despite the formal acceptance by the Church. 'I still think women have problems finding jobs'. She claims to know of two women in the Diocese who have served as a deacon and priest, who are looking to move; 'But there are certain churches that won't accept them'. As a consequence, she believes women have to work doubly hard, but they will bring compassion and understanding and complement the men. Esther is also an enthusiast for women in ministry. She was at the service in the Cathedral for that first set of women being ordained. She is clear where the blame lies; 'I think it was all Augustine's fault and the Early Church Fathers, and I blame them for the image of women'.

There are others however who have reservations. William made the distinction of being happy with women in ministry, but was doubtful about women in leadership governing a man. Ralph stated his own instinct was away from women in ministry, but nonetheless his experience of them had been good. Yet his reservations re-appear; 'I have to say I still think there's a feeling that the right person in the ministry.... is the man'. Colin found the situation difficult to square with his understanding of the Bible, yet values women as people and attempts to relate to them where they are. He will not judge or criticise them. His position is summed up this way; 'I feel a tension in their lives and ministries, a tension of authority in terms of the type of leadership a woman has'. Only Tom is strongly opposed to women in ministry. His stance is that of many older Evangelicals and is unequivocal; 'The general rule is that the teaching ministry is for men.....I am totally opposed to the ordination of women'.

The Roman Catholic respondents who answered this question had quite mixed feelings on this issue. None actually opposed the place of women in the priesthood, but there emerged a tension between personal desire and church tradition. The most enthusiastic supporter of women in the priesthood was Margaret. She did not believe there was any theological reason why women shouldn't be priests. Jesus had women around him. She felt the priesting of

women was some way off. Roger openly admitted to being wary about women priests, although acknowledged women were the backbone of his parish. He had some reservations; 'Theologically I don't see why they can't be priests. Traditionally I couldn't see it working'. He believed the priesthood would attract the wrong type of woman; 'It would attract Nunny types'. A similar tension is expressed by Alan, who finds no personal objection theologically or scripturally, but recognises the church has to agree widely on the matter. 'I don't see any consensus at the moment, least of all amongst the women in the church'. He argues that unless the church comes to a consensus on this, the church would divide as the Anglicans have. Simon Lee reiterates this same tension. 'Personally I would be pleased if the Catholic Church were to move forward to accept the vocation of women as priests. But I don't believe in moving ahead of the church, and so if the Catholic church as a whole wanted to take that step, I'd be very much in favour of it'.

Two Catholic respondents are reticent about the place of women in the priesthood. Doris states she would not go out into the streets to campaign for it, as she still prefers the priest to be male. She recognises however, that pragmatically it may be necessary to have women; 'If there was no priest except a woman priest, I'd accept her'. David Alton daubs the issue a 'sterile debate'. He feels it puts a block on the work of ecumenism. 'I think it would have been far better conducted if it had been about the role of ministry'. He then describes how in one parish he knows, the women run most things, and even take part as eucharistic ministers. This leads him to the conclusion; 'I think if we focus more on these positive developments and less on whether men or women should be regarded as the same....we would do much better to see what we could hold in common in ministry'. When confronted by the fact that certain women feel a specific call to priesthood, Alton is equally reticent in allowing this to unfold. 'If for two thousand years the church has declined to ordain [women] priests then it must have a good reason for doing that'. Alton has no systematic objection to the priesting of women, but believes strongly that personal opinions must bow to the collective decision of the universal church.

From this array of views it can be seen how certain respondents have had to overcome personal prejudice against women, whilst others have had to rethink their theology. For most Protestants, the move has been greeted with approval. Even Evangelicals, who have Biblical reservations, are in the end having to adopt a pragmatic line and are slowly coming to terms with women clergy. Catholics however, have a long and revered tradition which is restricting any

advances in this direction, despite personal longings for acceptance. Here it seems, is one of the last bastions of resistance to the universal approval of women's ordination.

Why these changes in thinking have come about in both Catholic and Protestant churches also raises some sociological questions. What influences lie behind this change in attitude to women; this altered theology? It is hard to believe it is purely a theological shift which has taken place in a vacuum. The social context in the latter half of the twentieth century, in which women's rights and opportunities have become more pronounced, seems to have had some substantial influence on the church's theology in this matter. For example, not one Catholic respondent openly opposed women priests on principle. The emergence of women in the workforce, their promotion to positions of leadership, and their growing independence from men, have all lent credence to the right of a woman to have her place in the leadership of the church - even though some of the respondents remained hesitant. Theological adjustment may thus be a convenient way of accommodating these social changes in society.

8.2.4.2. Celibacy in Ministry

The place of celibacy in ministry is something which is associated particularly with the Catholic Church. Despite the specific denominational locale of this issue, 17 of the respondents were asked their views on celibacy. Out of that number, 15 answered in favour of it being optional, including 4 Catholics. Further, 1 Catholic felt strongly it should be standard and only 1 Catholic seemed to be against it.

The arguments for celibacy being optional varied. The Catholic respondents were keen to share their views openly. David Alton remarked that celibacy was already an option in the Catholic Church. He pointed out that celibacy was not a requirement for priesthood for the first thousand years of the church. Due to various priestly abuses however, the church reformed its practice and introduced celibacy. He further noted that the Catholic church in Greece, in Romania and the Ukraine retain married priests. So it is a rule, not a law. He believes that as the present Pope wishes to reconcile the Orthodox churches with Catholicism, optional celibacy would be the way forward. He was quick to point out however, that should parishes begin to receive married priests, they are going to have to pay for it - in the offertory plates.

Alan compares the celibate life with choosing to marry or not to marry. 'In the

end, it's an individual and personal decision'. While recognising it is an obligation of priesthood, he argues it has never been a matter of the essence of the faith. He has discovered that while celibacy has bolstered his decision to enter the priesthood, it hasn't worked that way for others. Having said all that, he declares he still has a desire to see choice introduced; 'I do feel there is a case....for an option on this'.

Roger gives two views on the priesthood. To begin with, he believes a man is called firstly and primarily to the priesthood, and celibacy is simply a part of that; 'I didn't want to be a priest because I was celibate. I just wanted to be a priest and part of the package was celibacy'. He is honest about the difficulties of living the celibate life, especially in his case where he was a hospital chaplain with 3,000 women staff, and when he was a school chaplain with about 250 girls. He decided to adopt a fraternal approach to them treating them as sisters. He also contends there has to be a role for married priests. He believes the day will come when this will be an option, but adds one proviso; 'I honestly think people should get married before they become priests, rather than the other way around'.

Doris strongly favours married priests also, but now has a further reason; 'I've been campaigning for years to bring back our married priests now they have the nerve to give us the Anglican ones'. For her, celibacy is for monks, as it used to be for the first twelve hundred years. Simon Lee was reluctant to let celibacy go however, and argued strongly in favour of its retention. He describes the celibate priest's role this way; 'I think there is a noble calling - which I don't share.....to celibacy as a sign of contradiction in these materialistic times'. He argues further that there is a practical element to it as well in that it is possible for the Catholic Church to support the priest and his needs. There is one further advantage to celibacy; 'The priest has the ability to focus on parish community rather than a special family commitment'.

As a campaigner for the ending of compulsory celibacy, Robert used to edit a 'substantial bulletin' for the Catholic Church, and found himself amongst other things, 'arguing the case that married men should be considered for ordination to the Catholic Church'. From this came a few opportunities to discuss the issue with interested Bishops

Amongst the other denominations, as might be expected, there were none who argued for or against celibacy as the given lifestyle for the clergy. All without exception viewed the matter as a personal decision to be made by the

individual. Emma however, revealed how she personally made the decision to remain celibate. She acknowledged that the culture of the day would not have encouraged her as a married woman to go forward for ministry. She then described her feelings at ending her relationship; 'I really felt a burden gone from me, and I really feel that was God's calling to me'. Others expressed a range of views on the matter. Tom and Colin felt imposed celibacy was not Biblical. Ralph believed it was 'man-made' and that the church should adopt the Orthodox approach. Other comments were that it was 'not essential' (William), 'unfair' (Esther), 'not the only model' (Stephen), 'a gifting' (Douglas), and 'a distinctive calling' (Fred). Una even went so far as to question Jesus' celibacy.

It is apparent that the problem, if there is one, lies within the Roman Catholic Church very specifically. All the respondents, including Catholics, seem to be aware that the imposition of celibacy is not a dogma or statement of faith. History has played its part, but the push for equality of opportunity, and a recognition of married clerics' contribution to church life - especially former Anglican married priests, may yet contribute to a more open debate within Catholicism. There appear to be enough grounds for change here, if the views of these Liverpool Catholics are anything to go by.

8.2.4.3. Homosexuality in Ministry

Sex and gender matters come to a head on this issue of homosexuality. The recent campaign within the Church of England to gain parity for homosexuals in ministry, is perhaps the more public demonstration of the dilemma which is emerging within all the denominations. The pressure from society's more open sex culture is particularly influencing the churches' position on this point, and precipitating a re-evaluation of what were once unquestioned biblical norms.

Liverpool Christians are not immune to this debate of course, nor to these same cultural pressures. On an issue which a decade or two ago there would probably have been little dissent, it will be demonstrated that today there is far less consensus. Nineteen out of the twenty six respondents gave their views on this subject - 4 Catholics, 6 Anglicans, and 9 members of the Free Churches. They were asked their views on homosexuals being accepted into the ordained ministry and whether or not homosexuality was sinful. Only 16 responded on the sinfulness issue.

Beginning with the question of practising homosexual clergy being accepted by

the churches, the majority overall were opposed to this move. Eleven of the respondents outrightly refused to sanction practising homosexual clergy. Six respondents however were in favour of their ordination. Three respondents - 2 Anglican and 1 Free Church indicated they would be willing to accept those with homosexual orientation into ministry provided they remained celibate. No Catholic indicated acceptance of practising homosexuals for the ordained ministry, and orientation wasn't mentioned.

Those who were against the ordination of practising homosexuals were usually quite adamant in their stance. Taking the Catholic position first, it will be observed that church tradition plays some part in their outlook. Doris begins this way; 'I would not accept a practising homosexual any more than I would accept an adulterous priest'. Roger believes the homosexual has to cope with his sexuality in the same way he has to cope with his heterosexuality. So his position is also clear; 'I would never be able to accept practising homosexuals in the Catholic Church as a minister'. Two others focus on the church's stance over the centuries on this issue. David Alton states the church's position; 'It is...an impossibility for someone who is a practising homosexual to apply to become a priest in the expectation that they will be able to continue to lead that lifestyle subsequently'. Simon Lee takes a slightly more open stance. What matters to him is a particular denomination's position on the issue; 'Sexuality outside marriage is regarded as inappropriate [within Catholicism]....but if a church has a different approach to sexuality...then I think it follows from that you shouldn't bar people if that is your understanding of sexuality'. Pushed a little further, Lee gave his own view of the Catholic position; 'My personal view on it as a Catholic is that somebody who is in a homosexual or heterosexual relationship would not be acceptable to the Catholic priesthood'.

Other respondents against practising homosexual clergy were equally resolute. Only one Anglican, Fred, unwaveringly rejected the notion of practising homosexuals in ministry. He believes there is just one kind of marriage, between a man and a woman. Homosexuality, he claims, is also anti-social, and part of a bigger picture; 'The problem with our society today which the church has got to redress, is the breakdown in family life'. He gives a biological reason as to why homosexuality is unacceptable; 'If a man can't make love to a man because the kit isn't there, then it is obvious that that is also wrong'. The rest of the respondents who are unsympathetic to practising homosexual clergy, come from the Free Churches and the Orange Order. Tom is quite forthright in his condemnation; 'Homosexuality is completely wrong and condemned in scripture'. He believes also that Aids is a judgement of God

upon homosexuals, for 'they bear on their bodies the fruits of their sins'. Grant also took the line that Aids was a judgement on homosexuals. 'These people... are now swimming in a cesspool of their own making'.

A number of respondents used the scriptures for justifying their negative stance. Norman simply states adamantly; 'There is no scriptural basis for homosexuals to be ministers', and sees no difference between practice and orientation on the matter. Colin is strongly against the idea of homosexual ministers; 'I've never knowingly been in fellowship with anybody who has been a minister and been a practising homosexual'. He also argues that homosexual orientation is something Jesus can change. William outrightly condemns the practice based on scripture, though is sympathetic to those with the orientation; 'The homosexual is to be loved and cared for and given expression in ministry'. Douglas makes a distinction in the approach churches should take to the homosexual. 'There's a difference between acceptance and approval, and sometimes in our eagerness as Christians and as a church to communicate that acceptance, we go over into approval, and we can end up approving things that God clearly does not approve of'. He felt therefore that it was inappropriate for a practising homosexual to be in ministry.

Six respondents however were in favour of practising homosexuals being ordained, 3 Anglicans and 3 Free Church. Even here however, there was some hesitation amongst some in their acceptance of homosexuals. Jack admits homosexual ministers should not have to remain celibate, but believes there would need to be a lot of education in the churches for the stigma attached to homosexual clergy to be removed. 'There is also a very realistic fear that you could very easily corrupt the younger generation who might have been heterosexual, by coming into contact with someone who is homosexual'. Esther had a homosexual friend who was a vicar. She expressed her admiration of him glowingly, claiming he was a wonderful pastor. She however would not approve any promiscuity, from either a homosexual or heterosexual minister. Stephen underscored this very point in his assessment of homosexuality in ministry; 'I'm coming to the view that someone who is faithfully committed in the long-term.... maybe ought not to be barred from the ministry, whereas I would say that anyone who is involved in casual sexual relationships, homosexual or heterosexual, is not acceptable as a minister'. Una was sympathetic to homosexuals in ministry, and stated she actually supported the Gay and Lesbian Christian Movement. Her reason is egalitarian; 'Because I believe that people of faith should have the opportunity to offer themselves in ordained ministry'. She believes further, that this would

be an act of justice on the part of the churches. Jeff Gould, the openly 'Gay' Unitarian minister admits there is still disagreement in his denomination over this. He however, has personally been encouraged by both the denomination and his own church. 'My congregation has been fantastic and the denomination very supportive as well'.

Three respondents were willing to see those with homosexual orientation ordained. Emma put it this way; 'Certain people are called to celibacy and I don't mind 'Gay' men in the church'. She admitted knowing a homosexual vicar who was celibate, but had a question mark over those who were practising. Ralph was prepared to accept homosexual ministers, provided it wasn't cavorted about in the press. Yet again, he believes only those with orientation are acceptable. Keith Hobbs admits the issue is a difficult one, but is reticent to approve homosexual marriages or partnerships. He reveals that his denomination, the Baptist Union, has a position in which homosexual orientation of itself is no bar to ministry. However, genital relationships are not acceptable. He admits to knowing homosexual ministers who are doing a fine job, and acknowledges with some frankness that his problem is not so much with homosexuals, but with heterosexual men 'who can't keep their hands off the opposite sex'.

Finally, only six respondents were prepared to say practising homosexuality was sinful, five respondents refused to make any judgement on homosexuals, whilst five stated categorically that it was not sinful.

From the data, there is seen to be a great range of opinion on this. There are those who argue from a biblical perspective, those who speak from their own experience of meeting homosexual clergy, and one who is himself a practising homosexual cleric. Amongst those supporting homosexuality in ministry, there is a clear desire for faithfulness in partnerships. Promiscuity at any level remains unacceptable. A distinctive moral stand however, is still being taken by the Catholic Church. Catholic respondents nonetheless, were able to distinguish between their own personal viewpoint, whilst upholding the teaching of the Catholic Church. This may give the Catholic Church a greater moral authority in such matters.

Both the Anglican and Free Churches however, are quite divided over the issue, displaying here some signs of doctrinal relativism. Are those in favour of homosexual clergy attempting to make the church more acceptable to a culture that is not 'buying' its message (Berger, 1973), or are they trying to be

genuinely more inclusive in their welcome of sinners? There seems to be little doubt here. All the respondents in support of homosexual clergy opt for the latter approach.

Conclusion

This pick and mix approach to religious practice however, if applied to a larger playing field, carries with it one chief danger. It contains within it a denial of any authority except self. When authority becomes subjective, there inevitably arises increasing conflict as the multiplicity of self-interests clash. Durkheim has demonstrated the importance of religion for establishing cultural identity, but only as the society adheres consensually to its religion (see 3.1.2). It seems then that the increasing personal autonomy witnessed generally in society today, and illustrated by Luckmann's theory of an institutionally non-specific form of religion (see 3.2.1.2), is even permeating the clergy and other authority figures.

It was asked in the introduction just how far the church is influencing and being influenced by society. Here is some evidence perhaps of the latter process at work. The growing self-determination by individuals in life-style, relationships, and morals would appear to be challenging at times the very basis of religious authority. This area of sexual behaviour is one example of the church facing a crisis of confidence and authority in its attempts to be socially relevant.

8.2.5. The Personality Cult

The earlier survey of religious history in Liverpool revealed a powerful personality cult, around which many of the citizens gathered as a talisman of their politico-religious views. By far the most famous of these came from the Protestant side. Hugh McNeile, George Wise, and others used their own personal charisma to further their spiritual and personal ends. This 'charismatic' dimension to religious leadership is something taken up by Weber (see 3.1.2). For him the charismatic figure is the prophet, who following a process of rationalisation, forms a system of belief and thought which makes a break from the established normative order. This break is then legitimated by virtue of the prophet's personality, but requires others to commit themselves to the new order embodied in the break (Parsons, 1966, xxxiii-iv).

This applies only in measure to the personalities at the centre of the past conflicts, for they were not legitimising anything new, or attempting to make any new break from the established norm. What McNeile and Wise did was

simply to exploit the fears, prejudices and aggression already innate in the Protestant population. Wise however did demand commitment to the cause of Protestant supremacy, and so in this sense follows Weber's pattern. Has this 'charismatic' dimension however, been evident in the most recent Christian leaders?

Since the demise of the more flamboyant religious icons at the turn of the century, the religion of Liverpool seems to have centred round the various Bishops and Archbishops who have inhabited the episcopal sees. One exception to this was Henry Longbottom, who pastored the Protestant church on Netherfield Road for over forty years. He continued to be a scourge to the Catholic community during that period, and is mentioned by a few Catholic respondents in passing. As has been shown, the long series of Bishops displayed a mixture of friendly and distant relations with their opposite number. This all changed with the appointment of David Sheppard the Anglican, and Derek Worlock the Roman Catholic.

Can it then be claimed they became dominant charismatic personalities of the cultic type? Perhaps to the extent that almost all respondents make mention of the two Bishops as having been crucial to the religious development of the city over the past two decades, they are certainly key players. The one overriding difference between them and the personalities of the past however, is that they combined together to challenge the old religious antagonisms and laboured to see them subsumed by a desire for unity and understanding. Here is a major difference between them and the leaders of the past. The Bishops then became 'exemplary' prophets in Weber's sense, in that they broke from the established order of sectarian hostility, and forged their new path of ecumenism (Weber, 1966, 55). Because they did this 'together', there failed to gather around any one of them a particular faction, something again that was distinctive. Rather, both Catholic and Protestant were encouraged to come together. This has subsequently established its own normative order which is itself being questioned here and there by other groups of Christians.

Despite having become 'personalities', it would be difficult to say that either of the Bishops deliberately sought fame or recognition - though they were certainly popular media figures. The respondents recognised the benefits of their public persona, and whilst a number of criticisms were levelled at both men, there was no hint of them fostering any cultic status. On the contrary, it is apparent they were admired, respected, commended, and emulated, not only by many of those engaged in Christian work in the city, but by others in

different fields of civic duty. Paradoxically however, this widespread admiration in itself may have reflected some elements of cultic status at the heart of ecumenism, and will have implications for their successors. Weber's charismatic leader was followed by those who then routinised and consolidated the work of the 'prophet' in order to 'secure the permanence of his preaching' (Weber, 1966, 60-61). Herein lies the challenge for the present church leaders. Can they too bring to the task of Christian leadership in the city their own prophetic input, whilst consolidating the work of their predecessors? Only time will tell.

8.3. A MARGINALISED CHURCH

Christians themselves have noted the decline in church membership, and whilst it has been demonstrated that the public profile of the two Bishops has enabled them to have an impact on the city's life in diverse ways, the question remains for the rest of the church, particularly at local level, as to how far it has become marginalised in the life of the community? Are local churches ceasing to have any impact upon their communities? The respondents' perceptions as to why decline is taking place, will be considered first.

8.3.1. Reasons for Decline

The reasons given for the decline in church attendance are remarkably broad, but for the sake of analysis they will be divided into three sub-divisions; social, ecclesiastical, and spiritual.

8.3.1.1. Social Reasons

Some Catholic congregations appear to have been depleted greatly by geographical mobility which has emptied areas of the inner city over the past four decades. As a church whose philosophy includes establishing a religious community, the Catholic Church in parts of Liverpool has experienced extensive depopulation in some of their communities through slum clearance, and subsequent decimation of parishes and congregations. Roger has experienced this in his community 'This area has gone through so much change. In the 1850s-60s this area had between the docks and St Domingo Road, 300,000 Catholics alone, and there are now about 10,000....the inner city has completely been destroyed'. Robert paints a similar picture but with an added factor. He has witnessed a large geographical and social mobility out of Liverpool. He blames the huge decline in population for the loss of members, because the older generation of Catholic families have all but disappeared as a result. He also adds a sociological reason for decline. He claims a European Values Study showed a large decline in the belief in authority figures. Yet

another reason for the decline in Catholic attendance in particular is given by the Anglican Bishop. He relates how the Irish factor played a large part in inflating their attendance figures for the United Kingdom, compared with the rest of Europe. This Irish immigrant solidarity introduced a strong ethnic element into Catholic Church life. The church therefore became a rallying point for Catholics in a foreign land, and was strengthened by that. That has now faded however, and the Roman Catholic Church in Liverpool shows much the same picture of decline as other churches in urban areas.

The Bishop introduced another reason for church decline in the urban areas of the city. He claims history has shown that the working classes traditionally have never attended church in any significant numbers. He quotes freely from Charles Booth's book, 'Life and Labour of the People of London' written in the 1890s, to demonstrate this; 'Wherever the regular working class is found, and in whatever proportion to the rest of the population, they do not go to church'. The Bishop adds; 'I know nothing in my twenty years in London to contradict that'. We have noted however that the exception to this was the Roman Catholic Church with its working class base. Colin however, endorses the Bishop's view that class solidarity plays an influential role in church attendance; 'It's that issue of breaking into a mind-set that says church, and all that's to do with it, does not belong to our culture'. The challenge for him is to see the church bridge that cultural divide. Norman takes up the class issue claiming; 'Some people feel alienated from church because it is a class thing....so in that way it does alienate certain groups of the community'.

For a number of the respondents, the changing social habits and attitudes in society have affected seriously the attendance at church. People are too busy now, claims Richard. For him we are a transient people, without the same network of family as in the past; 'Life would appear to be in the fast lane for most people; they just see it as a soft option after a busy week that time is for themselves and shouldn't be devoted to anybody else'. Harold believes there is apathy amongst the population towards the Christian church, and the media plays its part too; 'They pick up very much upon the disagreements, and the moral failures'. A further reason for decline lies in a change of emphasis in belonging, according to Alan; 'I think their sense of belonging is more in terms of family or a relationship - the domestic scene, than it is to belong to the church or to a parish'. The greater freedom introduced by legislation to Sundays has also had a knock-on effect in church attendance, according to some respondents. Colin accepts the car now offers greater opportunity to escape the city for the day or even the week-end. Joe blamed the media;

'There's nothing to go to church for because we can watch it on TV'.

Allied to this was a feeling that the culture in Britain had changed. Fred describes how this affects the church; 'People don't sit anywhere for twenty minutes and listen now....we've got something which is totally foreign'. Douglas suggests twentieth century lifestyle mitigates against church attendance, in that people are much busier now. This is developed by Colin who feels we live in an overload society; 'There is a switch-off therefore, and that switch-off says church equals commitment; I do not want commitment'. Simon Lee describes some of the ways people go about switching off; 'What people tend to do at the week-end much more is flick through Sky TV, or go to the shops which are now open, or various leisure activities, or the Albert Dock'.

Part of that changing culture is an openness to other spiritualities. Colin has a proposition; 'Mystic Meg - it's part of the problem'. Dozens of families gather round the TV together, each with their ticket. He concludes; 'They are going through a mystical experience - some would say a spiritual experience, every Saturday as they join together'. Keith Hobbs shares this view. He acknowledges the technological age has brought a greater reliance upon science, but recognises equally that there are many alternative philosophies and experiences. 'I don't think it is that people are less religious; they turn to Mystic Meg, to horoscopes, to all kind of weird cults looking for some kind of spiritual experience and satisfaction'.

Ken went further back to the Second World War to find the reason for decline. 'I think Britain has suffered terribly as a result of the Second World War in terms of its confidence and the way it looked at its fabric of society'. He adds further that a loss of national pride in our institutions followed from that, though the church isn't unique in this. The concept of an established church hasn't helped either; 'People feel they have to react against something; it's another institution that has lost its provenance and does not have the respect it once did'. Finally, Emma felt that some of the people she met were simply satisfied with the life they had.

Conclusion

Surveying the data then, the respondents view the changes, and with it the decline of church attendance, from a number of vantage points. For some there has been social decline in the inner cities resulting from depopulation, which has destroyed community life, and therefore church life. This enforced geographical mobility has for some time been seen as one of the strongest

reasons for the decline in church attendance. Waller particularly refers to 'the gradual disappearance of the social homogeneity of Liverpool Catholicism', which also includes the upward social mobility of many Catholics through increased educational opportunities (Waller, 1981, 347). Furthermore, the decline in influence of a strong nationalistic religio/politico factor within Catholicism, has forced even that church to confront in Liverpool, the same dilemmas afflicting the other denominations.

For yet others, the changing social habits of an increasingly secular and wealthier society have offered real alternatives to the church. Apart from the increasing leisure boom and the deregulation of Sunday trading, alternative religion has made inroads to the lifestyle of significant numbers of the middle classes who have been the bulwark of most congregations. Bruce maintains; 'Those who participated in [New Religious Movements] were typically from the more comfortable sectors of Western societies, from social groups which had benefited from above average education and incomes' (Bruce, 1995, 112).

The loss of respect for many institutions reflects back on Luckmann's theory of a non-institutional religion now present in Western society (see 3.2.1.2). He argues the present social form of religion differs from the older institutional social forms, in that they are more flexible and cater more adequately for the 'private' needs of 'autonomous' consumers. These new forms, he believes, may find their source in 'inspirational' literature or in the lyrics of popular songs. Through these means, elements of models of 'ultimate' significance can be articulated (Luckmann, 1972, 106). The churches perhaps have yet to come to terms with this social shift in religious practice, and the respondents appear to acknowledge this.

Finally, the resistance of the working classes to regular participation in church life remains a constant dilemma for the churches. Working class identity is often at odds with other sections of society. Too often they feel excluded. Further, as Weber suggests, 'In the sphere of proletarian rationalism, religion is generally supplanted by other ideological surrogates' (Weber, 1966, 101). The 'Faith in the City' report of the Anglican Church perhaps gives a reason for this. It claims that a secularist element existed within the working classes at the turn of the century, 'which had an influence out of proportion to its numbers because so many secularists were active in politics or trade unions' (Report, 1985, 28). Glock and Stark also argue that active politics has become a surrogate for religious practice. While the church offers to make things better in the next world, left-wing groups offer change in this world. They conclude;

'Radical politics, perhaps functioning as an alternative outlet for feelings of status deprivation, do seem to provide a key to understanding the low church attendance of the lower classes' (Glock and Stark, 1965, 195). History however has shown, that despite the predisposition of the working classes to ignore church, there have been notable exceptions to this trend. Apart from a strong Roman Catholic presence amongst working class cultures, the Evangelical Awakening fostered by John Wesley in the eighteenth century, made a powerful impression upon the working classes, later evidenced in the establishment of the Welsh Chapel culture.

8.3.1.2. Ecclesiastical Reasons

The respondents do not hold back when discussing the part the churches play in the decline of attendance. Six respondents point out the church's irrelevance or insignificance (Richard, Una, Norman, Esther, Douglas, William), whilst others fill that out in more detail. The church is simply too boring for young people, states Esther, though acknowledging some good churches exist for them. For Fred, the church simply has a bad image. He believes the church misrepresents God by making people's lives a misery; 'My brother-in-law said all clergy should wear a collar so we could see you coming and hide in a shop door'. William is quite scathing of some churches; 'Christians are miserable; the service is boring; there's no relevance regarding the message being preached; it doesn't relate to the level people are at'. For Doris, the irrelevance was expressed by her son who felt the church should spend its money on the Third World, rather than on stained glass windows. Norman felt the church's irrelevance was demonstrated in its refusal to take a stand on issues; 'The churches have not stood up for what they believed...The Christian church has been seen as shifting its position'.

Church services can be irrelevant partly because some see them as boring due to the liturgical forms practised. Stephen claims this format 'doesn't give space for people as they really are'. Allied to this are the buildings used for worship. Two respondents felt strongly on this matter. Ralph argues; 'We are actually competing for people's comfort'. He then describes a church building he attended for a funeral; 'I thought, good heavens, for it was dingy and dark - it was awful; it was the worst aspects of Victorian architecture'. Emma claims the church is spending too much time raising funds for ancient Gothic monuments.

A further major cause of poor attendance at church was felt to lie in the poor attitude of Christian people and churches towards others. Jack summarises his

position with an example of a drunk man who appeared at a church on one occasion. 'They kicked him out....they didn't even go and follow it up, because he turned up drunk while they were worshipping'. Una agrees, claiming the church is too distanced from people and tends to be judgmental; 'Very often it is not actually out there in your corner shop with you or in the supermarket'. As can be seen, the church has no monochrome view on any matter, for the church consists of individuals as well as organised bodies.

Failure amongst Christian people to practise what they preach is also considered to be one of the dominant reasons for people pulling out of church. Disunity, on occasions, is perceived to be part of the problem. Sam considers this a factor; 'Maybe that is why we are not united as a church within the city and therefore we don't speak with one voice, and the voice is not heard'. Robert claimed a lot of the old imperatives had died and people were not going regularly to Sunday mass. He believed ineffective structures were also a problem, in that the church was not fluid enough to adapt to the changes necessary to maintain efficiency. He blames the present parish system for some of the decline; 'Let's face it, the parish came into being in the Middle Ages'. He further believes the concept of community is dead at present, so the church must think of different ways of handling church in the future. He gives the Housechurch movement as an example of adaptation, and hints this could be a way forward even for the Catholic Church.

8.3.1.3. Spiritual Reasons

Remarkably this featured hardly at all in the reasons for poor attendance. Only Tom ventured some spiritual reasons for the failure of the church to attract larger numbers. He was not short of reasons. Firstly lack of visiting and poor preaching were responsible partly for decline. He believes however, that both these means are rewarding. Tom is a keen preacher and mourns the decline in this format of communication. He gives further reasons for poor attendance at church. Godlessness is one; 'I think TV and the pressure from the Lottery. The Government has been guilty insofar as Sunday hasn't been upheld, but Christians have asked for that because they haven't kept Sunday as they should have done'. Finally, he believes the Devil is behind much of the decline too, making people believe a win on the Lottery will make them happy, and encouraging a secular view of origins. 'It's a materialistic, secular age in which we live'.

Once again it appears there is little consensus amongst the respondents as to why the church has seen its numbers consistently dwindle. The plethora of

different reasons indicates perhaps something of the confusion and turmoil in the minds of Christians. The fact that social reasons predominate may further reveal a desire on the part of many to rationalise the decline, at the cost of facing up to their mission. There is enough evidence in the data to indicate however a real desire to put right the failings within the churches, and to make their message more relevant, less judgmental, and certainly more interesting. The bulk of the Christian respondents in Liverpool however, do not acknowledge spiritual means as being an important factor in that process.

8.3.2. Perceptions of the sacred

Since it has been openly acknowledged that the churches in Western Europe are in decline, the question arises as to how far Christianity and the churches have lost ground to the other competing forces in society, such as secularisation and alternative spiritualities. The respondents were therefore asked whether they considered Liverpool people were now less religious than previous generations. This was partly to examine Davie's findings that there is a 'believing without belonging' in European religious behaviour. If this is so, how far and in what direction is this belief going?

Only 16 of the respondents answered the question, but on this occasion there was a greater unanimity of viewpoint. All acknowledged a retention of religious interest amongst the population. Three respondents actually stated that in their experience, people are even more religious. The Anglican Bishop for example, claims that whilst Liverpool is not necessarily more church-going than London, it is a much more religious city. Tom also acknowledges people generally seem to be more religious. For him they have a sense of mystery and engage in alternative religion; 'I think I can see an increase in the psychic trend. All the after death experiences, the weird and wonderful world of Prince Charles...and the New Age which is the big thing. It's very religious'. William felt Christianity and a religion of mere externals were incompatible, but accepted a spiritual awareness was still to be found; 'I think there is definitely an openness to the whole area of spirit and that kind of thing'. Others followed this same line. Harold for example states; 'People are looking to things like spiritualism, tarot card readings, fortune telling and things like that'.

The desire for the sacred in the population therefore, is not always finding expression through the Christian church. This is further conceded by a number of respondents. For Richard, the blame lies with those outside the church; 'They don't want the restrictions and they don't want the discipline of it

either'. Emma recognises the spiritual interest at large, but views church as being 'too demanding'. Four other respondents imply the church has failed (Harold, Jack, Una, Ken). Ken sums up their view; 'I definitely know [people] have given up on church'. Three respondents however feel that church attendance is not a good criterion for evaluating the strength of the Christian religion. Two simply state that view (Robert, Simon Lee), but Ralph expressed some reasons. Attendance in past generations had social and legal imperatives; 'People probably went to churches for a variety of reasons - social acceptance is one for example. Or if you go into mediaeval times, there was no concept you could be anywhere but church'. That being the case, Ralph concludes that those who attend church today probably have better reasons for doing so.

Two respondents describe what it is like for them to live in an age when many don't attend church, but retain a sense of the sacred. Roger, a Catholic priest, has a large congregation at weekends, over 500, but many of these come from outside his parish. Within the parish however, the problems persist, particularly with baptisms. For some, there is a superstitious element to baptism which has to be addressed, but others who do not attend, continue to bring their children for baptism, and in his eyes, display a strong faith. When referring to both baptisms and funerals which he conducts, he comments approvingly; 'I am amazingly impressed by how deeply spiritual people are when they come....You may not see them at the door at all, but there is a strong faith; a phenomenal faith and it's not just historical; it would be wrong to say it's superstitious. It is deep'. Fred, an Anglican vicar, faces similar difficulties over baptisms, but with a contrasting style. He refuses to reject anyone who comes with a child for baptism. His is a pragmatic approach; 'When a vicar says no, I will not baptise your child...., the person goes away thinking God has rejected her child. She's actually honoured you by bringing her child. She doesn't really know why she wants it baptised anyway'. He prefers therefore to instruct the family and then baptise, ensuring the challenge of the faith is presented clearly to the parents.

Conclusion

Christians in Liverpool are very aware of the challenge by other religious philosophies to their faith. They have come to terms with Casanova's core value in secularisation, namely differentiation (3.2.2.1). Greater choice has produced a generation that expects greater variety in their religious expression. This has prevented many of the respondents assuming that because large numbers of the population do not attend church it therefore means they are

literally god-less. It is widely recognised that many are still religious, and perhaps still sympathetic to the Christian religion. Other spiritualities too are making inroads, but not yet to the extent that the respondents can comment with any great knowledge on them.

Davie's concept of 'believing without belonging' appears at first to be confirmed. She has argued that many retain an affinity with the Christian tradition, whilst not attending regularly or at all. From the data however, it seems the term 'belonging' needs redefining. The latter two clergy above (7.6.2) demonstrate there is a desire amongst a considerable number of the population to 'belong' loosely to a specific church/denomination (Bruce, 1995, 48). This often guarantees a Christian rite of passage, particularly in baptism and burial. Bruce, quoting Brierley, reveals that in 1993, 27% of live births were baptized in the Church of England alone (Bruce, 1995, 59), implying a much larger figure for all baptisms. The existence of this kind of 'semi-detached church' therefore, is not without significance, for even when the rite is not fully understood, the desire to 'belong' to a tradition retains its potency. Deep-rooted sacred traditions of a varying Christian nature still appear to be firmly embedded in the consciousness of a sizeable proportion of the population, who retain their tenuous link in the ways described.

8.3.3. Getting People Back

The Christian community is equally intent on putting a halt to the slide from its numbers, whilst recognising the changing climate in which they function. Three approaches are suggested from the data, all chiefly pragmatic; all stressing what Christians or the church might do.

8.3.3.1. A New Perspective

Just as the Catholic Church had to engage in 'aggiornamento', so also does the wider church if it is to advance. That seems to be the message coming through the respondents. Sam was keen to suggest that self-examination was crucial here; 'I think certainly as local churches we have to look at our attitude and our lives to see that we are living the kind of lives we are trying to preach'. Further, this involves the church in displaying a caring attitude to others; 'Part of our ministry as a church is to seek to say to people - we are concerned about you; we care about your life; the conditions you live in'.

Norman believes some in the church have forgotten why they are there; 'I think the church needs to move away from itself and go back to its original mission. Preaching the gospel is an important part, though the way you preach the

gospel is obviously important'. He suggests getting alongside the poor and taking risks, and relates the example of Jesus who got alongside those who were marginalised or excluded. Richard believes the church should go to the people. He describes how his church does open air ministry on the streets in the estate where they are placed. He describes how they have printed sheets with the songs and Bible readings, and questionnaires to ascertain people's opinions. He concludes; 'We have to be prepared to listen to what they say..... and see how that can be adapted to introducing them to the gospel'. Harold endorses the previous comments. He too is concerned to get the gospel to people first and foremost, and not be concerned as much about filling the church. Yet this confronts him with a dilemma. He is aware that unless people come to church there will be no church to take the gospel to the people. His solution is to prioritise; 'It may well be that people come into contact first and foremost with Christ outside the church, but I do feel that there is a point when they have got to link in'.

Alan took a different approach, falling back on human abilities to appeal; 'I think so much depends on...personalities; on how far the priest himself is able to attract people back'. Yet he too recognised the need for action; 'It depends then on initiatives taken which would involve other people in the parish to...talk to people about their human needs with a view to restoring their spiritual needs'. Doris felt the church was already out there and had to be encouraged to come in and worship.

Two respondents believe strongly the church has to be prepared to listen to people before talking. Una put it this way; 'I think we have to be humble; we have to be prepared to listen, and where necessary be prepared to witness as well'. She is yet another who resorts to the church having to reach out; 'I think all the time the church has to go out, but when it does, it needs to make sure that what it can offer to people is something that.... is relevant to where they are'. Douglas believes the church should listen more to people. He too regrets some of the church's authoritarianism in the past; 'I think we have to listen to them rather than tell them what they should be doing or should know'

Ken was not keen on great efforts to reach people in vast numbers. For him growth was slow and organic; 'I'm not in search of great conversion or a mass revival....I think when you grow that quickly, you lose people that quickly'. Stephen again felt a tension between getting people in through the doors and wanting to get congregations out through the doors; 'Mission is about God's mission to the world of which we are a part, rather than the church's mission to

get people into pews'. He rejects the notion of the church as some large structure into which everyone is sucked and absorbed. Rather it is 'a servant body serving the world during the week'.

For Ralph, the reinterpretation of the gospel is what is essential. This will enable people to relate it to this age. This has implications for doctrine however; 'It might mean some....re-interpretation of those beliefs'. Esther suggested a mission statement would be helpful. She argues; 'I think the church has got to know where it is going and it's got to put its wares out publicly'. She feels an individual church's approach should be rooted in the kind of community it is placed in, but again there has to be a vision out of the community. For Simon Lee, the church's vision is without boundary; it is to reach out to the world.

For many of the respondents then, there is an ongoing awareness of the church's need to look out beyond its four walls. Whilst some are keen on a more forthright evangelistic approach, others stress the need for patience to listen to what people are saying before rushing in to speak. The need to care for people's needs is also important, as are vibrant personalities within the ministry who need to be able to reinterpret the church's message to the prevailing culture.

8.3.3.2. Reassessment of Approach

How then is the church to go about the business of getting its message out, of sharing its concern, of showing it is listening? This section deals with the views of the respondents on the methods of approach they feel the church should begin to adopt. Emma was adamant that mass evangelism was not now the way forward. 'In the cold light of day, what are they met with? They go to this little church on the corner of a street, and it just isn't good any more'. She has however some alternative strategy which she feels is more appropriate and effective; 'I believe the church has got to work through what we call the lesser services, like funerals and marriages'. Roger is equally clear that new methods ought to be shunned and that the church should stick to its task of doing the everyday things well. He develops his argument stating; 'I wouldn't move the goalposts. We do have in some situations wonderful practice and the more you can build up community spirit, people will come more often. I don't think we should have a new plan of attack or a new way of doing it'. Special events and ideas were also scorned.

Tom is convinced that social involvement is an important way forward for the

churches. He has engaged in various forms of social activity through his mission. He also writes articles regularly in local newspapers, what he terms his 'freebies'. At the present count, he has 770 free papers all over Britain for which he writes a weekly article.

Two respondents include prayer as a central factor in their approach to winning people back to church. Alan reveals he has learnt this from the Charismatic movement. He describes it this way; 'Because we are an institutional church as well as a church in which the Spirit is present...I think we've got to tie the two together and....just meet together in people's houses to pray'. This he believes provides the Holy Spirit with the opportunity to work in their lives. Colin, along with members of his church, visited key people in the community offering to pray for them. He describes the reaction; 'The interesting thing is that thinking we'd be thrown out on our ear, we have had to say to them sorry we have to go now, because they have opened up and been very willing to be prayed for'.

Bill took up the challenge made earlier by others, about getting out into the community. He cites as an example a church in his area whose young people get into the community by going round the streets in a happy frame of mind. 'They were showing Christianity and the spiritual side of life, that it's not dull, and I firmly believe they have attracted people to [their church] in that way'.

It seems from the foregoing that Christians today have a greater preference now for engagement evangelism in which they get alongside people as a group or as individuals. Mass evangelism or organised forms of witness are not now the most popular of methods, whereas involvement in community, sharing in prayer, and supporting those in need are deemed more worthwhile. This is having social consequences as the churches increasingly open themselves to community work. Instead of local churches standing aloof from the communities in which they are placed, pontificating on moral and spiritual matters, there is now a determination to identify much more with local people. The opening of many church buildings for numerous social and community activities is partly a result of this changed outlook. Yet even here there are other problems to be faced.

8.3.3.3. A Renewed Plant

At the heart of much church life is the building the members find themselves functioning in, and often this plays a significant part in the success or failure of the church. Too many church buildings are old and outdated in style. This has

a number of detrimental effects. Present forms of worship seem out of keeping in Victorian architecture. Many are cold and expensive to heat, and many are simply too far gone to repair adequately. Not many mentioned this in the present context, but some did. Jack puts it bluntly; 'There's a need to evaluate what we've got because we are lumbered with some horrible buildings'. Esther places the physical environment high on her list of priorities for attending church; 'The dingy, badly painted, unappetising looking place will not bring in people'.

Others focus on the finance needed to support the buildings and the whole operation of church life. Fred reveals how his church is financially strapped and how denominational support is slowly dwindling. His solution is straightforward; 'The church has got to find other ways of earning money. We've got to engage, as the Cathedral has, in commerce'. One way of doing that is to offer facilities on church property like wedding receptions. He views the only alternative as churches closing down, yet insists despite that, churches must pay their way. Ken believes much of the solution lies in the congregations themselves. He is vehement over the appalling giving in this country. It is woefully inadequate he claims. He contrasts this with the United States in which families tithe their income, with Britain in which families hardly put more than ten pence in the collection.

From this very brief resume, it is obvious buildings are a concern, especially older styled buildings. Yet the cost of new buildings is prohibitive, and the churches have to consider some other ways of raising capital. How to do that without losing their raison d'être, is a further challenge to modern day Christians. It has been noted elsewhere that the opening of church halls for community projects has enabled some churches to gain finance from external sources. Yet the number of church buildings is such that this form of activity cannot sustain them all. The future of many archaic church buildings is a dilemma for which the church has yet to find an answer.

Conclusion

Hugh McLeod argues that the Christian church is being pushed to the margins of social life. He suggests a number of factors point to it. The growing pluralism in religious belief, the extended professionalisation accompanied by its own value-systems, the pervasiveness of the medical and social work professions doing much of what once was the church's work, and the removal of religion from political debate, all seem to confirm the church's growing exclusion from society (McLeod in Young, 1995, 10-15). It would seem that

most Christian leaders have resigned themselves to the fact that the church is in decline numerically, and that for many in the population, there are other alternatives, both secular and spiritual.

The recognition of social reasons for much decline, allied to the propensity of Christians to blame themselves, gives a very powerful insight to the difficulties faced by the church. It seems that while many church leaders are able to make the sociological diagnosis, too few Christians are objective enough to notice that within the inner city and even beyond, there have been massive population clearances in which established church families have been removed from districts and from parishes. This inevitably has a detrimental affect on the inner city church, and the blame is attributed perhaps too heavily on ecclesiastical failure. Whilst many churches in the suburbs flourish as a result of inner city decline, significant numbers of urban churches have not closed, and often struggle on attempting sometimes just to keep a building open, but at other times working with limited resources and some enthusiasm, to care for fractured communities in practical ways. The 'Faith in the City Report' revealed how 'people who belong to a church in an Urban Priority Area tend to have a relatively high level of commitment in terms of attendance' (Report, 1985, 36). The same pattern emerged with regard to giving, in that U.P.A. churches actually gave more on average per head than other parishes (Report, 1985, 37)

Apart from the very public ministry of the Bishops and other leaders, much of church life carries on with a less publicised social action. Christians are also challenging some of the moral decisions of the day - particularly the abortion issue, in which David Alton is heavily engaged. For most Christians however, their work is directed at ground level, attempting to communicate the faith by personal piety, by means of social care and provision for the different age/gender cohorts, and through various community projects which occasionally have official sanction.

8.4. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Within this section dealing with education, three areas will be examined. Firstly the role of Christianity in schools, as it is developed in one of the Education Authorities on Merseyside. The role of religious education and its development within the boundaries of the National Curriculum will be looked at along with the present position of collective worship in both primary and secondary schools.

Secondly, the effects of Christian schools need to be considered in light of the fact that 'between them, the churches have a stake in well over a quarter of non-fee paying schools in this country' (Davie, 1995, 129).

Thirdly, the place of Christianity in higher education will be considered, specifically at the Christian based University College of Liverpool Hope. To what extent is Christianity relevant in a University College which, despite its Christian tradition, admits students of other faiths and none?

8.4.1. Christianity in Schools

Up until 1988, the Butler Education Act had required schools to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils. This act of worship was understood to be of a wholly Christian nature, but allowance was made for parents of alternative faiths or none, to withdraw their child from such acts of worship. Following the Reform Act of 1988, a number of things changed. Christian worship was to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (Hull in Young [ed.] 1995, 22), perhaps indicating the changing perception of the Christian religion in a more pluralist society. Christianity was now to be viewed as one amongst other alternatives, though it was by a small margin to retain its priority.

Furthermore, the Government's insistence that religious education ought to retain a meaningful place in the curriculum seems to run counter to secularisation theory. Here at the heart of one of the most important institutions of society, the school, is a strong religious core. So why has Government retained religion in schools amidst a growing pluralism? One suggestion is offered by Davie - social order. She repeats the question asked by many functionalists; 'If religion does something significant in or for society, what is going to happen if that role is no longer properly fulfilled?' (Davie, 1995, 84). Personal and social morality is often linked to religious belief. John Patten, as Education Secretary in 1992, seemed to perpetuate the link between both morality and religion. He claimed that as church attendance rose in Victorian and Edwardian times, so crime levels fell to their lowest (Davie, 1995, 85). This is also an argument made strongly by Christie Davies (Davies, 1994, 77). Davie however challenges what she believes is a simplistic cause and effect argument, but nonetheless repeats the question underlying John Patten's concern, that if religion is sidelined in society, including schools, what is to replace it as the basis of social order? (Davie, 1995, 85).

Religious Education then, is retained as part of the basic curriculum, but not the National Curriculum. This means that Religious Education 'has equal

standing in relation to the core and other foundation subjects within a school's curriculum, but is not subject to nationally prescribed attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements' (Bastide [ed.] 1992,13). Responsibility for Religious Education is now placed in the hands of the L.E.A. and is free of government control (Bastide [ed.] 1992, 14). How far then has this modification of schools policy in worship and R.E. affected the Christian tradition in present day schools, particularly in Merseyside? How have Local Education Authorities tackled the difficulties of multi-faith issues in the curriculum? Esther, who deals with this specific area in education does so within the Sefton L.E.A. in Merseyside. She has been working in this area for over nine years as an Adviser, and therefore the opinions offered are chiefly related to that one Authority.

8.4.1.1. The Religious Education Curriculum

Over the past number of years, Esther reveals there have been a number of schemes developed in Sefton whereby the religious education of the children has been significantly improved. Firstly there was the setting up of a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), which is a legal requirement. The purpose of this is to represent the different faith communities, the teachers' Unions, and the L.E.A. Secondly, they have produced an agreed syllabus for Religious Education in Sefton. This was revised in 1995. The third major development has been the introduction of a book on Collective Worship in primary schools, and one is anticipated for secondary schools, 'because there is a problem with collective worship in secondary schools'. A final initiative was the establishment of a Religious Education Centre in St Luke's Church of England in Crosby. This is a lending library with religious artefacts of world religions, films, videos, posters, tapes, and multi-media facilities.

Esther believes the teaching of R.E. in schools is still a justifiable exercise. She believes the study of R.E. prior to 1988 had 'no progression, no monitoring of standards'. With the introduction of the Council's syllabus however, she is convinced the profile of R.E. has been raised. She is a great advocate of multi-faith religious education, and believes this has been good for an area of Merseyside which she feels doesn't have a large range of ethnic minorities. Esther has no difficulties in teaching faiths other than Christianity. 'I feel quite strongly, passionately actually, that we should. I think a young person is deprived of basic knowledge if they leave school and haven't had that opportunity'. She believes further, that children need to be aware of other faiths in anticipation of the day they may move into another area to work where

this may be an issue.
The teaching of Christianity alongside other religions however, is not now a matter of choice, but of legislation. 'The legal position is that all major world religions in Britain today are included in any agreed syllabus. It also has to reflect the fact that Christianity is in the main, and therefore has to be 51% - just over half'. Within Sefton, schools are free to adopt different approaches within the parameters of the agreed syllabus. Some schools have adopted a thematic approach, looking at worship in a Synagogue or Mosque. Other schools have taken a more systematic approach and will spend half a term looking at one religion.

For Esther, Religious Education has three main objectives. Firstly, 'to stimulate the development of a young person and to offer stimulus that will interest them for life'. Secondly, it is 'to provide information/knowledge'. Thirdly, it should 'give them opportunities to come to their own personal response, so there is engagement at an intellectual level, engagement at a spiritual level....and there is a sort of immediate response level'. She indicates however, there are still some difficulties being experienced with schools who don't fulfil the legal requirements. Though R.E. is on the national curriculum and has a mandatory 5% of the curriculum time; 'Some schools do not give this', she demurs. On the other hand, 'Some secondary schools have doubled their teaching of R.E. and the time allocated to it. Some have therefore doubled the qualified staff'. She declares confidently; 'Most schools in Sefton are certainly meeting legal requirements as far as R.E. is concerned'.

Esther looks for two developments from the teaching of R.E. in Sefton schools; the spiritual development of the child and a growth in religious literacy. The balance has to be worked at between both these ends. Her goal for the future of R.E. is to see 'every school at secondary level providing good quality R.E. with appropriately qualified people teaching it, giving it the recommended curriculum time with well run and well established examination courses for those who wish to take it'.

8.4.1.2. Christian Worship in Schools
The thorny issue of collective worship in schools is one on which the respondent is surprisingly optimistic as far as primary schools are concerned; 'In all the schools I have inspected....I've not come across a primary school that doesn't meet the legal requirements - that's Sefton, North Cheshire, Wirral, Liverpool, Knowsley and St.Helens'. The story is quite different for collective worship in secondary schools however. There are two main problems it seems

in organising this. One is the sheer volume of pupils on occasions; 'Physically it's impossible to get 1,000 plus pupils into a hall all at once'. Secondly there is the difficulty of teaching in that kind of environment; 'How can you organise something which is meaningful for a sixth form....altogether and all crowded in?' It appears therefore, that about 70% of secondary schools are not complying with the legal requirements here, and it is not always because the head teachers are against it. Esther quotes one head teacher's solution; 'I care more about the quality I'm delivering in collective worship, and my pupils will only get two or three a week depending on which year group they are in'.

Esther knows of two attempts to overcome this problem of numbers. The first was in a church school which attempted to supplement regular (not daily) acts of worship by the whole school, with class acts of collective worship. This had advantages in that it was a church school. The teachers had a commitment to what they were doing and leading, and even though some may not have been active Christians, they were in sympathy with the ethos of the school. The second was an attempt on the Wirral, based on a booklet produced by the L.E.A. which aimed to help with the difficulty of numbers in secondary schools; 'The idea was that any class teacher would have a theme, a thought for the day, and would be able to expound on that'. Esther however claims this didn't work too well; 'It was too wordy; it was very heavily weighted towards Christianity and some people would not have been in empathy with the way it was phrased'.

She sums up her views on the collective worship scene, both at primary and secondary school levels; 'Personally I see the value of daily collective worship at primary school. I would like to see weekly collective worship at secondary school. That's manageable to be of quality, and I think that would reflect the view of the majority of head teachers'.

8.4.1.3. Church Schooling

The apparent wide support from parents for Church schools is something which needs to be considered when evaluating their role and contribution. It is all the more significant that it comes at a time when interest in church and religion is not at the top of people's list of priorities. The approach to religious schools by the two main Christian denominations perhaps can be summed up in the following statements.

Hornsby-Smith provides arguments as to why Catholic schools should be retained and valued. Firstly, there is 'the desirability and identity of purpose in

the various institutions concerned in the process of the socialisation of the child, especially family, church and school' (Hornsby-Smith, 1978, 25-26). Close home-school relationships have been shown to be of benefit in the measuring of a child's socialisation capability. Catholic schools, it is argued, aid this socialisation process by their strong links with church and home.

Another argument for the retention of Catholic schools is based on Kornhauser, who argued that 'liberal democracy is best promoted by a plurality of independent and limited-function intermediate groups which represent diverse and frequently conflicting interests' (Hornsby-Smith, 1978, 26). Hornsby-Smith's contention is that a specifically Catholic education is advantageous not only for the socialisation of Catholic children, but for the practice of democracy (Hornsby-Smith, 1978, 40).

By way of contrast, the Church of England Commission on Religious Education in its Durham report states; 'The aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion in human life and so to make a distinctive contribution to each pupil's search for a faith by which to live....The teacher is thus seeking rather to initiate his pupils into knowledge which he encourages them to explore and appreciate, than into a system which he requires them to accept' (Bastide [ed.] 1992, 9). For the authors of this report then, religious education is not necessarily for the promotion of any one denominational group, but a means of enriching the pupils through a wider knowledge of religious practice.

Esther indicated in a later private conversation that Church schools appeared to be popular and she was aware of certain Church schools which were oversubscribed in comparison to other schools 'in a similar area'. Davie also confirms this trend; 'What is absolutely clear....is the popularity of church schools' (Davie, 1995, 130). Why then are many parents keen to place their children in Christian schools? One Diocesan Director of Education suggests some non-religious reasons; 'Uniform, discipline, traditional education, manners' (Davie, 1995, 130). Hornsby-Smith however quotes the Greeley-Rossi report of 1966 which states; 'There is a moderate but statistically significant relationship between Catholic education and adult religious behaviour (Hornsby-Smith, 1978, 30). Perhaps this reflects the difference of approach by the two denominations as stated above. Davie further suggests that the Church school, with its stronger religious commitment, becomes as a result, a 'carrier of tradition' (Davie, 1995, 135).

One further reason could lie behind the popularity of church schools - academic attainment i.e. Church schools are supported for reasons of social and educational gain. In the Borough of Sefton in Merseyside, the performance tables of Keystage 2 pupils (ages 5-11) reveal that for many, there is a distinct benefit in attending a church school, either Catholic or Church of England. Out of a total of 85 primary schools across Sefton, church schools, both voluntary controlled and voluntary aided, achieved consistently higher grades in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Comparing the church school grades to both the National and L.E.A. averages the following statistics were obtained.

Performance of Sefton Church Schools (Total 45 schools)

Above National Average	**Above Sefton L.E.A. Average**
Science 35 (77.7%)	30 (66.6%)
Maths 35 (77.7%)	31 (68.8%)
English 36 (80%)	28 (62.2%)

Comparing County school grades with the National and L.E.A. averages, the following statistics were obtained.

Performance of Sefton County Schools (Total 40 schools)

Above National Average	**Above Sefton L.E.A. Average**
Science 29 (72.5%)	22 (55%)
Maths 22 (55%)	17 (42.5%)
English 21 (52.5%)	18 (45%)

Source: Metropolitan Borough of Sefton; Performance Tables; 1997 Keystage 2 Results.

Whilst the appeal of church schools is apparent at an educational level, there are other social factors that need to be addressed. Hornsby-Smith has argued that the right of Catholics to have their own schools is democratic and socially beneficial. This argument can be countered by pointing out the social divisions that denominational education introduces. Children brought up under one value/belief system may find it more difficult to relate to those with another. This kind of religious culture, particularly evident in Catholic/Protestant communities in Northern Ireland and in Liverpool at the turn of the century, can perpetuate social fragmentation in an increasingly pluralistic society.

The data in Liverpool however, seems to be suggesting a lessening of sectarian dogmatism. As has been shown, many schools are introducing a comparative element to religious education, and some retain this comparative note in their worship also.

8.4.2. Christianity in Higher Education

The role of the church in higher education has been integral to the functioning of Universities for many centuries in Britain. Those accepted to the University, those who taught at the University, and those who funded the University were almost universally those who were part of the established Anglican tradition. Yet today Christianity is limited to a theological department in many Universities, partly due to the downgrading of religion as a subject dealing with empirical data, and partly due to the increased diversity in the curriculum. In Liverpool however, there is a University College which attempts to retain a Christian basis within its academic framework.

8.4.2.1. The Philosophy of Liverpool Hope University College

The Chief Executive and Rector of Liverpool Hope University College Simon Lee, gave his own insights to this marriage of Christianity and academia. In its present form the College was founded as a result of both expediency and ecumenism. Two Colleges had existed side by side since the 1960s, one Catholic and one Anglican. Due to harsh economics, it looked as if only one of the Colleges could survive. Behind this economic reality however, there were the firm guiding hands of the two Bishops, Worlock and Sheppard, who were determined the colleges should not close. They negotiated with the Government and were given the go-ahead to save them if they could bring them both under one broad umbrella. The first merger was called the Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, L.I.H.E. for short. Lee wryly gives his assessment of this; 'One would have to say that it was economics rather than ecumenism which brought the Colleges together'. When he arrived in the mid-nineteen nineties, the first thing he felt he had to do was find a proper name for the College. He settled on the name 'Liverpool Hope University College', which has strong symbolic strands attached to it; 'We were looking for something which said 'Liverpool'; which said 'University College', but which also said something which captured both the sacred and secular agenda, the point of the College and linked to its roots. So 'Hope' is a great theological virtue; it's also the point of education and ecumenism, and it related of course to Hope Street which links the two Cathedrals, and it's where the Sisters (of Notre Dame) began'.

The ethos of the College is unashamedly Christian, and Lee is working hard to achieve a sense of oneness between the two original colleges despite the physical barrier of a road dividing them. He is also conscious he is competing with the two Universities in the city, and this has enabled him to clarify the College's goals; 'We've looked again at our mission; what we are about, and we've moved very firmly towards saying there's no point in being like the University of Liverpool, or Liverpool John Moores, which are very good....we want to be distinctive. We are a Christian College and we are open to those of all faiths and beliefs'. When detailing the inner structure of the College, the Christian bias becomes clearer; 'The trustees are from the Anglican/Catholic traditions. We also have Methodists on the governing council'. The top posts in the College are also reserved for those who are practising Catholics or Anglicans in good standing with their Bishops. Lee summarises the College's stance; 'Liverpool Hope University College is a Christian, Ecumenical Foundation which exists to educate the whole person, mind, body and spirit'.

8.4.2.2. Personal Development

Having established the Christian ethos within the structure of the College, it is important to get some insight as to how far the Christian religion is promoted as part of the College curriculum. Lee details this with some satisfaction. Firstly there is built into the working week of the College a set time for a Christian service; 'Once a week on Tuesday, from 12 till 1, we cancel all classes for foundation hour, and there is an ecumenical service in one or other of our chaplaincies'. He gauges there would be about four or five hundred attend this at the beginning of term and at the end, implying smaller numbers in between. There are also the Feast Days of St Katherine's in November, and for Christ's and Notre Dame (the two former Colleges). Then there is the building itself. The chapel in what was Notre Dame College, is right in the centre of the foyer. The names of Christian men and women are given to certain parts of the building too; 'In these kind of ways we try and remind everybody of our foundation, of our mission, and our theology faculty is so important to us. It's one of our four pillars we say in education - has strong roots in the church, that's another one. A third pillar is our community work, and a fourth is the Arts and Sciences together'. A lot of money is being put into the study of theology, and their first professor was in that faculty. Further, the College is building at present a huge 5 million pound library to be called the Sheppard-Worlock Library, which will contain archives, as well as the theology collection, and will be open to the public.

On a wider note, he still believes that religion plays an important part in

education generally, both at school and university; 'More than half the schools on Merseyside are church schools, mostly Catholic, but some Anglican as well'. The spin-off from the College is that many of the students who attended the College now teach in these same church schools. He reiterates what others seem to have found that church schools are extremely popular with parents around the country. He gives his reasons for this; 'Because of their church connection - their faith, their values, their sense of wanting to educate the whole person, but also their discipline and record of achievement'. He believes successful education depends on the atmosphere created in the school or college; 'The symbols you have, the approach you adopt, and if it is successful at secondary level which it clearly is, it is no surprise that in the rest of the world there are Christian Universities'. He pointed out that there are more Methodist Universities in the United States than Universities in the whole of England. He then makes the confident assertion; 'I think the whole history and notion of the University is tied up with the church....I think what is an aberration is the secularisation of higher education in parts of the English sector, not the other way around'.

Simon Lee is a realist and is aware that it is one thing to have a Christian based College, and another to have students all committed to the faith. A Christian University education carries no better guarantee of a job at the end of it, but he does believe it offers a kind of roundedness and greater fulfilment in life. He also recognises the response levels from students vary; 'For high days and feast days...you will have a bulging chapel...we are nothing like the kind of church attendance, but in a deeper sense people's quest for the spiritual is something which does strike a chord with these 18 year olds through to people who are coming as mature students'. He even admits that Christian students have a fascination for Buddhist spirituality. He concludes with a summary of his goals; 'What we are doing here is trying to work towards an understanding of one another's spirituality - what makes us fully human....There's a huge church out there; a huge spectrum'.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it seems that the Christian religion remains an important factor in a substantial sector of the education system in Liverpool/Merseyside. Despite the Government's broadening of the range of worship to be provided in schools, including multi-faith worship, Christianity still retains priority in Sefton due to a low ethnic presence. In the junior sector, school assemblies seem to be meeting the legal requirements right across Merseyside, according to the respondent, who is also an inspector in this area. Collective worship in

secondary schools is quite a different proposition however. The difficulty with large numbers at one time, coupled with lack of training in teachers, makes this a more sensitive issue. Consequently, the majority of secondary schools are failing to meet the legal requirements. It seems therefore that if Christian collective worship is to be presented in relevant, meaningful ways, more resources have to be put into creating an environment within secondary schools in which young people can come to a greater appreciation of the sacred.

The curriculum prescriptions on Religious Education follow much the same pattern as collective worship, insofar as 51% of the time has to be given over to the teaching of Christianity. Yet informing young people about other religions is also crucial to the curriculum, and for the respondent a vital part of their preparation for future integration in a multi-cultural society. Most schools in the Sefton L.E.A. are meeting their legal requirements. Some however are not giving the allocated time to this, and some teachers are reluctant to fulfil their obligation to teach other religions, whilst other secondary schools are actually stepping up the amount of time given and introducing more qualified staff. Some work has yet to go into this area of education, but in Sefton a lot of effort is being directed to that end. The opening of Emmaeus, the country's first purpose-built ecumenical school on Croxteth Park Estate in 1997, may also be a means of equipping young people to cope more positively with diversity in the religious world.

The respondent dealing with Higher Education in Universities, is critical of the secularisation of these institutions, and believes it is a betrayal of the past. Liverpool Hope University College is attempting to redress that by educating the whole person. The Rector believes religion and education go hand in hand, and have done through the centuries. The rather unusual circumstances in which Liverpool Hope came into being, and the rare nature of the ecumenical partnership in place at that time, are events hardly to be repeated on any scale. It would seem therefore that to provide more Christian education at this higher level, will require a number of commitments. Firstly, greater levels of cross-denominational co-operation throughout the country; secondly, an abundance of money from Christian sources and Government to fund such projects; and finally, a return to that philosophy of the past in which empirical and metaphysical perceptions of reality were not mutually exclusive.

9. LOOKING FORWARD

The churches in Liverpool stand at the gate of a new millennium which will usher increasing challenges to their structures, their outlook, and their message. How far the churches have been prepared to change up till now has already been examined, but there are some further points which the respondents touch on which need to be considered. They anticipate perhaps some of the tensions which arise inevitably from moves threatening further cherished traditions so closely identified with their faith.

9.1. AWARENESS OF OTHER SPIRITUALITIES

A number of the respondents have already indicated that they accept there is a latent spirituality amongst many in the city, occasionally finding expression in alternative forms of worship and other mystical activities. On the larger issue of interfaith relations, the respondents were open and sometimes uncertain on their views about the Christian's relations with those from other major faith groups. Nineteen of the respondents answered questions on this. It will be noticed that there is obvious discord over the approach Christians should adopt in their links with those other groups.

9.1.1 Some General Aspects

Taking a few general attitudes first, there appears to be a rather mixed bag of opinion emerging. Margaret suggested the church should cease to be imperialistic in its approach as it had been in the old days, in attempting to Europeanise the nations. Rather it needs now to identify more with other countries and build on their culture, rather than try to change it. One of her colleagues attends joint discussions between Jews and Christians, but she is doubtful if it is accomplishing anything apart from mutual respect; 'It's showing they are not against each other rather than actively trying to get together'. She further expressed an admiration for Muslim people, particularly those who are trying to live in peaceful co-existence. Harold believes there are more ethnic groups in the city than previously. For him this is a good thing; 'They are keeping their own faith, their own belief, which can only be good for them and the city'. Nonetheless he feels they are in danger of becoming exclusive, and therefore the church 'needs to talk to them more whilst not agreeing with them'. Sam is prepared to go even further; 'Where I can work with people of other religions for the good of our society, then I'm willing to do that'. Norman suggests something more; 'I think there is a lot more to be gained from the interfaith discussions than the ecumenical movement'. This comment is all the more significant in that it comes from one working within the ecumenical

framework.

For Alan, it is of primary importance for individuals to know their own faith first. Yet within that there is opportunity of learning about other peoples' faith and meeting people of other faiths. Further, he accepts that those who don't share a faith in Christ may nonetheless have a great deal to share with us about God in their lives; 'I think we have to accept the absolute integrity of a people's faith, especially when it is borne out in the manner of their lives'.

When however, it comes to the respondents' own personal involvement with other faith groups, the cleavage in opinion becomes more stark. Five of the respondents openly adopt an exclusivist position, with another implying it, claiming Christ is the only way to heaven or God. On the other hand, seven of the respondents are much more pluralistic in outlook, believing that God can work in and through other religions. Three are uncertain over the issue of salvation, whilst another three leave it for God to decide. Finally, although five of the respondents admitted to having no links at all with other faith groups, they did express views about their place in the scheme of things.

9.1.2. Exclusivists

Beginning with those of an exclusivist position, it is noticeable that each of the respondents is Evangelical in outlook. It is also noteworthy that with the exception of two of these respondents, they do not participate in any real ecumenical engagement either. Although small, this sample may indicate that a number of Evangelicals have placed themselves in a rather isolated position as the supposed exclusive purveyors of salvation. One of these respondents, Harold, argues his case; 'We've all got to be prepared to accept our differences, and the central point of the Christian gospel is that no man can come to God but through Jesus Christ'. He argues further that he has not seen much evidence of those from other faiths being willing to look at the Christian faith openly. Douglas expresses his desire to be inclusive by instinct, but cannot permit himself in this case; 'We see that God's revealed way doesn't allow us to be like that in terms of linking in other faiths with him and his revelation of his purposes here on earth, and he makes it clear...that only in Jesus can we actually find truth'. Colin is categorical in his approach to other faith groups; 'Christ is the way; there is no other way. We respect you, but you have to come our way'. He further believes that unless Christ is preached in this exclusive way, then the church will lose its bearings. Fred argues strongly for an exclusivist position with the reiteration that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone. He develops his argument; 'I don't believe in interfaith worship -

I'm sorry, you might call them all God, but they are not the same God. Unless they share the nature of the Father of Jesus they are not God'. He does however acknowledge that some of the morals we pick up from other religions are good. Sam, who has stated he is willing to work with other faith groups, nonetheless refuses to participate in multi-faith worship; 'I would not go into a Muslim, or a Hindu, or even a Jewish situation and worship with them'. William has mixed views on whether other faith groups experience salvation. So he adopts a dual position - a public and private stance. Publicly he is exclusivist; 'As the pastor and preacher I preach that Jesus Christ said, "I am the way the truth and the life, no-one comes to the Father but by me" '. Nonetheless he has witnessed first hand the faith of Hindus and Muslims and seen a sincerity there not evident in some Christians. Privately it leaves him with this burning question; 'Is there a way that somebody outside of Christ can go to heaven'?

9.1.3. Pluralists

Pluralists are just in the majority among the respondents, and most of them strongly take this position. Something of post-modern relativism appears to have taken root amongst a proportion of Liverpool Christians with regard to other faith groups. Margaret summarises a commonly held view; 'They are worshipping according to their lights...I don't think we should put any pressure on them to become Christians...they are all worshipping the same God, aren't they?'. This pluralist position is put again by Emma; 'I would say we are all travelling...there's room for them; room for all of us....All these roads are leading to the ultimate reality of God'. She goes even further; 'I've personally found salvation in Jesus Christ, but if I had been born a Muslim, I would find salvation in going to Mecca...I think it's an accident of birth. I don't think anyone can change from how they've been born, I really don't'. Yet another form of this argument is put by Ralph. He views other religions in the form of the well-known analogy of the mountain. The paths of other religions all lead up to the same God. He is therefore reflective about their final destiny; 'I hope there is still a possibility of salvation for others, even though it may be interpreted in the background of their own culture, and I'd rather have somebody who was a practising worshipper in another religious tradition, than not'. Keith Hobbs makes something of the same assertion about the effects of culture, whilst disclaiming any belief in universalism; 'Tied up with that is the whole question of the country into which you were born, and the faith into which you were born, and many people who exercise positions of leadership and responsibility in many of our churches now will say it really is by accident of birth they are what they are'. Yet he cannot escape his own tradition; 'As a

Christian I am convinced my salvation is in and through Christ, through the cross, resurrection, and God's purposes made clear in Jesus Christ, and that is a position I would want to maintain and would want always to start from'.

Jack gives some insight to his approach when he meets people of other faiths; 'When I come across people of other faiths, I'm very well received by them, because I talk about their faith, not my faith'. He does this with the aim of helping them along their pilgrimage, and not his. Furthermore, he believes it is an imperative that Christians engage in multi-faith worship. The different understandings of God did not nullify the fact that he was the one God of all. Finally, he believes that all faith paths lead ultimately to the one goal; 'I find it very hard to believe that a loving God would automatically cast out all those who have never heard of his love. I believe it's a question of the life you've lived as well as the reason why'. This sympathy with other faith groups, particularly Hindus, is also shared by Stephen; 'I have been struck by their spirituality; by their sense of the otherness of God; the transcendence of God, and the centrality of God in their thinking and living'. He finds a willingness amongst the Hindus in his community to talk and exchange views. The respondent admits to attending and observing Hindu worship, but not participating in it. He recounts his feelings about this; 'I'm not yet comfortable with it, but I'm more comfortable with it than I once was. I think I could be comfortable operating within a Hindu act of worship in terms of my own integrity, offering worship to God as I understand him or her'. On the issue of salvation, Stephen makes a distinction between God's varied means of revelation; 'The God who I believe has expressed himself fully in Jesus has also expressed himself very fully in other cultures and faiths, and while I would want to say always there is something distinct and unique about Jesus, I wouldn't want to say that God has not expressed himself very fully in other world religions and faiths'. He concludes therefore that there will be Hindus in heaven.

David Alton has also been actively involved with different faith groups due to his political commitment. He has spoken at both the Hindu Temple and the Muslim Mosque on politics and other issues of concern. He is also involved with the Jewish-Christian group in Parliament. His approach is a positive one; 'I've tried to build bridges and keep relationships'. On the issue of final salvation he is prepared to leave that to God, but believes that the Christian nonetheless has an evangelistic duty; 'I think it is our duty to spread the good news and tell people about Jesus, and if that is done in a non-confrontational way, people not only respect you from where you are coming, they delight in

what you've got to say'. This has to be distinguished from an overt proselytisation; 'The dilemma for the Christian is that you have a duty placed on you of evangelisation. You have to find ways of doing that - it's often by getting alongside people...sensitivity I think is required'.

Doris has had links mainly with the Jewish and Muslim communities. She has always felt that if she weren't a Christian she would be a Jew. She feels the direction other religions take is legitimate, even though she finds the Muslim concept of the Holy War hard to swallow. Her less doctrinaire view of God enables her to be sympathetic to those of other faiths; 'I think belief in God the Creator is where we started from, and we get tied up when we get into Trinitarian concepts'. Who was to be saved was again left to God, and she was aware of the pressure to be politically correct on matters of religion. She feared Christians could lose their commitment to the faith. Una was adamant that other faiths were not excluded from God's salvation; 'I certainly don't go with the notion that unless you can say Jesus has saved you there is nothing down for you'. She believes we have a great deal to learn from other faiths in their discipline and religious practice, and concludes; 'Perhaps we are beginning to be less arrogant about other faiths'.

Ken believes that the greatest religious strides being made on Merseyside at the moment are in the sphere of interfaith relations. He is actually a member of the Merseyside Interfaith Group and claims to be aware of what is happening and how the other faith groups think; 'These groups would not be happy with assimilation; losing their identity and uniqueness, and just melting into the pot'. He is particularly impressed by the Muslim community and their attempts to integrate themselves with society. This has consequences for the Christian community; 'We are moving from that position of ignorance to one of experience and knowledge...people integrate much more in Liverpool'. Norman reveals something of this closer integration. He is impressed by a close friend associated with another faith group; 'One of my best friends is a Muslim and he's a very spiritual man and I think that what has happened in the mosque here in the community is very interesting in terms of support given to Muslims'. He implies that even amongst Muslims, the light of God is shining.

Conclusion

The Christian community in Liverpool is probably more divided on this matter than on any other. The simplest position is that of the exclusivists who adhere to their position that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Some of them may have questions about the future state of those from other faith groups, but for

the most part, this area of Christian belief is not for discussion. The real dilemma lies with those who are in the pluralist camp. In order to be pluralist, either in worship or in the means of salvation, specific areas of traditional Christian teaching have to be adjusted or abandoned. So we find some believing that God has revealed himself in other world faiths; that the most fundamental Christian view of God - the Trinitarian - is now a stumblingblock to interfaith co-operation; that salvation is found in the practice of other religions; that Jesus Christ is simply one of many ways to God; that religious faith is purely a social accident of birth; that God will not condemn those of other faiths. These are paradigm shifts in Christian doctrine, and it is noticeable amongst some propounding these new beliefs, that there is an accompanying discomfort. What is of further interest is that two respondents valued their interfaith contacts more highly than their ecumenical ones. Perhaps now that ecumenism has become an established part of Liverpool church life, some Christian people are taking the opportunity to tackle this other great goal of finding a syncretism acceptable to the multiplicity of faith groups.

If this does become a distinct aim of the churches, then it could perhaps become a valuable tool in the socialisation of the many different cultures and religions which are increasingly finding a place in British life. Yet the church's inability to fully integrate the Black community over two centuries in Liverpool, raises some doubts over its capacity to achieve the wider goal. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that part of the baggage which religion was shown to bring with it are dysfunctional elements which too often cause other kinds of division. There seems to be this ebb and flow in faith groups, when at times of conflict there are those calling for defection, and at less critical times, others calling for unity. The latter is the position which a significant number of Liverpool Christians appear to be taking at the moment.

The relativism that has been partly responsible for the growing ecumenism amongst Christians, may also become increasingly germane in the multi-faith dialogue which will occupy the church well into the next millennium. The social benefits arising from this would appear to be enormous, should this be realised. Suspicion, fear, and the competition for religious supremacy could give way to a pluralism which acknowledges the value of each other's gods and practices. If ecumenism can help achieve equanimity amongst such competing cultures as Protestant and Catholic as witnessed in Liverpool, the benefits of multi-faith co-operation could be even greater, particularly in the area of racial harmony.

It seems also however, that in order to achieve this goal, there would have to be an inner secularisation taking place amongst Christians in Liverpool, similar to that which social scientists claim for the American church scene (eg. Luckmann, 1972, 37). The church became more 'modern' by rejecting certain Christian core beliefs like the Virgin Birth, miracles, Jesus' resurrection and ascension. In Liverpool however, the suggestions made by the respondents who are pluralistic in outlook, have little official sanction from their churches. Most are personal opinions and there remains strong opposition. It may even be difficult for many of these respondents to air their views publicly. It seems therefore, that unless this challenge of multi-faith parity is clarified officially within the churches, confusion will continue to reign over whether to evangelise or co-exist with other faith groups. Inner secularisation here therefore, has some way to go.

9.2. WHAT KIND OF CHURCH?

Twenty four of the respondents were asked to summarise their hopes for the church. This provided them with an opportunity to share their own personal aspirations, and as in the opening question, enabled them to give the writer an impression of what was of primary importance to Liverpool Christians for the future. The answers were amazingly varied and will be summarised under a number of heads. What is apparent is that there is no overall unitary theme emerging which might serve to harness the spiritual and organisational resources of the Christian communities. Further, a sizeable proportion of what is said might be categorised as wishful thinking. Tangible, visionary goals appear to be lacking.

9.2.1. An Urban/Missionary Church

The chief concern of the Methodist respondent is that there is now no Methodist Church in the city centre. For Jack, Methodism is at the cross-roads on the matter, for the decline in the inner city is not restricted to Liverpool, but is also found in Birkenhead and elsewhere. He states; 'We need perhaps to find a way of finding a more acceptable presence than just a lay worker', referring to himself. He further predicts that four more churches will close on Merseyside, but that should free resources for churches to be established elsewhere in the district; 'I think we need to honour that urban mission alongside the poor, to put churches into new areas, and to grow churches'.

Colin, who is already engaged in urban mission believes strongly that local mission is central to the whole idea of church. Reflecting on the ecumenical

drive within the city, he maintains; 'The one church [formal ecumenism] all over Liverpool that's not doing anything for anyone locally, is a nightmare as far as I am concerned'. He does not however reject the benefits of churches working together, as after some time and effort, a number of churches in his area have agreed allocated geographical areas within which to concentrate their efforts. They are also praying together and aim to work more in harness. He views this with amazement; 'That's a miracle of God's grace that after a year of talking together with ten churches we've been able to agree on our boundaries'. Una hopes the church on Merseyside will listen, learn and respond to the needs around them. This involves a willingness to care, 'to explore and adapt and...continue to welcome people irrespective of where they are coming from'.

9.2.2. A Prophetic Church

A number of respondents picked up on the prophetic theme as something to be grasped by the churches. It was felt that the church had to rediscover its capacity for speaking and acting on behalf of God, and challenge society to return to the Christian way. Jack argues; 'I would like to see us rationalise our institutional work so that it frees us to do evangelism and the prophetic work that we ought to be doing'. For him this involves building on the ecumenical work of 'Marcea', speaking with a united voice. The reason why the church needs to regain its prophetic voice is also given; 'We've lost the battle for the hearts and minds of people, but I think it's possible to regain it'. Norman suggests that church members shouldn't go to church just to warm the seats, but to become more proactive. The prophetic note involves action too; Christians need to get their hands dirty; 'The church should be like yeast in the dough, making a few explosions, causing a few ripples'. His aim in all of this is that Liverpool might develop more spiritually, with people again looking at the scriptures.

For Robert, the church, 'should be prepared to take risks in doing new things'. He further hopes that those who succeed the church leaders will not just take on the mechanical structure of 'Marcea', but would have some creative input of their own. Ken maintains that just as under the two Bishops the church had a high profile on social issues, so now it should continue with that note; 'I hope that it becomes even more vocal about social injustices'.

David Alton however, warns the church against becoming too engrossed in social action; 'The spiritual poverty which is abroad, is still a major issue to be addressed'. He gives as an example of this the two Bishops who joined Billy Graham on the pitch at Anfield in the Mission England Crusade of 1984; 'That

was just as important as standing together on the streets of Toxteth'. For him then, the church has to stand alongside those who are powerless and oppressed, but also to help people with their spiritual needs. Further, if the church is to be prophetic, it should not give off an uncertain sound; 'The world is waiting to hear the difficult things, and if the church doesn't say it to them, then nobody else will, and we'll do ourselves no favours'.

Sam takes a wistful look at church life, reminding himself of a bygone era when the church was the focal point of people's lives. He reflects on his own past; 'I remember my first church in South Wales. That was a village church...many of the activities of the community were centred around the church which was important at that time'. He would like to see this sort of pivotal role return to the church, particularly in Liverpool.

9.2.3. A United Yet Diverse Church

The desire for unity amongst many of the respondents has been evident in other areas already covered, but barely emerges here. Emma is succinct in her hopes for the church's future on Merseyside, using biblical language; 'One church, one faith, one Lord; one God and Father of us all, who is above all, through all, and in all. And one baptism - yes'. Jack's desire for the wider church in Liverpool, is that it will learn to share more. Referring to the week of Christian Unity, he anticipated a joint communion service, but there was one regret; 'I will attend this church with the Catholic priest celebrating, and I can't share in the distribution. I would like to see that change'.

William looks for a greater appreciation and understanding between Christians; 'Working together ultimately for the promotion of the gospel as seen in both its spiritual and social aspects'. For him this also includes a willingness amongst churches and individuals, to share their gifts and abilities; 'What we need to see within the city are those people who have got specific gifts of leadership in certain areas, who can help provide us with that cutting edge which is necessary to see the city effective with the gospel'.

The Orange Order by way of contrast would like to be left alone to decide their form of worship. Bill sums it up; 'I'd like to go back to its traditional values, to go about your religious way of life without people trying to dictate to you that because you are a Bible believing Christian and go to an Anglican church, that you've got to go and join your R.C. friends because they are also Christian. As far as I'm concerned that is totally wrong'. They wish to be left to worship as they are without others pressurising them on this matter. Perhaps this is

another indicator of the Order's inability to distinguish between what they think is happening, with what is really happening. Many churches are not involved in ecumenism, and do not appear to feel pressurised.

9.2.4. A Flexible Church

Richard touched on this, confirming some comments made earlier by others in the chapter on ministry. He argues that as a means to the church becoming more relevant, the structures will have to change in certain areas. 'I think we need to get back into the community and we need to have more housegroups, for it's easier to invite someone to a house than to a church'. The actual working ministry itself has to be adapted; 'I think there will be more team ministries, because of the lack of church leadership within different denominations. There's also going to be more emphasis on lay people taking responsibilities within their own church'. He believes the minister should be freed to focus on what he is about, as a pastor or preacher. Another area which the church has to address is the lack of young people in church. The majority of Richard's young people attend through being born into the church, but others have to be reached too.

Ken sees his church's ministry developing through a wider use of his church building. It is a listed building with great historical interest for Liverpool. He outlines his aim; 'I hope that the building is fully restored....and that it continues to keep its doors open for longer hours and for more activities and more people, and that it has a high profile within Merseyside as a centre of liberal religion, thought and practice'.

9.2.5. A Forward Looking Church

A number of Roman Catholics are particularly concerned the church does not go back to the old days of conflict. Margaret sums up the situation simply. She hopes, 'that it will never get back to the old sectarian ways'. Alan echoes this for his own church; 'I hope that the Catholic Church itself will not retreat into a ghetto again'. He looks forward to the church continuing to be outward looking, ready to speak for the faith, and working where possible in harmony with society. He further hopes the unity established so far will be maintained.

On a different note, Ralph believes a change in church buildings is a necessity for future effectiveness; 'I think an architectural revolution is needed in churches'. He is also convinced the future lies in a communal use of buildings; 'I think you need church buildings which are shared by denominations with different worship traditions using the same buildings'. In his eyes, this could

lead to a coming together of the denominations, and perhaps a means of selecting the best from Christians. This respondent also anticipates a move to more ancient traditions of spirituality, like Celtic and Orthodox spiritualities.

9.2.6. A Church with Eschatological Anticipations

One respondent Tom, clothed his vision of the future in eschatological language, making him unique amongst the respondents. When considering the future of the church, he tended to focus on some of the more prophetic events foretold in the Bible. Three particular events take his attention. Firstly the Return of Jesus Christ. This is something he anticipates as an event, but believes he will go to be with Jesus first at his death. The second event which he endows with spiritual significance, is his belief that the Jews will turn to Christ, accepting him as their Messiah. One of the signs that this is to happen, according to Tom, was the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Added to that, he claims the return of so many Jews from other parts to Israel is nothing less than a miracle. This he believes, will lead to the ultimate salvation of the Jewish people. The final event anticipated is 'the tribulation'. This is a term in the Bible for a time of intense persecution for Christian people at the end of time. Tom anticipates something of this being imminent; 'We can expect lots of tribulation, especially in Britain. I think we are heading for terrible troubles in this country because of our godlessness'.

Conclusion

These hopes of the Christian community are conveyed very much in personal terms, but fail to reveal any consensus of opinion again. Some have seen the weakness of the church in the inner city and wish to redress that, whilst most reflect on the inner workings of the church itself - its ministry, its communion, its pronouncements, its buildings, and its unity. What appears to be lacking is any clear-cut vision of the future. The new millennium will offer fresh challenges in thought and technology, in lifestyles and communications, yet few of the respondents appear to consider any of these issues in their vision of the future.

Nonetheless the respondents do display a desire to be part of a church that is still socially relevant in that it has a worthwhile contribution to make to both the political and social lives of the populace. Undergirding all that of course is the spiritual dimension. If these aspirations are followed through - despite the respondents' lack of any detailed blueprint, then the church of the next century could become more user friendly, more socially aware, less dogmatic, more united, less class oriented, and more outspoken. All this however remains

very much wishful thinking, unless the churches manage to build upon the unity already attained, and show a commitment to the full range of social groups. As has been shown, a lot of thought and effort is going into these areas, and some progress is being made in social welfare, education, and multi-faith/denominational co-operation.

Even so however, some social scientists express a pessimistic outlook. They claim the days when the church in the West had any widespread legitimacy for its religion and morality are all but gone (Berger,1973; Wilson,1982). This may be overstating the case. Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, for example, argue differently, using quantitative data based on the American scene. They assert that secularisation is simply 'one of three fundamental and inter-related processes that constantly occur in all economies'. It 'generates two countervailing processes. One of these is revival.....Secularisation also stimulates religious innovation'. They are convinced that the vision of a religionless future is 'but illusion' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 1-2). The results of most surveys taken in recent years would validate this conclusion in that most people still do believe in a God of some sort (Brierley, 1997, 5.13), and the proliferation of alternative religions is also a marked feature of the West. It still may be possible then for churches in more localised communities to bond together in a common faith and goal. If successful, social and religious cohesion could be achieved bringing with it a more harmonious and tolerant society.

10. DENOMINATIONAL RE-ALIGNMENT

The period from the mid-1960s to the present is a critical one for the development of a more harmonious and united form of Christianity in England. While it is the case that the denominations still retain their distinctiveness - and present day ecumenism encourages this, it is nonetheless one of the features of recent decades that the concept of co-operation rather than confrontation is much more to the fore in many Christian leaders' vocabulary. In Liverpool alone, advancements in ecumenical partnership have been made to such a degree, that some leaders claim it is the only way forward. Even some Evangelicals, who traditionally have been wary of ecumenical involvement, have seen fit to align themselves with this movement of co-operation. Other Evangelicals are still sitting on the sidelines observing however, whilst some remain hostile. So while there may be a perception that most Christianity in the city is ecumenically centred - and much of it is, it still has to be acknowledged that a lot of it isn't. Nonetheless, an increasing awareness of one another's traditions, has begun to mark many Christians, and led by the two Bishops and Free Church Moderator in the nineteen seventies and eighties, this came to fruition in the signing of the Covenant of Ecumenical Assembly in 1985 in Liverpool (Sheppard and Worlock, 1989, 95). Furthermore, this re-alignment seems to have emerged from a post-modern pluralism enforcing some theological rationalisation.

10.1 ROMAN CATHOLIC 'PROTESTANTISATION'

10.1.1. Causes

For the best part of four hundred years, the Roman Catholic Church has maintained a position of detachment from all Protestant denominations. The basis of this lay in the break of the Reformation, following which all Protestants were considered lapsed members of 'Mother Church'. The attitude of Rome towards Protestants became one of intransigence; either return to the fold, or be excluded from God's salvation. Catholic dogmatism and separateness has been re-enforced over the centuries by means of Papal Bulls and declarations of Councils, but has more recently been challenged by individual theologians questioning major doctrinal positions.

At the First Vatican Council for example (1869-70), there was a healthy debate on the infallibility of the Pope and how wide-ranging it should become. The agreed definition allowed the Pontiff infallibility only when pronouncing ex cathedra on matters of faith and morals (Lane, 1984, 212). Again in 1950,

the dogma of the Assumption of Mary was introduced by Pius XII. This declared Mary was taken to heaven by God without facing death (Lane, 1984, 213). Such pronouncements only served to deepen the rift between the Protestant and Catholic churches.

In contrast to Papal Bulls and Council pronouncements however, there appeared the works of individual Catholic theologians who threw into question some of the foundational dogmas of Catholicism. For example, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) developed his theory of 'anonymous Christianity'. Contrary to traditional Catholicism, Rahner announced that God's grace is at work in the non-Christian religions as well as in atheists, because as the individual encounters, and then obeys his conscience, so he finds God even though he does not realise it (Lane, 1984, 219). Contemporaneous with Rahner, is the Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Kung (1928-), who prepared the way more radically for Protestant and Catholic re-alignment. Upon an investigation into the theology of the Protestant theologian Karl Barth, Kung announced there was no irreconcilable difference between this and the Catholic stance taken at the Council of Trent (Lane, 1984, 219). The effect of Kung's book has been a widespread feeling among Roman Catholic theologians that the doctrine of Justification by faith alone is acceptable and need not divide the confessions (Lane, 1984, 220). It needs to be noted however that Kung in 1979 was disowned as a Catholic theologian by the Church for his controversial views on the papacy, though it stopped short at excommunicating him (Lane, 1984, 220).

This kind of theological softening may have played a part in making the confessional shift necessary as the Catholic Church moved into the second half of the twentieth century. Having said that however, McSweeney points out there has always remained a traditional Catholicism which rejects the new theology and doctrinal tolerance 'in favour of the dogmatic certitude and authoritarian government of the old Catholicism' (McSweeney, 1980, 222).

Other causes underpinning the shift in Catholicism include a desire for modernisation, the Catholic 'aggiornamento'. Bishop Butler contends that in the two decades since the Second Vatican Council, 'already a generation is reaching adulthood that has no memory of the pre-conciliar church, a generation for which compulsory fish on Friday, the Tridentine Latin Mass, and strong hostility to Protestantism are either unknown or seem as odd as the crinoline' (Butler, 1981, 211). Accompanying the drive for modernisation amongst many Catholics however, is an inconsistent morality. In the Liverpool of the 1950s, Kerr found the morality there was one 'which rejected birth

control but accepted abortion up to three months' (Kerr, 1958; 137, 170). Yet the Catholic Church remains denunciatory on both these issues. Coman asserts that a dissolution of a distinctive Catholic sub-culture has come about, 'through education and mixed marriage, the dissent over traditional teaching in birth regulation, the questioning of the limits of papal authority, the gradual substitution of English for Latin in the liturgy, the tentative movements towards ecumenism, the softening of traditional disapproval of mixed marriages, and the abolition of Friday abstinence' (Coman, 1977, 105). How then did these social swings and theological persuasions find root in Catholicism?

10.1.2. Means

At the heart of this historic change is the momentous Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. Called by Pope John XXIII as a consequence of inspiration while at prayer, the Council became an opportunity for the progressive forces to open 'the windows of the church to let in some fresh air' (McAfee Brown, 1964, 2). It was to be an ecumenically oriented Council 'in the sense that it looked to a future in which divided Christendom would be reunited' (McAfee Brown, 1964, 3). Primarily however, the Council was concerned with 'the inner life of Roman Catholicism, and with the reform, renewal and 'aggiornamento' of that branch of Christendom' (McAfee Brown, 1964, 3).

The Second Vatican Council brought about specific changes in Catholic practice which have been so revolutionary as to make Hastings refer to it as the 'protestantisation' of Catholicism. 'It so greatly changed the character of by far the largest communion of Christendom.....that no-one has been left unaffected' (Hastings, 1986, 525). This great change not only permitted Catholics to take part in ecumenical dialogue, but also altered the whole context in which initiatives take place. Hastings refers to the visits of two English Archbishops to Rome during the early 1960s as examples of the change of mood. In 1960, Dr Fisher paid a private visit to Pope John XXIII, and in 1966 Archbishop Ramsay made a similar journey, though a much more publicised one. Hastings sums up the events this way; 'Here was both a deliberate example of prayer in common and a degree of mutual recognition which would have seemed unimaginable a decade earlier' (Hastings, 1986, 530-1).

Hornsby Smith however, rejects the notion of the 'protestantisation' of English Catholicism, preferring to regard Catholics as having been secularised rather than assimilating Protestantism. He uses the term 'normative convergence' to describe the process in which Catholics and non-Catholics converge on moral,

social, political and religious issues (Hornsby Smith, 1987, 216). Nonetheless three particular changes in Catholicism seem to have contributed markedly to the re-alignment of the churches in recent decades, encouraging what Heelas refers to as dedifferentiation (see 3.2.2.1).

Firstly the Mass was to be conducted in the vernacular, and not in Latin (though the Tridentine Latin Mass was to be retained and used on occasions - as witnessed in Liverpool). This enabled not only many Catholics to understand the meaning of events more clearly, but helped rid it of its mystique for non-Catholics. It would also aid the ecumenical purposes of many Catholics. Secondly, there was a greater emphasis given to the place of Scripture in Catholic worship. The sermon was given more importance, and members were encouraged to read and study the Bible themselves. In 1973, the first version of the Bible produced by Catholic and Protestant scholars together appeared. This was the 'Common Bible', a new edition of the Revised Standard Version. Again, this became an aid to ecumenical co-operation, for now even editions of the Bible need no longer separate Christians.

Finally and most importantly, from this Council emerged a much more generous disposition towards other Christians. On this subject it was said of the Pope; 'To him they were first of all "brethren" and only secondarily, if tragically, "separated". Pope John beckoned the Catholic Church to move out towards the "separated brethren" as far as it could, in fidelity to her convictions' (McAfee Brown, 1964, 9). Part of the statement on this from the Council itself expresses regret at the divisions of the past. 'The Lord of Ages nevertheless wisely and patiently follows out the plan of his grace on our behalf, sinners that we are. In recent times he has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians, remorse over their divisions and longings for unity' (Pascoe and Redford, 1988, 214).

From being a Church which for centuries had entrenched itself in the traditions of its past, the Catholic Church now faced up to the challenge of Scripture, the unrest of many of its leaders, as well as the pragmatic call for unity from other believers. The Second Vatican Council became the means by which the practice of Catholics in many parts would never quite be the same again.

10.1.3. Effects

The effects of Vatican 2 are widely evident when considering the present state of Catholicism. Whereas prior to the Council, 'Catholic styles of devotion were entirely strange in the eyes of most Protestants' (McLeod, 1996, 44), Catholic

churches subsequently became more open to non-Catholics. The Priesthood also became more approachable and less authoritarian, and the worship better understood by the laity of all denominations. As a consequence sectarian prejudice and fear is gradually being extinguished in areas where Protestantism too is less entrenched.

In Liverpool particularly, the Second Vatican Council paved the way for the Catholic leaders to enter into partnership with those of other denominations. Covenants have been signed by denominations in specific parishes in which they aim to work together as much as possible, and in this way, the new ecumenism being practised in the city has become one factor helping eradicate the sectarian divisions of the past.

Some however, believe a section of Catholics have been marginalised through this process of change. 'What appears ..... is a growing divergence between the educated activist, leadership groups,.....and the mass of relatively passive nominal Catholics, largely unconcerned about the renewal process initiated and encouraged by activists in the church. The response to this process seems likely to be a growing alienation on the part of the traditional working class mass of Catholics in the inner cities.....There seems to be a danger that the "Church of sinners", mainly working class, might become a sect mainly of middle class activists' (Hornsby-Smith and Cordingley, 1983; 33-34).

The reasons for this divergence amongst Catholics are varied. Davie perhaps indicates some of them in her analysis of data acquired in the 1980s. Firstly, the Catholic community tends to be relatively young and working class, and consisting of a significant proportion of first generation immigrants - 25% of those sampled at the close of the 1980s. At the same time there has been a considerable social and geographical mobility, 'persistent migration away from the North West towards the South East; away that is, from the old traditional working class and largely Irish parishes, into the new suburban estates of all the major conurbations' (Davie, 1995, 58). Secondly, 'professional and managerial Catholics attend church more often than manual workers' (Davie, 1995, 58). Finally, there is emerging a greater 'internal diversity discernible with respect to origins, beliefs and practices, and increasingly noticeable with each post-war decade that passes' (Davie, 1995, 58). This has partly come about due to increasing contact with the surrounding society.

It may well be that the tendency of those working class Catholics - many of them immigrants - to feel secure within the confines of their own socio-

religious group, makes it more difficult to accept change. The very nature of their subculture may appear to be threatened. Whereas the more educated and ambitious Catholics who aspire to improve the quality of their lives, will be more likely to get involved in the process of change to develop the image and practice of their church. Vatican 2 then, appears to have been the catalyst for a more pronounced cleavage in English Catholicism.

10.2. NUMERICAL DECLINE

Throughout the twentieth century the Christian denominations have all had to confront a marked reduction in the numbers of people attending their places of worship. Yet it has also been demonstrated by other researchers in this field, that there has not been a parallel departure from Christian beliefs amongst the general populace. Davie claims that 'believing without belonging' has become the mark of religiosity in much of Western Europe, though the writer has attempted to show this needs modified slightly. Many people who do not attend a church regularly still feel they 'belong' to a local parish and demonstrate that in their desire for rites of passage such as baptism and funerals. Before attempting to analyse the present scene then, it will be necessary to reflect on past religious trends and then make a comparison.

10.2.1. The Past

For a comparison with the past, it is not the intention of this work to go further back than the nineteenth century. The centuries immediately following the Reformation were dramatically different in labour and outlook, and bear little resemblance to the world of today. Even then however, ' "the common" people of England never were significantly attached to organised religion' (Hornsby Smith, 1987, 26). In the nineteenth century however, the Industrial Revolution changed Britain from being a mainly agrarian to a mainly urban society. The demographic shift was substantial. Whereas 'in 1851 half the population had lived in urban areas; by 1901, four fifths did so' (McLeod, 1996, 27). During this period nonetheless, 'One must be struck by the degree to which Christianity was at least passively accepted by the great majority of the population' (McLeod, 1996, 2).

Some contend however, that the Victorian Christian boom was an overwhelmingly middle-class phenomenon, and that the working classes were by and large left on the sidelines. 'For much of the nineteenth century a very large proportion of the middle and upper-class population had attended one or more church services every Sunday' (McLeod, 1996, 170). Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London at the end of the nineteenth century asserted; 'It

is not that the church of God has lost the great towns; it never had them' (Quoted in Hornsby Smith, 1987, 26). In Liverpool a conference was called in January 1869 to tackle the causes of the prevailing indifference of the working classes to public worship. A wide variety of reasons were given. For example the pew rents were prohibitive, and many were put into 'poor seats' and branded as poor people. The gin houses opened on Sundays, there was poor visiting by the Ministers who too often were indifferent to the working classes, or people were too tired having worked all day (Evangelical Record, Vol 1; Feb.1868). There appears enough evidence to show there was some concern in Victorian days that church attendance was marginal amongst the working classes.

Cox indicates however, that despite this, the churches had an extensive presence in working class areas, and that the prevailing religious outlook in areas of London was not indifference, let alone 'heathenism', but what he calls 'diffusive Christianity', or popular religion (Cox, 1982, 90-105). In the nineteenth century for example, 'the Anglican Church undertook a massive church-building programme which filled previously neglected working-class districts....with a dense network of parishes' (McLeod, 1996; 24, 18-19). The Catholic Church also became identified in many areas, particularly in Liverpool, with the working classes, and has traditionally been noted for its success in such communities (Caradog Jones, 1934, 337). Hornsby Smith argues however that this apparent 'success' of Catholicism in working class areas is misleading. It was linked too closely with large-scale immigration from Ireland, and with its cessation, the working classes have subsequently become alienated from the life of the church (Hornsby-Smith, 1987, 211).

The record from the nineteenth century then, displays an irregular spread of church life amongst the different social classes. Here and there the church is strong as it is identified with a specific socio-religious community - as in the case of Irish Catholics, or status - as in the case of the middle classes. Yet elsewhere the picture is less favourable, for despite extra church buildings being erected to cater for working class spiritual needs, the reality there appears to be a passivity in matters of religion, rather than active involvement.

10.2.2. Statistical Evidence

Statistically there can be little doubt about most of the trends of religious affiliation. Since the nineteenth century, they have gone downwards. Church leaders, clergy and members have been confronting this issue much more assiduously in the last three decades, but the decline, with some exceptions,

continues unabated. 'Only 14.4% of the population in these islands now claims membership (in an active sense) of a Christian church' (Davie, 1995, 47). Fewer than one in ten people in England attend church and they are fairly evenly divided between the state Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the various Nonconformist denominations (Bruce, 1995, 39). The decline however, is uneven, with the larger denominations suffering the greatest losses. Yet the Pentecostal churches, the more independent denominations and the Orthodox Church, showed a varied range of growth in 1995 (Davie, 1995, 49). Added to membership figures, there are the other socio- religious indicators of decline also. In 1990, baptisms in the Church of England were only 27.5% of births compared to 67% in 1950. Between 1960 and 1982, the number of confirmations fell from 191,000 per year to 84,500 per year (Davie, 1995, 52). Hastings summarises this state of affairs bluntly; 'It is not exaggerated to conclude that between 1960 and 1985 the Church of England as a going concern was effectively reduced to not much more than half its previous size' (Hastings, 1986, 603).

Around 11% of the adult population of England and Wales is Roman Catholic (Davie, 1995, 58). The peak of Roman Catholic activity occurred in the 1960's, but in the next ten to fifteen years, the figures began to take a dip. From a membership attending mass in Britain in 1950 of 3.5 million, it had decreased to 2.2 million in 1990 (Bruce, 1995, 37). The projection for the year 2,000, has the total mass attendance for the United Kingdom as being approximately 1.8 million (Brierley, 1997, 2.8.3)

The main Nonconformist Churches reached their maximum membership just before the First World War, but between 1914 and 1970 their total membership dropped by about one third. The Baptists are the partial exception, and have through most of the 1980's arrested this trend (Davie, 1995, 61). Davie suggests the Baptists have been successful here because they are something of a bridge between Old Dissent and newer forms of church life, like the house churches. They also rely on the active commitment of their members for their very existence as a 'gathered' congregation (Davie, 1995, 63). The projected figures for the year 2,000 however, indicate even Baptists are suffering reversals, with a drop of around 6,000 members since 1995 (Brierley, 1997, 2.10.2).

Whilst these figures may present a downside in organised religious practice, it is not a situation which is unique to the churches. There is some evidence to suggest this decline is not simply a matter of an increasingly secular society

rejecting the God of former generations. Jenkins suggests a sociological answer when comparing church life to that of other British institutions; 'If churches languish, so do many voluntary charitable organisations, and at the local level at least, so does active membership in political parties.....This suggests that the causes of our much-canvassed religious decline are related to a wider communal malaise and are likely to be as much cultural as directly religious' (Jenkins; 1975, viii). Both Beckford and Davie suggest there is an unexplored field of research here (Davie, 1995; 18-19; Beckford 1992), but it nonetheless throws into doubt any singular diagnosis of religious decline.

Conclusion

The apparent decline in religious involvement then is something the churches cannot avoid. Yet rather than driving them all into ever decreasing ghetto-like congregations or denominations, this has become part of the process by which many of the churches have come together in recent decades. One interpretation of the ecumenism which has developed therefore, is that it has been forged as a direct consequence of the church's desperate plight. Doris for example, quotes a sceptical friend on this subject; 'Ecumenism is the sign of a dying church'.

This argument might carry some weight, but is it particularly relevant to Liverpool? The evidence is not convincing. The two Bishops began their partnership in the seventies when their churches were still relatively strong. Certainly the Catholic Church had at that time the largest diocese in the country numerically. Furthermore, the Bishops pushed forward the process of partnership against advice that it might rekindle the hostilities of the past. Finally, it has to be remembered the ecumenical process had been underway for some centuries, and boosted in the early part of this century at Edinburgh in 1910. It may then be unfair to credit all ecumenical co-operation to numerical expediency, though there is a recognition that some loads should be shared, like the ecumenical City Centre Team, and the work of 'Care'. For many within the ecumenical movement, there appears to be a genuine spiritual impulse to create the one church which they believe Jesus Christ himself desired.

10.3. RELIGIOUS RELATIVISM

It has been shown in 3.2.1.4 that religious relativism is an accompaniment of the post-modern era. This is based on a desire to expand the boundaries of knowledge and experience by claiming all views are valid, and insisting there is no right or wrong. Everything can have meaning, and freedom of choice

becomes one of the keys to knowledge. Yet clearly this kind of relativism has severe limitations. Few would attempt to justify the Holocaust as one possible life choice amongst others. Religious relativism however, has powerfully influenced many recent thinkers on the subject, and some of the arguments used to promote it will be considered here. The arguments deal mainly with interfaith relations, but the aim is to discover if there is a linkage with the process of denominational re-alignment.

10.3.1. Relativist Theory

The basis of what is presented here is found in the book edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter, 'The Myth of Christian Uniqueness' (S.C.M. Press, 1987). In this book a number of writers argue for a relativism amongst the religions, and propound some ways in which this might be achieved. Three main stages are suggested as being necessary if the world's religions, and particularly Christianity, are to release their claim to absoluteness.

The first and fundamental stage is to make a theological shift. Gordon Kaufman argues that a move has to be made by Christian people away from a stance on absoluteness, whereby it is taken for granted 'that the fundamental truths and values needed for the proper ordering of human life are available and known in and to the Christian tradition' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 3). This absolutist position inevitably leads to confronting other religious or secular traditions negatively, refuting them and rejecting them as mistaken (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987,4). Kaufman's approach therefore is to make the shift from this theologically dogmatic stance to a position where other traditions are viewed from a historical and comparative position. 'In the course of history women and men have developed many diverse worldviews, many different conceptions of what life in the world is all about' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 7). Kaufman's view simply stated is that humans themselves created and developed their varied religious traditions in an attempt to understand the meaning to existence.

What this means in practice for Christians, is that they begin to think of themselves as historical beings like everyone else, who have made that journey of discovery within a particular cultural context. Christian traditions, values and understanding of truth therefore, are themselves historical developments, 'creations of the human imagination in and through history, like those of any other people or community' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 8). Here then is the theological shift. No longer ought Christians to view their religion as grounded directly in divine revelation, but as part of the historical development

of human society. For Kaufman then, the theological statements of the religious traditions are merely products of human study and reflection. 'None of us - Christian or non-Christian - possess absolute or final truth...at best we Christians, like all others, have available to ourselves the insights and understandings of our forbears. But these were, in all cases, their own imaginative constructions....and thus finite, limited, and relative' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987,13)

The second stage is to acknowledge the value of other cultures' religion. John Hick uses this as the basis of his argument that the absoluteness claimed by Christianity has to be abandoned. For him the explosion of knowledge among Christians in the West concerning the other great religious traditions of the world has been one of the decisive factors in many thinking Christians beginning to take that step (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 17). As evidence that an erosion of Christian absolutism is already taking place, Hick refers to the Second Vatican Council of 1963-65. He claims that Vatican 2 repealed the extra ecclesium nulla salus (ie. the 'no salvation outside of the church') doctrine by declaring there is salvation outside the visible church. Speaking of Christ's redemption and its effects, Hick quotes Vatican 2. 'All this holds true, not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way...we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 21). Hick concludes from this that the possibility of salvation was thus extended officially in principle to the whole world, a move of which Karl Rahner would have approved. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church still retains its belief in the centrality of Christ, even though Hick believes his superiority has receded into the background. Again Vatican 2 is cited; 'All must be converted to [Christ] as he is made known by the church's preaching' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 21-2).

Hick also suggests that a similar theological shift is taking place within the Protestant World Council of Churches, though he provides very little illustration of it (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 22). On this basis Hick concludes that it seems 'arbitrary and unrealistic to go on insisting that the Christ event is the sole and exclusive source of human salvation' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 22).

The final stage is the adoption of a pluralistic attitude to religion. Langdon Gilkey argues that a new interpretation of Christian obligations to the world has been emerging from the Ecumenical Movement; 'The most important

development, I think, is the shift in the balance between what were called the requirements of the faith and those of love' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 38). One of these requirements was the need to defend the faith against all other viewpoints, and this even outranked the obligation to love the other. Gilkey suggests a reversal has taken place here and that love has now become the major obligation. A corollary of that has been the demotion of the creeds, confessions and even scripture itself, to being merely human and historical, and therefore 'relative expressions of a truth that transcended any single expression' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 38).

Gilkey argues further that no religious tradition is universal; rather they are particular (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 41-42). Yet somehow he believes we must find 'a theological mode of universality'. His solution is found in a two-tier understanding of religious expression. For the elite of each religion there is a mystical and universal core which they can grasp and articulate in a philosophy of absolutism. The outer clothing of the religion, its symbols, moral laws and sacraments are revealed however, 'for the divine understands that not all men and women are elite, and that different cultures need different religious homes, so to speak. Thus each particular religion is true and yet relative, a true revelation for that community, relative to other true revelations to other communities' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 43). The question arises however, and is posed by Gilkey himself, that if no revelation is held to be finally valid, how is any truth to be known? His solution is to provide a dialectic, producing 'a relative absoluteness' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987,47). This involves believers (of whatever religion) retaining their own standpoint, but on the other hand refusing to absolutize that standpoint. 'On the contrary, we relativize it radically: truth and grace are also with the other, so that now ours is only one way' (Hick and Knitter [eds.] 1987, 47)

Conclusion

How far the relativistic arguments have influenced Liverpool Christianity remains an unknown quantity, but it would appear that some of the conclusions have nonetheless found a home in a number of the respondents. Kaufman's suggestion that historical processes should be the basis of viewing the world's religions is evidenced in those respondents who claimed that the religion practised by individuals was culturally and historically determined. Individuals were locked into that. The belief that God speaks in other cultures and other religions was also pivotal to those respondents with a pluralistic worldview, yet the paradox of Vatican 2 (mentioned by Hick) in which it insists on the centrality of Christ is also evident in some.

Gilkey's complex view of 'relative absoluteness' is perhaps too novel and is not something articulated by any of the respondents. Yet his suggestion that love has replaced dogmatic faith in the outlook of many Christians would find approval amongst Liverpool pluralists. Their unwillingness to judge other faith groups, their desire to forego some fundamental doctrines, and their urge to leave the door open to others for God to show mercy, is some evidence of that.

It could be argued then that this kind of relativism expressed towards other religions and other cultures, is built upon the tolerance and acceptance fostered in ecumenism - and Gilkey hints at that. There too, relativism has been apparent. Dogma has been softened in some cases, as in the place of scripture and authority, and greater openness to others' spirituality is evident. Some Christians now perhaps accept more readily that God can work in a Muslim or Hindu culture, because they have come to acknowledge he can work within a Catholic or Protestant culture. It is noteworthy that most of the respondents who are pluralists are also keen ecumenists. The relativism practised in these two areas is an indicator of its importance in the re-alignment of the Liverpool churches.

11. CONCLUSION: A NEW TUNE?

At the outset of the thesis it was suggested that the conceptual model of counterpoint in musical composition, could be used to establish a framework within which the religious life of Liverpool might be analysed. Counterpoint is that process involving the interplay of different melodies with a main theme, sometimes complementing and sometimes contrasting that theme. The previous chapters have attempted to parallel that process in relation to the social and religious themes interacting around the sectarian history of the city. This chapter will attempt to summarise the conclusions and evaluate their significance.

11.1. THE OLD TUNE: SECTARIANISM

Running through the religious history of Liverpool's recent past has been the story of the sectarian impasse encountered around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Much of the literature written on the city's life includes this sectarian element, and as a consequence has perhaps helped root this specific religious perspective in the thinking of many of its citizens. It is this re-iteration of religious conflict which makes the sectarianism of the past an appropriate central theme around which other religious movements and impulses might revolve.

First of all, sectarianism was socially and religiously one of the dominant issues of the period. For Liverpool people the religious conflict impinged on almost every aspect of their lives. Marx's proposition that religion can be used as an effective means of social control was given some credence in Liverpool at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see 3.1.3). Politically the city was controlled by religious partiality, almost exclusively in favour of Protestantism, leaving Catholics with a deep sense of disenfranchisement. Housing and jobs were matters often decided by religious affiliation, and subsequently religious cartels were established in the job sector. Housing ghettos were also formed in parts of the city. Outbreaks of violence were a continuous problem, particularly at the commencement of the twentieth century, with the year 1909 notorious for its bitter religious conflicts.

Secondly, sectarianism provided a basis for both personal and cultural identity by offering a belief system and community out of which the participants could emerge to live their lives in the wider society or into which they could retreat when events turned against them. A significant part of that identification was nurtured by the sectarian nature of the education system (see 8.4.1.3). Both

Catholics and Loyalist Protestants used the education system to socialise a child in the ways and beliefs of their respective communities. Sectarianism divided the education system to such an extent that even after Government intervened and established elected school Boards to run the non-church elementary schools, infighting persisted amongst the Liverpool Board members as to what form of Christian religion was taught. Schools provided political opportunities for religious groups who attempted to capture supremacy on the Boards. Children therefore continued to grow up within an education system which fostered sectarian prejudice.

It has been shown nonetheless that despite the past, Government and parents favour the continued use of church schools (see 8.4.1 and 8.4.1.3). The Government in more recent years however, has adapted legislation to accommodate the multi-faith culture whose needs the education system must now provide. So though church schools have the right to teach their own denominational brand of the faith, they are also encouraged to provide a religious education which informs on the faith of other cultures. The ecumenism of the past twenty years in Liverpool particularly has also helped overcome the 'demonisation' of others with differing beliefs. A greater toleration and understanding marks the approach of educationalists and governments to religious diversity today.

Parents on the other hand indicate their approval of church schools by 'queueing' for them. Many such schools are oversubscribed. It has been shown that the quality of discipline, teaching, and Christian ethos are viewed positively by parents – even though they may not embrace the Christian faith personally. The Marxist assertion of the church's social control through institutions, including schools, is patently dated in Liverpool, and increasingly irrelevant in an age of greater personal freedom and social mobility.

Finally, sectarianism even divided the working class community in Liverpool in a way hardly known elsewhere. This is in stark contrast to Durkheim's Totemism which suggested that religion is an expression of a 'determined society' worshipping itself. As has been argued (3.1.2) this view is only applicable in a homogenous society. Totemism as a system fails in a diverse society such as that of Liverpool at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While the new Trade Unions were drawing working class men together in a form of labour solidarity in other parts, it was not so in Liverpool, particularly

in the early stages of Trade Unionism. Working class divisions were fostered by the Conservative Working Men's Association and the Orange Order working in harness, whilst later in local government, a caucus of Catholic Labour MP's split the local party, and controlled the city for most of the 1930s. All this made it virtually impossible for any one group to unite the factions and draw people together for the benefit of the city. Even the neutral Unitarians, who never did attract the mass of the population, were less influential following the deaths of Holt, Rathbone, and Bowring (Waller, 1981, 14). Sectarianism was to remain a deep scar on the life of Liverpool for some time to come.

11.2. THE PRESENT TUNE: A MERSEY MIRACLE?

By way of contrast, the city at the present has just emerged from a relatively brief period of history which has revealed a starkly contrasting picture of religious life. Since the death of Archbishop Worlock in 1996, and the retirement of Bishop Sheppard in 1997, the city has had opportunity to reflect on the work they have accomplished in the past twenty years. Part of this thesis is to do just that. Has there then been a 'Mersey Miracle' of ecumenism, and if so how far has it gone and how lasting will it be?

First of all the context in which the two Bishops undertook their task is an important one. Church leaders in other areas of the U.K. have engaged in ecumenical activity without the accompanying publicity of the two Liverpool Bishops, so what has been so distinct about their ministry? It has been shown that since the worst sectarian days of the early part of the century, the city had never quite climbed out of that religious mire of mutual suspicion and antagonism. Church leaders in the city through the remainder of the century had talked and even been friends, but that was as far as they had dared go. The two Bishops therefore began from a low base, and perhaps the reason for their high profile is a consequence of their attempt to do something radical to remove that deep-rooted suspicion.

Secondly the timing of the arrival of the two Bishops was critical. Although Bishop Sheppard arrived first in 1975, he had not established any pattern to his ministry when Archbishop Worlock arrived in 1976. The latter therefore, was not embracing an established policy of his Anglican counterpart. Both from the outset together, embarked on their journey to improve ecumenical co-operation significantly, and at the same time remove the antagonisms of the past.

Socially it was also an opportune time for them to arrive in the city. It was a

time when a much more liberal attitude to religion and behaviour was evident, following upon the permissive 1960s and early 1970s (Davies, 1975). Old taboos were questioned, a new morality was being explored, and traditional religion was out of fashion. Davie has shown how Britain had become part of the religious 'exceptionalism' witnessed in Western Europe (Davie, 1999). Whilst many parts of the world were experiencing some form of religious revival, Britain and Western Europe were becoming increasingly secular. Many sociologists as a consequence were writing off the church. Diminished numbers were a sign that the church was being marginalised (Berger, 1973). A more private, non-institutional form of religion was emerging (Luckmann 1972).

In the realm of beliefs, relativism was becoming an increasing factor. Fewer believers viewed their faith in exclusivist terms (Hick and Knitter, 1987). This is expressed in the interfaith dialogue in Liverpool at the present, though as yet only a small percentage of people seem to be involved at a tangible level. Two of the respondents valued their interfaith links more highly than their ecumenical connections. A significant number of the respondents were remarkably open to other faith groups (9.1.3). They were less exclusive in their doctrinal stance. No longer do many of them believe Jesus to be the only way to God. Relativistic attitudes then may have brought about a change of outlook towards other religions amongst some Christian people, but actual participation seems a distance off yet.

There remains a great deal of optimism however amongst the respondents (6.2.1). Much of that has been due to the work of the Bishops and other church leaders. The church under them became a major player in the ordering of the city. Further, Christians were called upon, not to abandon their unique traditions, but to embrace one another in a common faith and work together where possible. Ecumenism was to replace pluralism in this sphere at least.

Economically the time was also opportune for their arrival. Whilst in other parts of the country economic improvement provided increased leisure, and greater educational opportunities enabled more people to challenge the status quo, Liverpool remained in economic decline. This paradox helped provide the Bishops with a key social role. They deprivatised religion by demonstrating their empathy with Liverpool workers as well as carrying out their religious duties. The one role informed the other. Books such as 'Built as a City'(1974) and 'Bias to the Poor' (1983) were written by Bishop Sheppard around this time advocating a greater involvement by the Church in social issues. He also

chaired the Church of England's report on 'Faith in the City' (1985). In these ways the Church leaders reflected the revival and growth of public forms of religion emerging world-wide as religious movements began to speak and act on socio-political issues which affected them deeply (see 3.2.2.1). The social and world contexts therefore, provided a timely opportunity for the two prelates to take up the challenge to think and act differently, and call their communicants to follow likewise.

Finally, the men themselves were important. Both knew each other from their days in London, though the contact was superficial. This nonetheless provided a basis for the two of them to come together and share what experiences they had. The key to their success would appear to lie in their own deep personal friendship which developed over the years of their working together. This formed the basis of their partnership as they broke into the hardened presuppositions of their respective flocks and attempted to soften them. Not only that, the Bishops decided early on that this required action in a wider context. They were quick to see the need to include other denominations, particularly the Free Churches, and established 'Marcea' (Merseyside and Region Churches' Ecumenical Assembly) as a framework through which the wider church could function at an ecumenical level. They also drew in those from commerce and industry who were sympathetic to the cause they were espousing, to broaden ecumenism's validity. Here again the church leaders were engaging in that process described as dedifferentiation (see 3.2.2.1). In bringing diverse churches and groups together to work and worship together where possible, they broke down the barriers which had previously divided them. Matters they had in common outweighed their differences. These two sides to their work - the ecclesiastical and the social - helped legitimate the Bishops' work on a broad scale. By means of this wide partnership they made inroads to Liverpool public life in a way no other religious leaders had done since the days of sectarian activity. As a consequence, it can be strongly argued they were major players in the radical change of attitude to sectarian religion. They epitomised Weber's 'prophetic religion' in which a charismatic figure arises with a mission, breaks from the past, and takes others with him (see 3.1.2). In Liverpool's case there were at least three such figures (the Bishops always included the Free Church leader)! Some go so far as to suggest this new co-operative approach is irreversible. The majority of the respondents interviewed have been supportive of the ecumenical partnership, even though some have not actively been involved with it. Others are at present engaged in promoting unity at a local church level. Whatever the future holds for ecumenism, the present breadth of its base would appear to indicate its

continuation in the immediate future, but the role of the new church leaders will be crucial to its further progress.

11.3. A NEW COUNTERPOINT?

The final question to ask is whether there is now a new counterpoint to the main theme of ecumenism in Liverpool religion today? How far has the ecumenism of the day gone? Are there signs anywhere of other religious themes emerging in counterpoint to the new ecumenical spirit? There appear to be only two possibilities which emerge from the interviews.

The Orange Order remains a presence, but though it retains its firm stance almost unchanged since the turn of the century, it is apparent that it is a movement which carries little sympathy outwith its immediate circle. Orangeism stands alone virtually unsupported. Its harsh intransigence over ecumenical discussion and action is now at odds with the mood of the city at the present time. In Northern Ireland the Order reflects that form of fundamentalism which aims at 'reintegrating a social order under the canopy of one all-encompassing sacred tradition' (Lechner, 1993, 22). Significantly in January of 1999, the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, with its strong Orange associations, announced its intention to open a branch of the party in Liverpool and contest the May local elections. Ian Paisley Junior, the party's justice spokesman, claimed; 'We are not imposing this - the public wants it' (Liverpool Daily Post, Jan.12th, 1999). By April of that year however, the Party announced they would not be offering any candidates. Northern Ireland is a continual reminder that deep religious divisions and feelings can quickly be ignited given the right circumstances. At present however, sectarianism does not yet appear to offer a likely counterpoint to the settled ecumenism.

There is one movement emerging which could yet become an active counterpoint to ecumenism, namely the new Evangelicalism of the right, formalised in the 'Together For The Harvest' movement (TFH). As has been noted (6.2.1), this movement, though ecumenical in spirit, has tended to keep its distance from formal ecumenism and has preferred to travel its own narrower road. Some steps however, have been taken by the Evangelicals to build relations with ecumenical personnel and the Anglican Bishop's invitation to speak at their annual meeting in 1999 is a strong indicator of that. Most Evangelicals however, would be reluctant to join in an interfaith consultation.

The desire on the part of this Evangelical group to form one city-wide church

comprising chiefly the more independent churches, is an ambitious dedifferentiation process (see 3.2.2.1). Yet the writer has become more aware of what this group is achieving over his years of research. Increasing city-wide prayer gatherings focusing on the general needs of the city, growing consultation on joint evangelistic enterprises, leadership training days, and increasing co-operation in adopting strategies to alleviate social exigency in the city, are at the heart of this theologically conservative movement. It may well be a local example of the religious revival emerging world-wide (see 3.2.2.1). Yet even within this movement there is evidence of Aldridge's 'consumer' dimension to religion (see 3.2.2.3.1). Many evangelicals are choosing their worship styles like consumers pick groceries. They are quick to leave one place of worship for another should the religious goods fail to satisfy their spiritual appetite. If however, this movement could produce leaders who had public legitimacy, and convince those Christians raised on independence of the need to become more interdependent - even more ecumenical - Evangelicalism might become as great a force as the Nonconformity of the nineteenth century. There are difficulties with this however.

Firstly, Evangelicals remain divided, with Charismatic churches being the dominant force. Whilst these may find a basis for working together, a minority of Evangelicals would be hesitant, as differences of emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit still cause suspicion. Secondly, the church polity of many Evangelicals in the Free Churches means that there is a sect-like reluctance to let go of the self-governing nature of each local church, and have it subsumed in a larger alliance. Added to that, many already have strong denominational allegiances. Finally, Evangelicalism will have to work hard to gain recognition on a larger stage. Unless some influential figures emerge who can gain the respect of the wider public - as the Bishops have done - then the movement may just remain a force on the sidelines of religious and civic life. These objections do not detract from the undoubted commitment of the TFH movement to a more united church. For the writer, this is the one group offering any significant counterpoint to the present ecumenical effort.

Conclusion

The aim of this work has been to explore the social role of Christianity within the city of Liverpool and to investigate whether there was and is more to it than the much publicised sectarian hostility of the past. The history of the sectarian conflict has been considered in its social and religious context, and something of the damage inflicted on the city as a result has been honestly acknowledged. Yet what has also become apparent has been the broad social and educational

contribution of the Christian church and organisations to the city in schools, hospitals, social welfare, child care, race relations, University provision (including the growing Christian based Hope University College), and in the huge voluntary contribution to the varied age/gender cohorts through the numerous local churches. How the success or otherwise of all this can be weighed is a huge undertaking, but something of that has been attempted in these chapters.

Furthermore, the emergence of Christian leaders who decided that confrontation in the Christian religion was not to remain the mark of Liverpool, has helped bring a paradigm shift to the thinking of the majority of religious people in the city. It has been shown also however, that the turnaround in religious thinking must also be related to social factors. The growing relativism in matters religious, an increasing secularisation in society, and a numerical decline in church attendance, have all played a part in bringing about the re-alignment of the churches. This interplay of sociology with ecclesiastical factors, may also prove to be helpful for Christians still coming to terms with the rapid changes of outlook in society. Whilst many Christians remain concerned at the social trends which are evolving, this may nonetheless encourage them to stop looking inwardly and examine more acutely the changing intellectual and social climate into which their message must resonate. For some this will involve an inner secularisation or the adoption of relativistic views regarding other faiths, but it will have to be considered carefully as it will involve altering the nature of their message - something being stoutly resisted by many other Christian people. The members of the Christian community interviewed, face the new millennium with optimism. This work suggests they need to face it with a more focused purpose, a more precise understanding of Christian identity, and a formula for retaining and building on the ecumenical legacy they have inherited.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVES

David Alton, Former Member of Parliament, Mossley Hill

Margaret, Sisters of Notre Dame

Doris, National Council on Ageing

John Furnival, Derek Worlock's chaplain

Robert, Member of Ecumenical Team in inner city

Simon Lee, Rector and Chief Executive of Liverpool Hope University College

Roger, Catholic Priest in inner city

Alan, Catholic Priest

ANGLICAN REPRESENTATIVES

Fred, Vicar in outlying estate

Ralph, Former Police Superintendent

Una, Nugent Care

Stephen, Vicar in inner city

Emma, Vicar in inner city

Lena Prince, First woman vicar in Liverpool

David Sheppard, Former Bishop of Liverpool

FREE CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

Frank Anti, Churches Action on Racial Equality ('Care')

Douglas, 'Reach' counselling agency and member of T.F.H.

Norman, Community worker

Sam, Baptist Minister - Liverpool outskirts

Ray Collings, Salvation Army Divisional Director

Esther, Schools Religious Adviser, Sefton

Jack, City Ecumenical team

Jeff Gould, Unitarian Minister

Keith Hobbs, Free Church Leader, Baptist minister

Colin, Minister in Liverpool

Stephen, Anglican Vicar

Richard, Salvation Army Officer

Ken, Minister in Liverpool

William, Superintendent for Assemblies of God

Harold, Salvation Army Officer

Terry Jones, Baptist Minister, Toxteth

Tom, a retired Independent Church leader, City centre.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORANGE ORDER

Bill and Grant (Anglican)
Joe (Baptist)

Appendix 2.

List of Questions for Respondents (except Bishop Sheppard)

1. How long have you lived in Liverpool and what does the city mean to you?

2. What has been your particular sphere of work/service in the city?

3. What are your opinions on the religious scene at the moment? Have they changed significantly? If so what has brought about the change?

4. What contribution have you (or your group) made to the city?

5. How important is regular Christian worship in your life? How does your faith in Christ affect your outlook in the world?

6. How do you view your role as Minister/Vicar/ Priest at the moment?

    6.1. How do you feel about women in ministry?

    6.2. What are your views on celibacy in ministry?

    6.3. Do you accept homosexuals in ministry?

7. Why do you feel people do not go to church today?

8. How do you see the role of the church at the end of the 20th century?

9. Do you feel any of the church's doctrines or practices are a hindrance to faith? If so, what examples can you give?

10. How do you view the ecumenical approach adopted by the church leaders over the past twenty years? Do you think people outside the church care about it? How far is sectarianism still an issue?

11. What must the church do to get more people back inside its doors? Is there some other priority?

12. How important is it not only to 'believe' in Christ but to 'belong' to a local

congregation?

13. Do you perceive any other groups in the city being successful in creating interest in spiritual, moral and social issues? Do you have any interfaith connections?

14. Do you detect people are becoming less religious, or are they simply preferring not to attend church?

15. Are you aware of any significant project in Liverpool which is contributing to the well-being of the community?

16. Do you feel the church should get more involved in politics and in public debate over moral and social issues? Should it give a lead? If so, how?

17. Should the churches become more involved in the community? If so, how?

18. What is your hope for the future of the church on Merseyside?

The following question was omitted early on in the interviews.

19. Do you believe the city is confronting a religious crisis?

Questions for Bishop David Sheppard

1. What goals did you set as you began your ministry in Liverpool?

2. What were the advantages and drawbacks if any, of your close relationship with Derek Worlock?

3. In what ways has the church benefited from the close ecumenism developed in the city? Has sectarianism been eradicated? Has the church grown across the denominations?

4. How has your holistic style of ministry affected areas such as housing development, community relations, local politics, education etc?

5. What has been your major achievement and what legacy would you like to leave behind?

Appendix 3.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CHURCHES

Name of Church and Denomination**.....**

District/Town**.....**

Minister/Priest/Leader**.....**

QUESTIONS

1. WHAT KIND OF VOLUNTARY WORK IS YOUR CHURCH INVOLVED IN? (Please tick)

Children.....

Youth.....

Ladies.....

Men.....

Senior Citizens.....

Special Needs (specify).....

Community Project (specify)....

Other.....

2. HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS AND PAID PERSONNEL ARE INVOLVED? (Please indicate the total number in each category)

	V	*P*		*V*	*P*
With Children	.....	.....	With Senior Citizens	.....	.....
With Youth	.....	.....	With Special Needs	.....	.....
With Ladies	.....	.....	With Comm. Project	.....	.....
With Men	.....	.....	With Other	.....	.....

3. HOW MANY HOURS ARE INVOLVED IN EACH ACTIVITY? (Please give the sum total of hours each week of volunteers in each activity)

Children.....

Youth.....

Ladies.....

Men.....

Senior Citizens.....

Special Needs.....

Community project.....

Other.....

A total of 172 questionnaires were sent out.

20 to the United Reformed Church

20 to the Methodists

60 to the Roman Catholics

24 to the Baptists

48 to 'Together For The Harvest' leaders

A total of 48 churches/clergy responded

7 were returned by the United Reformed Church

10 were returned by the Methodists

12 were returned by the Roman Catholics

11 were returned by the Baptists

8 were returned by 'Together For The Harvest' leaders.

This was a response of 27.9%

Appendix 4.

LIST OF CHURCHES VISITED ON SABBATICALS

1. ANGLICAN CHURCHES

St.John and St James, Bootle (1996)
St. Luke's, Crosby (1996)
St.George's, Everton (1997)
St. Matthew's, Bootle (1997)
Anglican Cathedral (1998)
St.David's, Childwall (1998)
Christchurch, Ormskirk (1998)

2. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

St. Monica's, Bootle (1996)
Metropolitan Cathedral (1997)

3. FREE CHURCHES

Cottage Lane Mission, Ormskirk (1996)
Stuart Road Baptist Church, Walton (1996)
Belvidere Baptist Church, Toxteth (1996)
Toxteth Tabernacle (1996)
Kingsway Christian Fellowship, Waterloo (1996)
Liverpool Christian Life Centre, City Centre (1997)
Ullet Road Unitarian Church, Toxteth (1997)
Liverpool Free Presbyterian Church, Walton (1997)
Toxteth Community Church (1997)
Linacre Methodist Mission, Litherland (1997)
Bootle Christian Fellowship (1998)
Walton Salvation Army Citadel (1998)
Old Roan Methodist Church (1998)
Orrel Park Baptist Church, Bootle (1998)
Elm Hall Drive Methodist Church, Wavertree (1998)

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