

Mapping the Way

By Michael Cocks (author of "The Stephen Experience")

This course is designed for
Lenten programmes,
preparation for church membership,
for private study,
by people of varying church traditions.

The course helps to answer the question
"Where does Christianity fit in a complex
and pluralistic world, a world of many
beliefs and unbelief, a world of science,
a world of many cultures and bodies of
literature?"

In this course, the writer maintains

- 1. that the holistic theology of St John's Gospel is the key to our answer. The theology is in line with words in Ephesians 4.4. about a God who is "in all, through all and above all."**
- 2. that the holistic views of quantum physicists which point to one Spirit, in all, through all, are very similar.**
- 3. that it saves much confusion, if we can be aware of the mode in which we see things:**

***St John is holistic. He sees things as a connected Whole, like the mystics, and like the new physicists. It is a valid and right way of seeing things.**

***The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke see things in the light of the normal see and touch world, where we hear what Jesus and individual disciples said and did. Another valid and right way of seeing things.**

***We also see things in the light of metaphor, parables, similes. Obviously this is also valid and right. But we need not to confuse ourselves: "saved by his precious blood" is true if we understand this to be a metaphor, parable or simile. It is error if we look at it from the see and touch mode. To see it in this mode would have us believing in some kind of magic.**

There are many exciting discoveries to be made in this course. Enjoy!

Introduction: Surveying the field

Lesson 1: The old three-decker reality, or the ONE, seen in four modes.

Lesson 2: In the holistic mode, who am I? What is God?

Lesson 3: Holism and John 21.

Lesson 4: Holism, the new physics and the Gospel.

Lesson 5: The mythic/poetic/metaphorical modes.

Lesson 6: The Bible

Lesson 7: Faith and Spirit

Lesson 8: Commitment to a church

Lesson 9: The mythic mode: how does prayer work?

MAPPING THE WAY

Centuries now have passed since the time when some form of Christianity defined how a nation saw reality, how one saw the meaning of life, how one understood the nature of existence. Four centuries of scientific endeavour, the break-up of Christendom into a multitude of denominations, the decline of belief, the collapse of faith in authority, the spread of non-Christian religions, the rampant growth of materialism, all have conspired to produce a 'pluralistic' world.

In this anarchy of belief and lack of belief, it is still possible of course to have a deep and sincere faith, as a member of a Christian church, and to lead a fulfilled life.

But how are we to think of people of other beliefs, other interpretations of life? Does the work of 400 years of science really say that faith in Spirit is in vain? And what about literature of all kinds, music, the visual arts, and all with which the media daily bombard us. How can we find our way amongst so many loud voices, and get our bearings?

The world of belief is such a varied territory. To orient ourselves in it we need to make use of a map of some kind. To suggest such a map is the purpose of this course.

So let's be clear about the starting point in our proposed map:

In this course we are assuming that the spiritual-physical universe is one undivided whole, that human beings need to make sense of the experiences they have of this whole, and the Divine Source. To do this they use (1) **scientific method**, (2) **philosophies**, (3) **the arts** (4) **religion** and (5) **other beliefs**. All these things and more are seen as essential for personal growth, and for being made whole.

(1)**Science** is a series of tools human beings have created, for making and testing theories about things, weighing and measuring, classifying, and building up a picture of what is real.

Question: *Choose any science, and discuss how far the above description*

of a science fits.

As science is only a method for trying to understand what goes on in the universe, it is not a faith, or a system of beliefs. People of faith or lack of faith are scientists, and scientists can be influenced by many

(2) philosophies or systems of beliefs, in their thinking. Technology puts to practical use what scientists discover.

Question: *When scientists discover a fact (e.g. that New Zealanders have a higher than usual percentage of people suffering from asthma) they make a guess, theory or hypothesis about how this has come about, and try to prove or disprove that guess/theory/hypothesis. But what is the difference between such a theory and a belief?*

(3) The Arts include stories and poetry, music and song, painting and sculpturing, dance and drama... anything that goes on in the human mind and heart can be expressed or created by the arts. And the arts will also include the art of education, and the arts of healing, parenthood, and human relationships.

Question: *Can you put into words some of the general purposes and functions of the arts?*

(4) Religion is the reaching out of human beings to a Power or a Spirit greater than themselves. In Christianity, Judaism, Islam, some forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, that Power is seen as ONE, creating and embracing all that is. There is much more to be said about religion than this, and this of course is what this book is about. As is the case with science, religion also appeals to personal experience in forming an understanding of what is real.

(5) Beliefs: Even with such an exact and mathematical science as physics, scientists can differ from each other in important ways, and differ because of differing beliefs. Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr were examples of this, even in field of physics, the most exact of sciences.

In religion of course such differences are much more apparent.

Differences of belief are very noticeable amongst Christians, for instance. There are Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians, and amongst the Protestants there are hundreds of denominations. There are many points of view that can contradict one another. Most Christians believe in a Divine Source of all things, that there is a spiritual dimension to the universe, and that the life and teaching of Jesus is central for them.

Question: *What are some of the things about which Christians have differing beliefs?*

All of us, whether Christians, agnostics, Buddhists, or members of Islam, live in a world deeply and fundamentally changed by the discoveries of scientists, and we live in a world of television, newspapers, and books. We also live in a world of growing tourism, where more and more people see how the other half of the world live.

This means that people of differing beliefs cannot ignore a world which is changing before their very eyes, and they are forced to consider how their beliefs stand up, in the light of what is becoming known about the universe.

We need systems of belief to try and make sense of things, whether we are thinking in terms of science, the arts, human relationships or whatever. We need systems of belief. But we also need to check whether they really fit in with what we know about the world.

Question: *Why in fact DO we need systems of belief?*

We can see the trouble, and even wars that can come about, when people are too sure that their very detailed beliefs are the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, when they fail to recognise that a question can be looked at from many points of view, and that there are many reasonable but differing answers to the question.

From our schooling we have become aware that we can look at reality from the point of view of mathematics, history, social sciences, science, literature, psychology, engineering.. in more ways than we can list.

In this book, we are bearing in mind all the above ways of looking at a question, but more especially we are finding out what can be discovered by looking through Christian eyes.

But will this be profitable, considering how many differences of belief can be found amongst Christians?

To answer this question, let's think about just one Christian church, the **ANGLICAN**, to which perhaps eighty million people belong.

Like other churches, it is a community of faith, a community of people trusting in a power greater than themselves. It is a community with a history stretching back to the time of Christ himself. It has the same origins

as the Roman Catholic Church which numbers perhaps 1100 million people among its adherents. During the almost 2000 years of its history, this community of faith has developed and changed in the way it has organised itself, developed and changed in its belief systems and philosophies, and changed in the way it has seen itself acting in the world. 450 years ago, while preserving much of Catholicism, it no longer acknowledged the authority of the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, and developed along its own path. The Anglican Church was the State Church of England. It was the group of Christians supported by the government, and it attempted to include in its community of faith people with quite differing beliefs. People could have differing beliefs, but they could still be friends and worship together in church, and be together in the community. Regardless of belief, people could support one another in their relating to Spirit. The Anglican Church never had everybody thinking all alike, or going about things in exactly the same ways. Some people would say that this is a strength of the Anglican Church.. that it does not encourage people to have closed minds, and that it encourages people of differing beliefs to stay friends and worship together.

We can say about the Anglican Church, that like other churches, it has faith in God, a creative Source, as revealed by Jesus Christ, and as gradually discovered by the Jewish people who lived before him, and by his followers after him. Anglicans, like other Christians, look to their spiritual forebears who wrote the books of the Bible, for vision, inspiration, and for the confirming of experiences that people of faith have to this day.

The **Lutheran** church in northern Europe, in Scandinavia, and the USA, with more members than the Anglican Church, has developed along similar lines to the Anglican. It has had a different political history, and owes its origin to the leadership of Martin Luther.

Question: *What do you remember of this thumbnail sketch of church history?*

In most modern churches, members can have widely differing views.

One important group of church members can adopt the **authoritarian** approach. They say that the Bible is infallible, or more accurately the selection of key passages they have made from the Bible is infallible, the true words of God. Or they may attempt to say that what they see as the traditional teaching of the church is infallible. The merit of the authoritarian approach is that it may help some people to be more whole-hearted in their spirituality, in their relating to Spirit. The decision to be an authoritarian saves one from being weakened by the great number of

conflicting thoughts we may have about things. But other people might think that authoritarians pay a high price for their decision, in that they must refuse to look at scientific work daily shown to be sound.

Non-authoritarians, people who wish to be open to truth in whatever quarter it is to be found, will not want to keep what they have learned in school in a different box from what they learn in church. Such people would tend to say that the church and its statements of belief, and the ways in which it organises its services of worship, that it is a human thing. They would say that developing beliefs, and ways of doing things, do not come directly from a God organising things from above the skies. They would agree that we are all relating to Spirit, in tune with the ways of seeing things presented by Jesus, but that our changing beliefs and theories, and how we go about creating a space for awareness of Spirit... that is a very human thing.

But whether we are authoritarian or non-authoritarian, it is hard for us not to be influenced by what people are finding out by the use of scientific method.

And we have already noted that science is a tool for thinking, invented by human beings, and that scientists are human, and have belief systems.

There is one belief that the majority of present day scientists do have, and which strongly influences some non-authoritarian Christians, making them somewhat sceptical Christians. The belief is called *Reductionism*. It is the belief that if we reduce the universe to its smallest possible bits, and if we understand what happens when they come together, then we know enough to explain why human beings arrive on the scene in this world. Make a soup of the right ingredients of bits, and you'll get some of life's building blocks. And once you get a soup of life's building blocks, by random chance we can expect life forms to emerge. Only life forms that successfully function live, and the more successful they are at coping with life's threats, the more of them live. By chance human beings grew very good brains, and good brains do help one to survive. Thoroughgoing Reductionists do not allow that there was any plan, thought, or purpose in these smallest possible bits coming together, and therefore they will not allow that there is any plan or purpose in human beings coming into existence.

We may note that with this Reductionist point of view, scientists have immeasurably increased our understanding of the universe. We cannot therefore altogether dismiss Reductionism as misguided, or wrong-headed. But we can say that this point of view alone is one-sided and incomplete.

Christians who adopt the Reductionist viewpoint too wholeheartedly, become somewhat sceptical Christians, rejecting many of the basic things that Jesus and his followers were saying. On the other hand they would accept some of the things that Jesus taught, about love and service of neighbour. Christianity for such people is a way of expressing and acting on one's feelings of awe and love of life. But such Christians will doubt the existence of Spirit, and will not admit that there is any life beyond the grave.

But there are other non-authoritarian Christians who take a holist or wholist standpoint. They are influenced by a competing belief held by many scientists. It is called Holism (Whole-ism). The belief is that the universe is basically a single whole, within which every part is (instantly) connected to every other part, and mind as humans know it, is part of that whole which cannot be divided. You cannot really understand a person by chopping him or her into the smallest possible bits. You have to study the whole living, conscious individual, and study that individual in relationship to all that surrounds the individual, including the universe.

Holists will allow that Reductionism very much has its uses. But they would say that Reductionism does not give the complete picture.

Holism is based on sound grounds. They include the *Einstein-Podolski-Rosen Thought Experiment*, which shows that energy particles, once they have been together, will instantly affect each other, regardless of distance, regardless of time passing. They will affect each other not at the speed of light, but instantly. (Everything must therefore affect everything else, instantly.)

And there is *Bell's Theorem*. Basically it is saying something similar: Either Quantum Mechanics is wrong, (and much of modern physics with it), or you have to think in terms of the whole universe working as one unit. But Quantum Mechanics has been proved to be right. So we must indeed think of the whole universe as working as one unit. (We explore these ideas in more detail in chapter Four.)

And *mind* is one aspect of this One Unit, according to some new physicists. The universe can be described as *psychophysical*.

So plainly this competing scientific belief is friendly to a belief in a universal mind or Spirit, in all, through all, and above all. And of course we can call that Spirit "God". Probably only a minority of scientists work with this competing belief. The scientific basis for the belief is sound, but ideas often take considerable time to jump the boundaries of various scientific disciplines. People specialising in biology, for instance, do not always keep

up to date in what is happening in astrophysics.

This course is written with this competing scientific belief in mind, and we will have a chapter later on exploring this further.

Questions:

- 1. What are differences between Authoritarian and Non-authoritarian Christians?*
- 2. What are differences between Reductionists, and Holists?*
- 3. Why is Reductionism unfriendly to a belief in God?*
- 4. Why is Holism friendly to belief in God?*
- 5. Reductionism and Holism don't really contradict each other. Why is this?*
- 6. What do you understand the Einstein-Podolski-Rosen experiment as showing?*
- 7. What does Bell's Theorem say?*

Before we end this short account of non-authoritarian Christians, we must really acknowledge that perhaps even a majority of practising Christians have a relationship of love and prayer towards God, and a willingness to love and serve their neighbours. Such people are interested in what in fact is central to Christianity the living relationship with God and neighbour, and are not particularly troubled by dogmatic or philosophic considerations.

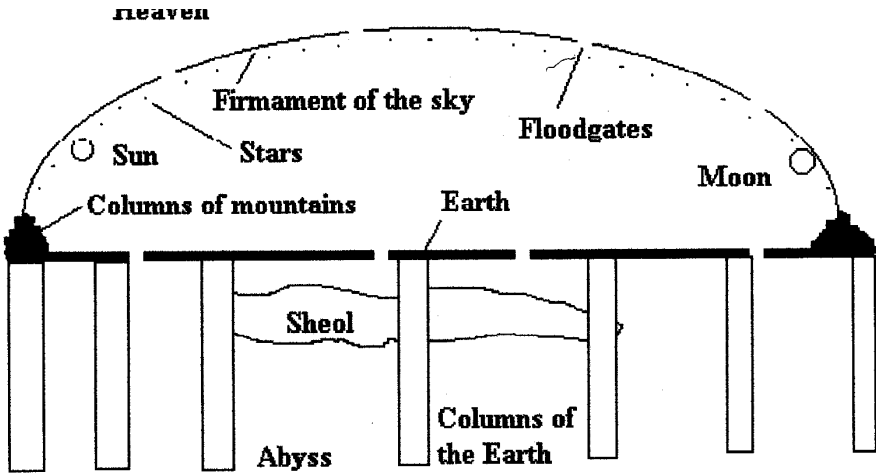
I

THE OLD THREE-DECKER REALITY or THE ONE, SEEN IN FOUR MODES

We started this course by saying that we are looking at the Spiritual-Physical universe from the point of view that it is ONE WHOLE. We are thinking holistically.

We need to think about the Whole, the universe, with some care. For the universe as we know it, is very different from how things were seen in the time of Jesus Christ.

Examine this diagram depicting the Hebrew conception of the universe, still current in the time of Jesus.



If we think about this picture, we will note that it certainly is not a holistic picture. There is no sense of the togetherness of all things in the One. We are in the world of See and Touch. God is up there above the firmament, the see-through solid basin inverted above the earth, and resting on the mountains. Heaven is up there. Hell is under the earth, and that is where the devil is. The world is flat, resting on pillars, which rest on ..who knows what? The sun and moon and stars are all thought of as set in the inverted basin. The earth is at the centre of all things. There is no knowledge of the vastness of space. God is like a man whom one could see and touch, if only one could get above the firmament. Rain is water coming through "windows" or holes in the firmament. In theory one could measure how high the firmament was above the earth, and therefore how far away was God. God employed angels as messengers to fly down so that God and humankind could make contact.

The Hebrew picture is dualist, not holist. "Dualist" means "the universe is not one thing, one organism." God fights it out with the devil. Heaven is separate from earth. We are in the realm of see and touch. Things are not seen as together in one whole.

People had this picture as a kind of backdrop in their minds, as they sought to describe their very real experiences of God and of Holy Spirit. But as their experiences were so genuine, and as many share these experiences and relationships today, we can be more accepting of their dualistic and strange "backdrop", their understanding of how things are, in a time before science had been invented.

Indeed we may note that the three-decker picture is influencing the minds of

many people even today. Look at some of the hymns and songs we sing in church:

Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised: 523 "Joy and triumph everlasting hath the heavenly Church on high" 452: "There's a friend for little children Above the bright blue sky.. There's a robe for little children Above the bright blue sky" 154: "When God of old came down from heaven, In power and wrath he came". In the main, however, the Hebrew picture universe is not openly stated. Nevertheless, with the many references to heaven, angels, heavenly temple, heavenly crowns, realms of light, imagery to do with the Hebrew picture of the universe remains.

So do we have a problem about such language, such ideas, here? Should we get rid of such hymns because they seem to reflect the ancient picture of the universe? Should we drop words like "God" "devil" "angel" "hell" "heaven" and so forth?

A psychologist, Lawrence LeShan, helps us to think about this in his book *Alternate Realities*, London, Sheldon Press, 1976.

THE FOUR MODES OF SEEING THINGS

LeShan accepts the picture of the universe as an indivisible whole, presented to us by the new physicists. This Whole, however, can be viewed in four basic ways or modes.

MODE A. SENSORY - PHYSICAL (The See and Touch way of understanding things.)

- In this mode, "all valid information directly or indirectly comes from the senses,
- all events happen in time and space,
- all events have a cause,
- causes occur before events...
- objects separate in space are separate objects;
- events separate in time are separate events
- all activity - movement - takes place through space and takes measurable time units to occur.

While regarding things in this mode, we may intellectually agree that the universe is an indivisible whole, but that is not how we are at this moment regarding it.

This is the mode in which most of us spend our working lives. Indeed it is

the mode in which the Jews of old conceived their dualistic universe of heaven, and earth, and hell.

In this mode we earn our livings, think and plan, carry out scientific and technological work. And when we look at the achievements of science and technology, it is plain for all to seem that the SENSORY mode is a right, proper and valid mode of understanding things. For us, this SENSORY mode hardly needs explaining. And when we are working in this mode, other ways of seeing things seem almost foolish.

B: THE HOLISTIC MODE

In our introduction however, we suggested scientific reasons why we should also regard the psychophysical WHOLE as indivisible substance, indivisible mind, why we should regard our individual minds as participating in the Mind or Spirit of the Whole. This mode of seeing things, LeShan calls the Clairvoyant Mode, but which we might perhaps better call the HOLISTIC MODE. We shall be spending a lot of time exploring this Holistic Mode in chapters Two, Three and Four.

Question: *What is the difference between the Sensory-Physical mode and the Holistic mode? What have we been learning about science, which makes it necessary for us to accept that we must see things in the Holistic as well as the Sensory-physical mode?*

Describe the Hebrew picture of the universe. Why is this picture NOT holistic?

LeShan assigns metaphor, poetic language, dream language, and words such as heaven, angels, devils, "above the bright blue sky" to the

C: MYTHIC ["poetic"] MODE.

"Myth" here does not mean "untrue", but rather refers to pictures and stories that poetically point to events of Spirit, that cannot adequately be expressed in straightforward SENSORY-PHYSICAL terms. We shall be exploring the MYTHIC MODE in more detail in Lesson Five onwards.

The fourth mode, we may call

D: THE PRAYER MODE.

In the Prayer Mode, we assume that we are together in the ONE, but also separate. We are connected to the person for whom we are praying, but we ARE not that person. We explore this in our final chapter, Chapter Nine.

- **What is the nub of what has been said so far?**
- Perhaps it is that Judaism and Christianity came to birth before the time of science, when they saw everything in terms of a small three-decker world.
- Today "three-decker" pictures survive in our hymns, Bible readings, and sometimes in our thoughts.
- But in fact astronomy and space exploration have given us a picture of a universe which has nothing in common with the three-decker picture.
- And so the danger arises that we will reject the deep God-experiences of our spiritual forebears, because of their three-decker thinking. To do that would be to our great loss.

If we are to avoid throwing the baby out with the bath water, we should look to LeShan, and his four modes of viewing things.

TASK: *Examine the four modes, until you are very clear about them.*

II

IN THE HOLISTIC MODE, WHO AM I?

We can come to terms with the old three-decker world, if we remember the FOUR MODES of seeing reality: the SENSORY -PHYSICAL, the PRAYER, the MYTHIC/POETIC and... the HOLISTIC.

And it is the HOLISTIC mode that we shall now explore in some detail.

Firstly let us ask a question: **"Who am I?"**

We could rightly answer ***"I am a child of God"*** - and that sounds a simple answer. But it is not really a simple answer, since people disagree about how to use the word "God". But how would we answer, if we were thinking in the HOLISTIC MODE?

"I am a hierarchy of SETS and SUBSETS of WHOLES, ranging from the smallest particle of the atom, up through molecule, cell, organ, body & spirit, Earth, solar system, galaxy, to universe."

Or more simply, ***"I am a body used by a consciousness, part of an environment, part of the Whole."***

Or again in the HOLISTIC mode we could say that ***God is a Mystery, a mysterious Whole containing my environment, my consciousness and my***

body.

But let's express this in a diagram. And ask another question:

Who or What says "I AM?"

1. I am **PHYSICAL**

Let's symbolise my physicality
with the Hebrew letter HAY.



2. I am **one consciousness**

One mind, one set of emotions, one soul,
one personal subconscious, one history.

Let's symbolise my consciousness
with the letter VAV.



The **PHYSICAL**
and **CONSCIOUSNESS**
ARE NOT SEPARATE.

Draw HAY AND VAV TOGETHER..



3. I am **one with my environment**

(Things, people, and the invisible.)

Draw Environment with another HAY.

ה

Physical and consciousness
and environment are not separate
Draw HAY VAV HAY together.

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4. I am one with **All-That-Is**.

Draw All-that-is with a YOD

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PHYSICAL : CONSCIOUSNESS:
ENVIRONMENT : ALL THAT IS, are not separate,

so draw YOD HAY VAV HAY together
YOD HAY VAV HAY is the picture of who
I am. It is the image of a PERSON.

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YOD HAY VAV HAY spells the name of GOD:
YHWH = YAHWEH


יהוה


And in fact is not this a way also of representing God? In all through all and above all?

I am in the image of That which gave the name "I AM" to Moses from the burning bush. (Exodus 3.2-4.)

I can know, sense, feel, intuit, and be aware:

1. with my **body** 

2. with my **self** 

3. with my **world** 

4. with **All-that-is** 

With my **body**: (That requires no explanation.)

2. With my **self**: my consciousness, subconsciousness, history, beliefs, attitudes.

3. With my **world**: all that I am connected to, visible and invisible, friends, church, society, culture, country, the world in general.

4. With **All-that-is**. With 1-2-3 and more than I can ever know, including the creative processes of God, and the Void in which God works.

Here I can be in the **Still Centre**, beyond any words of mine.

From here can I participate in the **Dance of Life**



I danced in the morning

*When the world was begun
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on earth
At Bethlehem I had my birth.
Dance then wherever you may be
I AM the Lord of the Dance said He,
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be
And I'll lead you all in the Dance said He.*
-Sydney Carter

How can we become less arthritic in this dance of life?

**By letting go, letting God
By living by Spirit, not Law
By loving more, judging less
By become more conscious
More flexible at each level
Of awareness.**

*How can we become more aware?
How can we become awakened?*

BY LOOKING IN MANY DIRECTIONS, namely:

LOVEWORK**PLAY**CHURCH**BIBLE** ART
JESUS**MUSIC**BOOKS**MEDITATION
CREATIVITY**PRAYER**SPORT**FRIENDS
POLITICS**DREAMS**SUFFERING**DEATH
WORSHIP**INSPIRATION**SCHOOL**
REBIRTH**HAVING
CHILDREN**DANCING**CONFLICT
SERVICE OF OTHERS**COMMUNITY LIFE
SIN**DANGER**JOY**DEPRESSION**ALL**

RELATIONSHIPSTHE WHOLE GAMUT OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE, WORLD WITHOUT END**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1. Consider this picture of God and Us that we have just looked at. It is a reasonable picture of God? Is it a reasonable picture of us? Why?*
- 2. Does it fit in with the ways in which you think of the Christian religion? With prayer, God, Spirit, grace, love, salvation, heaven and hell... whatever else comes to mind.*
- 3. What changes would you have to make to accommodate the YAHWEH picture?*

III

HOLISM AND JOHN 21

In talking about the three-decker world, we must not get the impression that all people in the ancient world saw things the same way. Amongst the Jews there were many religious sects with many opposing beliefs. Amongst the Greeks there were many schools of philosophy with widely varying views. All the same, prominent Greek philosophers had a strong influence both on the Jews, and on the early Christians. The writer of St John's gospel, was strongly influenced by Plato, and also it would appear, by Pythagoras. Plato and Pythagoras were Greek philosophers living hundreds of years before the time of Jesus.

Of all the New Testament writings, John's Gospel is the most holistic. For example read John 17.21-23: I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you....I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one.....

John is influenced by Plato in that he believes "reality" is "laid up in heaven", and that we on earth as shadows of that "reality". Jesus is that "reality" seen amongst the shadows. Jesus is the real light, he is the real vine, he is the real bread.. for instance.

The Resurrection story in John 21

But what appears to be the most holistic passage of all is to be found in the culminating chapter 21. And here the influence would appear to be that of Pythagoras. Perhaps you have already learned about Pythagoras'

hypotenuse theorem, that if you draw a right-hand triangle, the square on the side opposite the right angle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides.

Pythagoras was a Greek who lived about 500 years before Jesus, and anyone who went to school even in those days, knew about Pythagoras, even in Israel.

Pythagoras was amazed at the things he discovered through his working things out in geometry, and believed that the things that he was discovering came straight from the mind of God, as he understood the Divine Source of all things. For Pythagoras geometrical shapes and numbers took on a mystical meaning. The circle symbolising eternity and perfection, and the square standing for Earth.

Pythagoras himself was part of a tradition of schools which fostered the intuitive in this manner.

With regard to numbers, we need to remember that in those days the letters of the alphabet did double duty as numbers. For those who spoke Latin, just a few letters were used for this purpose, I = 1, II =2, V = 5, VI=6 and so on.

But in the language of Pythagoras, Greek, every letter of the alphabet stood for a number. For instance $\alpha = 1$, $\beta = 2$, $\delta = 4$. In that case $(\beta\alpha\delta) = 2+1+4 = 7$. (Letters of Hebrew words could also be added in the same way.)

Not only geometrical figures but certain numbers had sacred mystical significance.

Christians influenced by Pythagorean schools, must have found some interesting coincidences when they added up the letters of certain words: the name "Jesus" added up to 888; the word "Cross" to 777; the Beast, 666; Flesh and blood, 444.

Here are the values of the Greek letters:

$\alpha' = 1$, $\beta' = 2$, $\gamma' = 3$, $\delta' = 4$, $\epsilon' = 5$, $\zeta' = 6$, $\eta' = 7$, $\theta' = 8$, $\iota' = 9$, $\kappa' = 20$, $\lambda = 30$, $\mu' = 40$, $\nu' = 50$, $\xi' = 60$, $\omicron' = 70$, $\pi' = 80$, $\phi = 90$, $\rho' = 100$, $\sigma' = 200$, $\tau = 300$, $\upsilon = 400$, $\phi' = 500$, $\chi' = 600$, $\varphi = 700$, $\omega' = 800$. [900 Not used in Gematria.]

Thus, Jesus = $\text{Ιησους} = 888$, Beast = 666 Cross = $\text{σταυρος} = 777$, flesh

and blood = σαρξ και αιμα = 444.

You might like to check it out by adding up the letters of these words.

*

TWELVE was the symbol for COMPLETENESS, WHOLENESS, the UNIVERSE. Twelve months of the year, twelve signs of the Zodiac, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve disciples. The 144 000 who in Revelation 14.1 were said to be saved.. is 12 X 12 X 1000. Symbolically that must mean ALL!

And it so happens that the words "The Lord God" added up to 1224, another combination of 12s. So do the words "God's Creation" and "One whole of wholes".

The numerical symbolism again seems to give the message of the YAHWEH symbol.
Everything is within the All.

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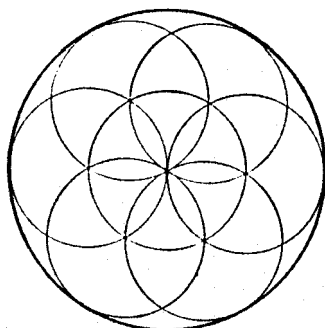
The story we shall now study comes from John's Gospel, chapter 21. It is a story of Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead, and on the surface of things it is simply a story about catching a lot of fish. But there are some features which make us suspect that there is a Geometry and Spiritual Numbers "game" being played here. A game with very serious intent.

(Adding up the numerical totals of various words and assigning them a spiritual significance is called "Gematria" (a corruption of the word "Geometry" which in turns means "measuring the earth".)

We are indebted to John Michell: *City of Revelation* London: ABACUS 1973 for discovering this story. The illustrations are his.)

*

JOHN 21.1-3 Some time later, Jesus showed himself to his disciples once again, by the sea of Tiberius, and in this way. Simon Peter and Thomas 'The Twin' were together with Nathaniel of Cana-in-Galilee. [3 disciples]. The sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were also there. [4 more. 3 + 4 = 7 disciples] Simon Peter said, 'I am going fishing'. 'We will go with you', said the others. So they started and got into the boat. But that night they caught nothing.



Look at this **diagram no.1**

Let the central small circle represent "Simon the Rock" (Simon Peter) in Greek letters. $\Sigma\mu\omega\nu\ \omicron\ \Pi\epsilon\tau\rho\varsigma = 1925$.

Let 1925 units be the circumference of the circle.

1925 divided by Pi [3.14159] = 612 (plus a fraction) - the length of the diameter of *Peter's* circle, and of the *radius* of the big circle.

Therefore a circle with circumference 1925 (Simon the Rock) will have a radius of 612, which is half of the diameter 1224, which in turn is the magic number for *The Lord God*, the *Whole of Wholes*, the *Creation of God*, as we said.

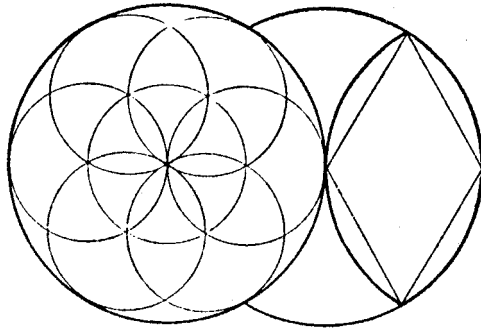
(We are not to imagine that some copy of St John's Gospel has been found with all these diagrams and numbers. But if we ourselves supply these diagrams and numbers, they fit the story so well, it would be surprising if such diagrams had not existed at the time the story was written. And after all it is a fact that people were discovering "Gematria" in holy writings, in the first century A.D. both in Greek and also in Hebrew.)

Now let us draw a circular boat (a coracle) with diameter 1224 ('the whole of wholes'). Let Peter's 612 circle have the same centre as the 1224 boat-circle.

Then let us draw six more 612 diameter circles, with their centres on the periphery of Peter's small circle, and all their peripheries touching the centre of the big circle, which is also the centre of Peter's little circle. These six small circles represent the six other disciples.

They all fit in exactly and make a pretty diagram. And they provide an illustration of "Where two or three are gathered together there I AM in the

midst of them". For when we are together in Christ's name, we do experience the I AM, the WHOLE of WHOLES, the 1224, the holy of holies.



Now we are studying **Diagram 2:**

John 21.4-7: *Morning came, and there stood Jesus on the beach, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, have you caught anything?' They answered 'No.'*

He said 'Shoot the net [=το δίκτυον to diktyon = 1224] to the starboard [on the right side of the boat] and you will make a catch.' They did so, and found they could not haul the net aboard, there were so many fish [οι ιχθυες = 1224] in it. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!'

Looking at Diagram 2, if we want to draw the net, we set our compass again with a radius of 612, and capable of drawing a circle of 1224 diameter. We put the point of the compass in the middle of the right edge of our coracle and describe a crescent as we see in Diagram 3. Then we put the compass to the right of this crescent, and make an arc making a pointed oval called a vesica piscis (Latin for fish bladder). The Christian church was to draw a fish of this shape as a secret sign (adding a little tail). A fish became the symbol for Jesus, because the letters of the Greek word for FISH, made up the first letters of the words JESUS CHRIST GOD'S SON SAVIOUR. (An added meaning for Piscis or Fish lies in that Jesus was born at the beginning of the Piscean Age, of course known to the contemporaries of Jesus.)

The Greek word for Fish was ιχθυς written "ichthys" in English and we have in English the word "Ichthyology" meaning the classification of fishes.

Take the capital letters of ichthys and they become the first letters of words meaning JESUS CHRIST GOD'S SON SAVIOUR

Iesous
Christos
Theou
Huios
Soter

Now continuing with our drawing of the net: The distance between the two places where we have put our compass points is 612.

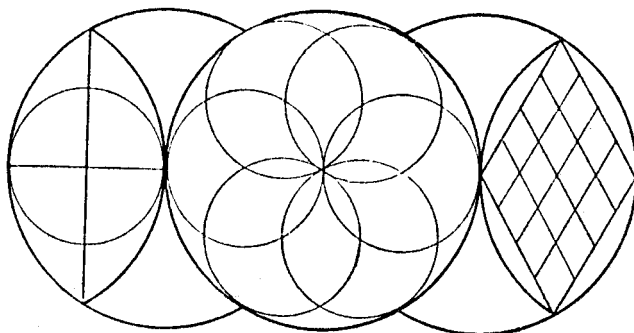


Diagram 3

But our fish-netting is not yet in place. So let us join the two places where we have put our compass points with the apexes of our vesicas (fish shaped ovals). Each of the two sides of the diamond shape we have made measures 1224 units, still symbolising "The whole of wholes".

Now make the net by tying in three strands of rope going one way, and three crossing them.

So we have the diamond shape divided into 16 little diamonds.

Now number the little diamonds, 1 to 16, and number the big one 17.

Add all the numbers $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17 = 153$. **153 fishes!**

This 17-diamond figure we have drawn is a Greek symbol called the *Tetractys*, a symbol for the Whole of Wholes.

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To continue our study of Diagram 3

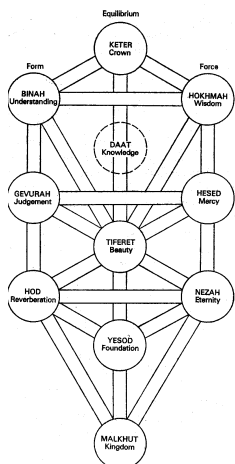
John 21. 7-8: *When Simon Peter heard that, he wrapped his coat_επενδουτης ependoutes = 1060 about him (for he had stripped) and plunged into the sea. The rest of them came on in the boat, towing the net full of fish; for they were not far from land, only about a two hundred cubits.*

Enough room to fit another vesica of the same size that contained the net, between land and the 1224 circular boat or coracle. The distance between the apices of the vesica is 1060. The suggestion is that Peter is naked in the 1224 coracle because he is one with God in spirit, with the Whole of Wholes, Holy of Holies, with Christ, and with the other six disciples. So then Peter puts on his coat (his physical personality) jumping into the sea, into the vesica to the left of the coracle which has not Whole of Wholes Tetractys net, once again symbolising the physical.

John 21.9-11: *When they came ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish laid on it, and some bread. Jesus said, 'Bring some of your catch.' Simon went aboard and dragged the net to land, full of big fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and yet, many as they were, the net was not torn.*

It seems Christ is inviting Peter to unite the experience of being at one with the Whole of Wholes with his earthly experience.

It is noteworthy that the Hebrew Qabala Tree of Life diagram fits exactly over the diagram we have just been studying. The Qabala Tree of Life diagram is a mystical diagram known in the time of Jesus, and designed to help people to feel the many-sidedness of their relationship to the Holy of Holies, the Whole of Wholes. (The Qabala Tree of Life is described at Revelation 22. *Read and note the similarities.*)



It ties together so well, that it is hard to believe that this diagram was not in the mind of the writer of the story of John 21. But if it had in fact been in his mind, then it is still amazing how the numbers all point to the Holy of Holies, the Whole of Wholes, in the way they do.

If the diagram had not been in his mind, is it chance or the action of God that things fit together in this way?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. We ended our chapter with a question. How are you inclined to answer it, and why?
2. Is your world a world in which a higher power can bring things together in a meaningful way? Why, why not?

IV

HOLISM, THE NEW PHYSICS AND THE GOSPEL

When we had finished our story from John 21, it was hard not to believe that when St John was telling this resurrection story, he was reminding us that the universe is One, that God is One with this universe, that in the story Jesus is in effect telling Peter to unite his earthly bodily consciousness (the

shore) with the Whole of wholes. Then he would know what the resurrection really meant.

Look now at Ephesians 4 verses 3ff:

Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives, by the peace which binds you together. There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all men, who is Lord of all, works through all and is in all.

These words seem to say directly what is said symbolically in John 21. And then the writer of the letter to the Ephesians goes on to talk about Jesus Ascension into heaven. Perhaps we have seen pictures in which artists have depicted Jesus as going up into the sky perhaps like an astronaut. But this is not how the writer of Ephesians sees it.

Eph. 4:9: Now, what does "he went up" mean? It means that first he came down - that is down to the lower depths of the earth. So he who came down is the same one who went up, above and beyond the heavens, to fill the whole universe with his presence

This wholistic picture seems to come out in John 15 where Jesus is made to say that he is the Vine, and we are the branches of that Vine, that Whole.

And look also at John 17.21: May they all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me, and I in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I gave them the same glory that you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one: I in them and you in me... "

And look at Exodus Chapter 3.14: Note the name given to God, which is "I AM THAT I AM". It stresses that God is to be identified with Being, with Existence, rather than thinking of God in human terms. But in those ancient times, the writer probably hadn't got to thinking of identifying God with ALL existence.

*

But the title of this Chapter is "*The New Physics*". Why should we now start to look at Physics, when you are attending a class to do with joining a church, and being a committed member of this church?

A church member is also a citizen of a country, who has had a similar

education to other people in that country, and has been faced with the same questions about what is real, and what is not real, as anyone else.

And it is a confusing world that we live in, for there are all sorts of scientific views and opinions, just as there are many more differences of opinion about Christianity, let alone religion in general.

So to make an end to this tug-of-war in their heads, church people may try to live with a split mind, and say on the one hand, "Here I have a picture of what is real, which I have somehow got from my church, and my Bible, and my family, and my priest" and on the other hand say "Here I have a picture of what is real which I have got from my experience, my schooling, TV, reading, and my friends."

But it is not satisfying to live life like that. Split minds either make us cynical and sceptical about people and life, or they can make us closed minded people enclosed in a fortress of belief, into which new ideas and new experiences cannot penetrate.

So how can we avoid this tug-of-war in our minds? It surprises some people to learn that the new physics can now help us somewhat in our thinking about Spirit, for physics looks at this Whole of wholes, also.

THE OLD PHYSICS

You will remember Isaac Newton and how he worked out the laws of gravity, and he worked out how, for instance, the moon can move around the earth, staying at the same distance. He taught the thing that astronauts observe, that out there in space, away from the gravitation of the earth, things stay put until you give them a push, and out there in the vacuum of space, once pushed, they will move for ever in the direction in which they have been pushed, unless gravity, or another kind of push, alters their path. The reason why the moon, or a man-made satellite keeps moving around the earth, is...

1. because the earth's gravity keeps pulling the satellite down to earth, and
2. because the original push to the satellite was **STRONG** enough to keep it moving around the earth, and not crash down out of the sky, and **WEAK** enough to prevent the satellite escaping earth's gravity and flying away for ever into space.

This is the reason why the moon circles the earth, or the planets the sun, involving gravitational forces and the laws of motion, which Newton plotted so accurately with a mathematics he developed for the task.

If we are dealing with BIG things, Newton's physics obviously works very well, and it is still accepted in general terms. Newton drew on the observations of Copernicus, Kepler, and Tycho Brahe, and although they were all religious men, what they observed helped much of mankind to see the universe as a machine, a machine where considerations of spirit and "God" and the like, seemed out of place.

To this day, many modern university departments of psychology (studying human mind and behaviour) think of human beings as complicated machines. They are still influenced by the machine-universe idea that Newton helped to put forward.

So much do some psychologists think like this, that some have even gone to the absurd length of denying the very existence of consciousness, and that consciousness plays any part in human behaviour. Others have taught that consciousness is to the person, what the engine noise is to the engine.

THE NEW PHYSICS

The new physics that looks at happenings within the atom gives us an entirely different picture of what is real, than that gained from Newton. For instance, Newton had seen atoms as solid, like billiard balls. The new physics however gives us a different picture.

1. First think about the nature and size of an atom. Suppose we take a cricket ball, and increase its size until it is equal with the Earth. If we did that, the atoms inside the cricket ball would only be the size of grapes.

But take one of those now grape-sized atoms, and increase its size to that of a fourteen-story building.

The nucleus of the atom will still only be the size of a grain of sugar half way up the building.

The electrons will be 1/2000th the size of the grain of sugar, and circling 7 storeys above, and 7 storeys below.

So what is this apparently solid world made of? Almost entirely empty space. And even the atoms and electrons are not solid.. they are "tendencies to happen", and at the subatomic level mass and energy change unceasingly into each other.

There is so much emptiness in what we think is solid, that under sufficient gravitational pull, the whole solid earth could be crushed to the size of a cricket ball. There is so much emptiness in all of matter, that if all the stars of all the galaxies in all the universe were to fall into one spot, they could all

crush into one mathematical point.

It is believed that from such a mathematical point, perhaps 15 000 000 000 years ago, there was a Big Bang or perhaps a Great Light, and what was to become all the galaxies of stars was to burst from that point. And these galaxies of stars have been travelling apart from each other ever since.

Shakespeare wrote that we are the stuff that dreams are made of. And when we look at the structure of the atom and its emptiness, we can only agree with him.

*

In fact there are physicists who suggest that the whole universe is like a cosmic dream, a dream of a greater and unknowable Mind, creating and embracing all things. One divine dream, with all things all times all places related together in that one Dreaming Mind, creating all things from the void of nothingness.

Now physicists themselves do not set out to be religious people, or poets. So when some physicists suggest that the universe is like a Divine Dream, there is hard evidence to suggest this idea to their minds.

The evidence is much too complicated to present in a course such as this, and requires advanced mathematics to explain itself, but we can talk a little about one experiment that helps to give an idea of their reasons for thinking this way:

The **Einstein/Podolski/Rosen Thought Experiment**, also referred to as the "EPR Effect", is not so difficult to describe.

Direct a laser beam to a point where the beam is split to travel at 90 degrees to the original direction of travel, both to the left and to the right. After the photons have flown to the right a million kilometres at 300 000 km per second, change their direction and spin, then the photons which have flown a million km in the opposite direction appear to "know" what has happened to the right-travelling photons, and instantaneously change in an opposite way.

The EPR Effect has repeatedly been proved, and the conclusion is that All energy particles that have been together will affect each other ever afterwards.

If both the EPR and the Big Bang theory are correct, then all energy particles in all parts of the universe are instantly responsive to each other. This idea can reasonably be extended to saying that people and worlds are

also instantly responsive to each other through this undivided Whole throughout the universe.

Other experiments that point in the same direction, are the **Double-Slit experiment**, and Heisenberg's **theory of uncertainty**.

If the EPR effect, in particular, can be noted throughout the universe, if we take seriously all that we have said in our first three chapters, then we shall also need to DENY all the things we thought were obvious looking at things in the SENSORY mode.

For instance in the Sensory-Physical mode, *"all valid information directly or indirectly comes from the senses,"* but according to the EPR effect information is coming instantaneously from all parts of the universe, which functions as one whole.

"All events happen in time and space," is the truth according to the Sensory-Physical mode of seeing things, but according to modern physics, there are three dimensions of space, one of time, and between seven and twenty-one OTHER DIMENSIONS not to do with time or space.

"All events have a cause," it is said, but how can you show that they do or they don't, since you cannot know all the distant events which might be involved in what is going on?

"Causes occur before events..." Too simple, because there are dimensions other than time and space, and there is evidence of so much we do not know.

"Objects separate in space are separate objects."

Are you separate from the tree whose oxygen you breathe, and which breathes your carbon dioxide. Each needs the other to live, so are they separate?

"Events separate in time are separate events"

What does that mean, when everything is connected to everything else?

"All activity - movement - takes place through space and takes measurable time units to occur." The EPR effect denies this.

So while we are thinking in the SENSORY MODE, we are completely denying the truth and value of the WHOLISTIC mode. But while we are in the WHOLISTIC mode, we are completely denying the truth and validity of the SENSORY. It is the same universe, seen from two different angles.

It is usually while we are in the WHOLISTIC mode of seeing things, that we meditate, feel at one with God, become aware of distant events, become intuitive, open to spiritual guidance. It seems that when we are in this mode that spiritual healing can take place. It is the mode when love comes into play, when the creative and artistic tendencies show themselves. We use the right brain, in this mode, while we use the language using, and computer-like left brain for the SENSORY mode.

The HOLISTIC MODE helps us to make sense of quite a number of things we talk about in Christianity:

- God as creator, the omnipresence (everywhereness) of God,
- the omniscience (the all-knowingness) of God,
- the Love (connectedness) of God holding all things together,
- the Spirit of God in our hearts and minds (we are connected with All that is) so that it is not possible for that Spirit to be absent from us;
- the idea that we are in the image of God (imaged by God), since the part must give some idea about the Whole;
- the idea of prayer to God for others (of course it is possible and is of value for we are all one in the whole);
- the idea of the afterlife (if we are in the mind of the Whole how can we drop out of it?);
- The idea of spiritual healing (of course it is possible for we are created in this Whole, and can be healed in this Whole, in just the same way that a cell in our bodies is created by the body, and can be healed by the body.)
- The importance of faith (of course it is important, because faith is the mind and spirit of God at work, and if we work in this faith, then things eventually happen as they should in the Whole.)

Our experiences lead us to feel with the words of Tennyson:

*Speak to Him, thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit
can meet -*

*Close is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet. [The
Higher Pantheism]*

Or with another poem by the same poet:

*Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you there, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower - but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is. [Flower in a crannied wall]*

This says in the language of the heart, what we have been saying previously.

The major implication that all this has for the language of Christianity, is that it should be understood in this holistic light. That is, if we want to talk about God, Devil, Heaven, Hell, angels, spirits, resurrection, ascension, salvation, grace, answer to prayer, Kingdom of heaven, Son of God, and so on, we have to do so **in the light of an indivisible Whole**. Christianity uses these words in the context of "in all places at all times", and for this reason, and especially with these words, we cannot use them to mean separate things, or people. "God" is a word to use in relation to the indivisible Whole, likewise "devil", "heaven", "Holy Spirit" and so on.

We can use the word "God" to refer to the creative, purposive, loving, integrative, (and whatever other) aspects of this Whole, and "devil" to refer to the disintegrative, destructive, hateful (and whatever other) aspects of this Whole. Similarly with any other religious word. Religious words used in this way, lose none of their power or meaning, and prayer and meditation, worship and awe, love and service of others, none of these things lose their significance from this holistic viewpoint. And as for "divine guidance", each of us can surely seek it.

Such is the revolution in our thinking demanded by the new physics.

*

*"Upon this age, that never speaks its mind,
This furtive age, this age endowed with power
To wake the moon with footsteps, fit an oar
Into the rowlocks of the wind, and find
What swims before his prow, what swirls behind-
Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts... they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill*

*Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric; ...*

[Edna St Vincent Millay, *Collected Sonnets* N.Y. Harper & Brothers, 1917, p.140.]

Appendix: A suggested "loom". *Quotations from a summary of Bohm's Gnosis, by Beatrix Morrell: [David Bohm was a leading theoretical physicist whose work, as is usual in scientific endeavour, rests on foundations laid by many others. An examination of these quotations will suggest close parallels with the "God who is in all, through all, and above all."]*

1. Any individual element [of totality] could reveal "detailed information about every other element in the universe"

2. "The unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders"

3. Two subatomic particles that have once interacted can instantaneously "respond to each other's motions thousands of years later when they are light years apart." (Stephen: "The furthest sun is closer to you than your tongue."\$46.)

4. Space and time might actually be derived from an even deeper level of objective reality. This reality he calls the Implicate Order.

5. Within the Implicate Order everything is connected, and, in theory, any individual element could reveal information about every other element in the universe.

6. The Hologram is Bohm's favourite metaphor for conveying the structure of the Implicate Order. "Everything is enfolded into everything". The totality of the movement of enfoldment and unfoldment may go immensely beyond what has revealed itself to our observations. We call this totality by the name "holomovement". This is the "fundamental ground of all matter" The holomovement is ground for both life and matter.

7. "What *is* is always a totality of ensembles, all present together, in an orderly series of stages of enfoldment and unfoldment, which intermingle and interpenetrate each other in principle throughout the whole of space."

8. The individual is in total contact with the Implicate Order, the individual is part of the whole of mankind, and he is the "focus for something beyond mankind"

9. It is this collective consciousness of mankind that is truly significant for Bohm. It is this collective consciousness that is truly one and indivisible, and it is the responsibility of each human person to contribute towards this consciousness of mankind, this noosphere.

10. Bohm also believes that the individual will eventually be fulfilled upon the completion of cosmic noogenesis.

11. intelligence has always been at the very core of the Implicate Order.

(cont. of ¹⁰) 12. It will be ultimately misleading and indeed wrong to suppose.. that each human being is an independent actuality who interacts with other human beings and with nature. Rather, all these are *projections of a single totality.*

For further thought: *Some readers may note similarities here with the thought of the great*

Catholic theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Look up John 17:20-24, and indeed the whole chapter, and consider whether or not you see parallels with the above summary of Bohm's thought.

V

THE MYTHIC/POETIC/METAPHORIC MODES

In various ways we have been exploring the SENSORY/PHYSICAL and HOLISTIC MODES. Now we turn to the **MYTHIC/ POETIC/ METAPHORIC MODE**.

At the end of Chapter IV we said that if we want to talk about words such as God, Devil, Heaven, Hell, Angels, Spirits, Resurrection, Ascension, Salvation, Grace, Answer to Prayer, Kingdom of Heaven, Son of God, and so on, we had to do so in the light of an Indivisible Whole. Let's explain further.

Take a premonitory dream. The dreamer sees a corpse on a bed, and knows that it is the body of a friend, but not which friend. Around the room are floating geometrical shapes, and the dreamer has an aha! feeling. Yes those shapes explain everything. Twelve hours later the dreamer is phoned: an artist friend has just died. "And wasn't it a good thing he had finished his book on geometry?" says the person on the line.

Now the dreamer has obviously been dreaming in the Wholistic Mode, and is feeling at one with a Wider Inclusive state of being. When she hears the news on the phone, she has a feeling of being at one with... God? Universe? with the dead friend? It is hard to say, and she may say any of those things.

Did what she learned in the dream come because of God's guidance, the Holy Spirit, psychic powers, the occult, through God's grace, or through the intervention of her guardian angel? People use all those explanations.

The dreamer appears to have been in touch with a real event. The dream expresses the event in symbolic form. There are feelings being expressed in the dream. The dream expresses itself as a kind of poetry. The dream is in the *mythic/poetic* mode of seeing reality. And it is as valid a mode as any other. (To understand how she gained the knowledge of the death of the friend, we have to shift modes and see the situation in the *holistic* mode.)

The dreamer will say that on the fulfilment of the dream, she has had a mountain top experience, which in other circumstances she would call union

with God.

Probably people have always had experiences like that of the dreamer. Such experiences don't belong to the sensory world where we weigh and measure. "How many centimetres long was the dream? How much did it weigh? What was the distance between one idea and another? How can we precisely analyse the dream? ... It can't be done. All we can say is "As if...". All the dreamer can say is "It is as if a Personal God were watching over me, and telling me about the death of my friend, it is as if the Holy Spirit were filling me with knowledge..." And so on.

What are we to say about the word "God"?

We have the experience of being loved by a power greater than ourselves, we have answers to prayer, people are healed, people are inspired, in the grips of that power greater than themselves they endure great hardship in the service of others, they have great ideals, they help change the world for the better, they experience evidence that there is life after death, that there is meaning to their lives, that there is salvation in the sense that they can become spiritually whole, it becomes very obvious that the power greater than themselves creates, that that power has a purpose for their lives.

All these things are said by people who believe in the Christian God, and accept Jesus as their Saviour.

These experiences are real, but how are we to describe this power? As a "Father"? As a picture, the word "Father" can take us some way. This mysterious Whole, has brought us into life, like a Father, and cared for us as some fathers do. The relationship does seem to be personal, such as a child can have with a father. But it is surely stretching things a bit far to say the Whole is an unmarried father. "Father" is a picture that carries us some of the way. But then it stops. To counteract this image many people wish to emphasise the "Motherhood" of God. That image us carries us some of the way. But then it stops. Because neither is God a human unmarried mother.

Let us take another of those words, "angel". In a three-decker world angels were needed to carry messages down from the heaven above the firmament, to those on earth. God was separate from humankind, and needed messengers. This also is a "mythic" poetic word: it is a dream symbol conveying the fact that messages are indeed conveyed from Spirit through the intuitive self. But in the modern world, we accept "angel" as a symbol for the message, but not a messenger. It would be an interesting exercise to follow up this line of thought as we read our hymnbooks.

We need to hold lightly to our pictures, our myths, our explanations, and not to push their symbolism too far.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE CONFUSE THE MYTHIC/POETIC MODE WITH THE SENSORY PHYSICAL:

Many church doctrines over which churches have divided themselves, and have excluded each other from fellowship, have come about through confusing a poetic statement with such a statement that one might make in the *sensory-physical* mode. Most superstitions arise from confusing the *mythic* with the *sensory-physical*. One might be so bold as to say that this has happened with the doctrine of the Trinity. It may well be true that God is experienced as Creator-Father, as Spirit, and through Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity expresses that experience poetically, very well. But it would be confusing modes to count, one, two, and three somethings in a God hidden from our eyes.

There is a book that did not make it into the Bible, called *4 Maccabees*. It was written in Greek, at Alexandria in Egypt, someone near 1 AD, by an unknown author.

The book tells the story of a Greek tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to crush the people of Israel, and destroy their faith. Amongst many other crimes, he had a widow and her seven sons tortured to death, in an attempt to make them eat pork, a thing forbidden in the Law of Moses. They died under torture, because they refused to go against the Law of Moses. After telling the story at length the writer continues saying that..

4 Maccabees 7.18-22.. they now stand before the throne of God and live the life of the blessed. For Moses saith, All thy sanctified ones are beneath thy hands. These then having sanctified themselves in the cause of God are honoured not only with this honour, but also for their sakes our foes did not overcome our people, and the tyrant was chastised and our land was purified. They became as it were a ransom for our nation's sin, and through the blood of these righteous ones and their propitiating death, the divine Providence preserved Israel which before was evil entreated.

Compare this similar language from the New Testament.

Mark 10.45 and Matthew 20.28: *For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Romans 3.25 *Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [appeasement, atonement] through faith in his blood (AV) (God offered*

him so that by his death he should become the means by which men's sins are forgiven, through their faith in him) Romans 8.3: *God sent his Son to be an offering to pay for sin.*

If we look at these Bible passages in the light of the story of death of the Widow and her Seven Sons from *4 Maccabees* we can get a fair idea of what "ransom" and "propitiation" mean there. In the *Maccabees* story it probably means that their self-sacrifice was the price that had to be paid to give Israel the moral strength to keep to their faith, and resist the tyrant.

In the story of Jesus, his death is perhaps seen as the price that had to be paid to bring people into a knowledge of the extent and trustworthiness of the love that is extended to us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" is how it is seen in John's Gospel. Early Christians referred back also to Isaiah 53, and compared Jesus to the "Suffering Servant" described there. They also said it was the precondition of the Resurrection, and to prove that Jesus really had a body.

Then at the end of the second century after Jesus was born, a church Father called Irenaeus, pushed the idea of Ransom or Price away from the *mythic* or *symbolic* mode of seeing things, into *sensory* thinking. "Who was the price paid to?" he asked. "It must have been paid to the Devil to buy him off"

A later Father, Tertullian, conceived the idea that because of mankind's sin, God's justice, which demands a just punishment for sin, demanded that mankind be handed over to the Devil. According to this theory Jesus' death was the ransom paid to the Devil to buy back those of humanity who had faith in Jesus. This then became official church teaching at the Council of Sens in 1141. Others pushed things even further, but the story becomes too complicated to tell here.

[See Hastings Rashdall: *Ideas and Ideals*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1928]

To this day, many Christians are influenced by Irenaeus and Tertullian and their successors, and see that "ransom", that "redemption", that buying back of what God had allowed to be "in pawn" to the Devil, they see this as the "crux" of the Christian gospel, everything else paling into insignificance.

The word "Crux" means "Cross." Crux means key-thing, the central thing. We can see this in our hymns. For instance RAM 214 "There is a green hill":

He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good, That we

might go at last to heaven, Saved by his precious Blood. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; he only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. O dearly, dearly has he loved And we must love him too, And trust in his redeeming Blood, And try his works to do.

R A M 107 the Blood of Jesus For our pardon cries. Oft as it is sprinkled On our guilty hearts, Satan in confusion, Terror-struck departs... Lift ye then your voices Swell the mighty flood; Louder still and louder, praise the precious Blood.

RAM 204 He who for me their surety stood, And poured on earth his precious Blood

It is arguable that big misunderstandings arise in Christianity when people take what is mythic or poetic and treat it as something one can weigh and measure in the *sensory* mode of seeing things. When we are trying to communicate matters of the Spirit we absolutely have to use the language of poetry, art, music, dream, dance, and all kinds of symbols. There is no other way to do it. And we are indeed trying to communicate true reality of experience. But on the other hand we need to avoid the fallacy of treating poetry as if it were science. When we treat poetry as science, then we are running away from the spiritual experience that the poetry was trying to express, and entering the world of superstition and magic.

VI

The Bible

This poem:

Dear Karirikura, beloved ocean,
We would be lost without you.
But you are here beside us, very close:
soft thunder in our ears.
And oh
the shattering immensity of sound in your
voice as death leaps up and printless
walks the lonely sand-dunes.

At nightfall, you make deep the shallow
waters of our grief, Karirikura
Your strength is our joy in the morning

when the sun lifts her eyebrow.
But we hear you also chanting to the living
the bright world heedless, turning..
And to the heart-sick wanderer returning
often we have heard your happy hymn of greeting
haeremai.. haeremai... haeremai.

Excerpt from Hone Tuwhare (1978) in "*Countless Signs*" p.18, An anthology compiled by Trudie McNaughton.

As we absorb the impressions of this strong poem, we note that the Ocean, Death, and the Sun, are presented as personal. On the one hand we could say that the poet is putting the feelings that are inside him, out there in what he sees. But on the other hand, if there is anything in our holistic picture, of one Spirit in which we participate, maybe there is not such a separation between "in here" and "out there". There is separation, if we are thinking in the sensory-physical mode, but in the holistic mode we think "as if" there were no separation. And the poet is thinking in the holistic mode.

The poet is putting "in here" "out there", but he is treating the "out there" as personal, in the way that we have already suggested that the universe is personal. When people intuit what really does belong to a consciousness wider than their own we talk about the Holy Spirit, which we may perhaps think of as the spirit belonging to the Whole. More often than not people thinking of the word "holy" as meaning, "sacred, set apart". But for the mystic and mystics are really holists, "holy" comes to mean "of the Whole".

Thinking now about the imagery of the poem: In dreams and in poetry, the ocean is often a symbol or picture for God, a God seen as an ocean of consciousness, of spirit, of mind, boundless, restless, ever-changing, with currents of mind, spirit, inspiration going unseen, unstopably, in this direction and that. An ocean of spirit enfolding all thought, all life, and carrying all before it. The ocean of spirit is necessarily seen as personal, just we drops of water in this ocean partake of that same personal quality. It is an ocean that conveys thought and prayer, in much the same way as the physical ocean conveys the long drawn out cries of one group of whales to another, through great distances of water.

We are here of course, thinking in the mythic or symbolic mode. And do we here need to argue that the information that is conveyed in this mode is just as valid and real as the statement "I went to the shop and bought a kilo of cheese?" Do we need to argue that what is seen in this mode is of infinitely greater significance?

Question: *In what ways is God like an ocean, and in what ways not?*

In modern times it is possible to see the spiritual-physical universe as one undivided whole. It is a different picture from that of the Hebrew, illustrated in our last chapter.

In modern times it is possible to say "that human beings need to make sense of the experiences they have of this whole, and the Divine Source (however we conceive this) using scientific method, philosophies, religions and the arts. And to see all these things as essential for personal growth."

Myth before Science

But there again, science played no part in the thinking of the many writers of the books of the Bible. Once again we have a difference from Biblical times, for scientific method, as we know it only dates from Roger Bacon (1214-1294). (He was a Franciscan friar, a man of remarkable gifts, of great learning and inventive power. In an age of darkness he was the first to insist on the importance of experiment and can claim the title of founder of experimental science. Optics, explosives, engines, and mechanical flight came with range of his researches.)

Prior to the use of scientific method, nations and tribes all over the world attempted for instance to explain the existence of the world and the people in it, by telling stories, myths and legends. These stories often have great spiritual power, such as we find in poetry, and for this reason are very well worth studying deeply, but they are not science.

In New Zealand we are aware of the Maori stories of the creation, with Rangi the sky god and Papa the earth goddess, and their children.

Two or three thousand years BCE the Egyptians, Indians, and the Babylonians told stories of their own. For the Egyptians the universe was a sort of rectangular box, with Egypt at the middle of its base; the sky was believed to be supported by four mountains at each corner, and the stars were lamps hung from it by cables. Round the land there was a river, upon the surface of which floated a boat bearing the sun. Babylonians had similar ideas, but developed knowledge of the heavenly bodies to such a degree that they could predict eclipses.

Creation myths

The Babylonian creation myth is a long story about the birth of various gods and about a conflict between the god Marduk and the goddess Tiamat.

Tiamat is slain and it is from her body that the firmament, the great dome of heaven, is made. In language "Tiamat" is related closely to the Hebrew word for deep "tehom". By slaying Tiamat the chaos monster, the monster of the deep, Marduk makes it possible for order to reign. The writers of the first chapter of Genesis, called the "Priestly" writers, appear to have been aware of the Babylonian story, but cut out any references to other gods, and make of it an infinitely better myth or story by which to experience the one God.

It would be good to read Genesis chapter 2, verses 4B- chapter 3 verse 24. [Written briefly "Gen. 2.4B-3.4."] This contains a second Hebrew story of the Creation, and comes from stories told both in the north and south of what is now called Israel, and were probably put into writing between 800 and 700 BC.

The first and "Priestly" story (of Genesis 1) was probably put together with the second story before 400 BC.

Questions: *What do you remember of the Hebrew, Babylonian, and Maori creation myths?*

If we were to regard a myth as a kind of poetry, can we find these myths poetically meaningful for us today? In what ways?

*

There is infinitely more to be said about how even just one book of the Bible, Genesis, came to be written. But if it is true that the Creation story in Genesis 1 was composed by the Priestly writers as an improvement on the earlier Babylonian story, and if it has been put together with two sets of folk stories at the same time, then it is not right to say, as some people still say, that Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, and the rest of Genesis, and in fact the first five books of the Bible, were dictated by God to Moses.

*

But if it was not dictated to Moses by God, does that diminish the authority and value of Genesis? Answer a question, with a question. Would our respect and appreciation of Hone Tuwhare's poem be increased if we believed God had dictated it to him while he sat on a rock in the ocean?

Doesn't the poem stand on its own feet? Either it has power, or it doesn't. The same applies to the Hebrew creation stories. Either they have power or they don't.

Myth, Legend, and Saga.

The Hebrew creation story is a *myth*, well able to stand on its own two feet. But what is a myth? A myth is not to be understood as implying things really happened that way. It is to be taken seriously because myths poetically speak of the great issues in human life and open our hearts and spirits to the acting of the Spirit of the Whole. What then is a *legend*? A legend is usually about a possibly historical character, where there may be a kernel of truth, but other stories have been added to increase our admiration for the character. Some of the shorter stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob contain a lot of legendary material. On the other hand a *saga* is a lengthy series of stories, many of which may be legendary, forming a single unit. Genesis 12-25 make up the *Abraham saga*.

Question: *Come again? What is the difference between Myth, Legend and Saga?*

*

How did the books of the Bible get to be chosen?

There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and in theory they were all written before 400 BC. After two terrible shocks to the people of the land who were conquered and taken into exile, they developed the belief that God only spoke to the prophets, and only inspired people during and before the exile. Fourteen other books written after 400 BC were written in Greek, called the Apocrypha and are used by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches to this day. The Old Testament and Apocryphal books were written by many writers, and contain law, history, prophecy, poetry, fiction, and what is called apocalyptic writing, in which ideas are presented hidden in symbolic form.

How did the books that now make up the Old Testament and Apocrypha get selected? In the time of Jesus, there did not exist bound volumes of "The Bible". Instead there were parchment or papyrus rolls of individual books, and of a much greater number of books, in the two hundred years before Jesus was born, and the in the hundred years after, the present pre-Jesus books won general acceptance as most inspired, most worthy to hear in synagogue, and to teach.

These agreed books did not stand alone, without anyone to interpret them. They were read in the synagogues, they were interpreted, preached about. The first five books of the Bible, were called the Torah, the Law, and had especial veneration. Religious leaders had the duty of so studying the Law as to be able to interpret its every rule or precept or admonition and to apply these to every possible occasion in life. And this was often very difficult. Sometimes there were occasions where the law just could not be stretched to

cover them. So people resorted to remembering the words of special teachers or rabbis, and what they had had to say about the subject. (Somewhat as happens with British and New Zealand justice, where judicial decisions, and case histories, make precedents for later decisions in courts). These sayings of the rabbis, were called the Mishna, and collected into a vast body of civil and canonical law called the Talmud, by which the Jewish nation governed itself.

Questions: *Explain the difference between Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud.*

In what forms did the Bible exist before the time of Jesus?

In what are called the "main-line" churches today, people recognise two authorities in Christianity. The first is the Bible, and the second is the Church (=Synagogue). How much was this so, with the Jews?

*

So far as the New Testament is concerned, this too started as collections of manuscripts, and here too, considerable time elapsed before growing agreement amongst the Christians, allowed certain manuscripts to be accepted and used, while others dropped out of general use.

The authority of Church, and the authority of Bible

People continued to preach from selections of books and letters which now make up the New Testament, and additional books were written, such as the Epistles of Polycarp, Clement, Ignatius, and so on, which dropped eventually out of general use, since they were largely commentaries on what had gone before, and did not have the same fire in them. But with the New Testament books, it was never a case of each person being their own interpreter, deciding all by themselves what the words meant. People belonged to churches, and churches had leaders, and theologians, and some leaders gained especial pre-eminence, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian to whom we have previously referred. So for the first 1500 years of Christianity, the New Testament stood alongside the collective teachings of the church, which interpreted it and expanded on it. The teachings of Church and Bible had equal authority, just as the teachings of the Old Testament and the Talmud had equal authority.

This situation applied until the invention of printing, where the books of the Bible were bound into a single volume, and became accessible to a wider group of readers. Previously, monasteries and other seats of learning, would likely have only one copy of a given book of the Bible, and probably not own a complete set of the books that make up the Bible.

With the coming of the Reformation in the 1540s, and the birth of

Protestantism, certain sectors of Christianity wanted to study the Bible and the Bible alone.

The Church had certainly needed reforming, for its teachings in addition to those of the scripture had allowed many superstitions and immoral practices to enter into Christian life. What is more, the Church had claimed absolute power over its adherents, and that power was not always used wisely or well. So it became a very attractive idea to dispense with church teaching, and go back to the "pure" scriptures.

But this led in turn to other dangers. For the people who could read and write, and wished to instruct others on the scriptures, were not often much educated beyond the ability of reading and writing, and so, with lack of understanding of the circumstances in which scriptures were written, many misunderstandings and misinterpretations and stupidities ensued. For many Christian groups, the authority of Scripture was made just as tyrannical in Protestantism, as the authority of the church had ever been in Romanism.

In Article 6 of the Church of England, the sound principle of the reformers was kept to that "the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

But some groups perverted this into the belief that the whole of Scripture was necessary to salvation. It has taken more than a century a devoted scholarship to save Protestantism as a whole from this perversion.

*

This is what is said about the Bible in the *New Zealand Prayer Book's Catechism*, at page 930.

24. What is the Bible?

The Bible, or Holy Scripture, is a library of books divided into the Old and New Testaments.

25. What is the Old Testament?

The Old Testament consists of books written by the people of the Old Covenant before the birth of Christ to show how God was at work in nature and in the history of Israel.

26. What is the New Testament? The New Testament consists of books written by people of the New Covenant to set forth the life and teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, the growth of the early Church, and the good news of the kingdom for all people.

27. Why does the Church value the Holy Scriptures?

Because the Holy Spirit inspired their human authors and through the Scriptures God's word continues to speak to the Church.

28. How do we best understand the Bible?

We understand the meaning of the Bible, the Church's book, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the people of God in interpretation and understanding.

29. What is the Apocrypha?

It is a collection of books written by the people of the Old Covenant and sometimes read in church but not to establish doctrine.

VII

Faith and Spirit

We have spent such a long time before coming to grips with Faith in Jesus Christ because it was thought necessary to discuss some important questions first:

1. Are we going to think in terms of the picture of the world (cosmology) of the ancient Hebrews or are we going to accept a modern picture? How are we going to handle the old-world images that keep cropping up in Bible and church?

Question: What are some of these old-world images or pictures that we can find in our prayer book? Make a list.

Suggestions: "Father in Heaven", "Redeemer", "Christ", "Son", "bearer of our sins", "kingdom", "angels and archangels", images from the first chapter of the book of Genesis.

From the "holistic" point of view we can treat these expressions as poetry or metaphor. (When we use a metaphor we are using a figure of speech in which we *imply* a comparison with something not *literally* alike. "He was the *black sheep* of the family" When we say this we are implying that "he" was *like* a black sheep which has to be culled from the mob, lest he produces black-wooled offspring, which are not wanted. "He is like a black sheep because he is a bad man, and might help make other people bad."

Question: *Look at your list of words. Can they be seen as metaphors? If so, work out in which ways they DO describe e.g. "God", and ways they don't.*

Question: *What is the difference between religious language and scientific*

language?

Suggestion: Religious language tends to be poetical, and to talk in terms of story and myth. Science is firmly grounded in the Sensory-Physical world, of weighing and measuring, and does not deal with feelings.

Question. *Where does scientific work get its authority from?*

Where does the authority of the Bible and of the Church come from? ... Would you answer (a) God? (b) the Church that you trust? (c) your own experiences? (d) other people's experiences? (e) "common sense"? (f) we need to believe in something? (g) you have seen everything from the holistic mode, and that has changed how you see things? (h) because of your respect for your elders and betters, who put their faith in the Bible and the Church? (i) some other reason?

Suggestion: You could answer in any or all of these ways. But it is good to be very clear *why* you personally are accepting a teaching or a belief; for if you do this, your accepting will integrate better with the rest of your knowledge and beliefs... So: don't shirk thinking and feeling this out!

Now, when we look at how *other* people at *other* times have approached these questions, we find several differing starting points.

1. One of these ways is **Orthodoxy**.

That word means "right belief". In the days when the church ruled society, there was a strong belief in Authority, and people were convinced that you should teach the truth through a well thought out formal system of teaching. Most churches developed catechisms, which young people were asked to learn by heart. They were very needed when most people couldn't read or write, but could learn by heart. A catechism is a system of teaching with questions and answers. The teacher asks the question, and the pupil gives the answer learned by heart from a book. There is a catechism at the end of the New Zealand Prayer Book.

Question: *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Orthodoxy approach? Make a list of each.*

Suggestion: It is helpful to hear a well thought out account of how other people have made sense of things, and to memorise it. It can make a good basis for thinking, and help to save one from floundering in a contradictory sea of thoughts. The weakness is that they are not our thoughts, and even though we may parrot the words, we may not understand with our hearts and minds.

In this course we have been strongly putting forward the idea of *holism* as the basis for understanding things, and alongside this it has been urged that we remember the *four modes* of viewing reality, that we always bear this in mind as we study the Bible and the Prayer Book. Perhaps this will become a new "orthodoxy", the new thing we are told to believe.

Question: *List the advantages and disadvantages of accepting this new orthodoxy?*

Suggestion: To argue for this new "orthodoxy" we might say that holists are more able to put together in our minds *all* that we learn: "religious", "scientific", "literary", or whatever. We need to bear in mind everything we have learnt about the world, in forming our understanding of God and his works.

The ideas of *holism* and the *four modes* don't contradict traditional "orthodoxy", which we can see summed up in the Catechism.

2. We can also come at things through Spirituality, through a changed awareness of things, in some way being "born again".

Often people rebel against the "head-stuff" of formal church teaching, and who see the need for awakening, and renewal of spirit. To be spiritually "born-again" is seen as a prerequisite for being saved... for salvation. Being born again, means that you go beyond what happened to you at baptism, to a complete change of spirit and heart, turning to Jesus. For some the Confirmation service is like an act of marriage to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Saying "yes" to Jesus is the central thing. Spiritual transformation is the goal.

Each of us in fact needs to be "born again" from one kind of awareness to another. We are born from the confinement of our mother's womb into the vast world we relate to through our senses. Children certainly play endlessly at make-believe. But they find it very difficult to think abstractly about things that cannot be seen or touched. They tend to be confined to the see-and-touch sensory-physical world.

To be "born again" is to move from the *sensory-physical* into the *holistic* mode. It is to drop the barriers of your individual self, to feel one with the Whole. When we meditate, we can be "born again" to a certain degree. In meditating, we relax our bodies, let go of our busy minds, let go of our emotions, and surrender and become at one with the Ocean of Consciousness, with God. Meditation in this sense of "letting go and letting

God" gives us an inkling of the meaning of being "born again". But with physical birth, you are either born or you are not. Spiritually, there are definitely degrees of being "born again", and we may experience a series of such "births" throughout our lives.

Jesus' message about being born again, included saying that we must repent of our sin. We could express the meaning of "sin" by saying that it means all that cuts us off from our Creator.

There are problems here, in regard to this repenting. For while we may be aware of emotions, and things we have done, which may make us unwilling to get too close to God, there is a whole life time of thoughts and feelings, and things which have gone wrong, which we don't necessarily consciously remember, but is affecting us. So repentance can mean being willing to really get to know our deeper selves, the darkness as well as the creativity within us. And to come to God to be made whole.

Sometimes when we are born again into the holistic mode of seeing things, things happen beyond what is normal. We may become aware of creative impulses, intuitions, inner promptings, perhaps even an awareness of what is happening in a distant place, and there may be spiritual or physical healing. We sometimes say this is the Holy Spirit at work, or the Spirit of Jesus, but whatever form of words we may choose, we may be glad of these moments, for they confirm for us that God is acting in and through us. These experiences do not necessarily mean that we are moral or wise, but they show God acting whether or not we are moral or wise.

The Charismatic movement emphasises these gifts of Spirit that have been described. Some Charismatics would be holists, while others would be authoritarians, and understand these gifts of Spirit in terms of a literal interpretation of the Bible, and in non-holist terms, with a dualism, with a God as opposed to a Devil, a spiritual world as opposed to a physical.

Questions: *Without looking back on what you have just been reading, try and put into words what is involved in the "born again" approach. How "born again" do you feel? List the advantages of being "born again." Can you see any traps?*

We may note in passing that there are many points of view in the Anglican church, including Anglo-Catholic, Liberal, Charismatic, Evangelical, and Feminist; and these points of view will all have differing ideas of what it means to be "born again".

Question: *If you have any knowledge of these points of view, you might try*

to put into words what you consider these differing ideas of being "born again" might be.

3. Helping others.

With entrance to the world of adults, individuals undertake moral responsibility for their own lives, and the lives of others. Many church denominations are extremely active in various forms of social service: providing food and clothing for the needy, counselling, care of children, aged, drug abusers, family disturbances. Christian humanism involves an active concern for the welfare of others, showing one's love for others, by what one does.

Question: What is to be said for and against the Humanist approach? How important do you think this approach is?

4. Emphasis on the Liturgy and other services of the Church.

We call our Communion service in church the "Liturgy". Through the Liturgical Movement of the 1800s the Liturgy regained a central place in our Sunday worship.

The Liturgical Movement aimed to reform the Anglican Church so that what happened in church more closely resembled what was happening in the Roman Catholic church. This movement which gave rise to the influential "Anglo-Catholic" Anglicans, had its roots in the 1800s led in England by J.H. Newman, P.Pusey, and John Keble. The movement made the Communion service or Liturgy quite central. Diligent weekly attendance at Holy Communion was seen as central to salvation. They also put great emphasis on the continuity of the Church from the time of Jesus Christ, and its universality.

While we might no longer assert that participation in the liturgy is essential to salvation and spiritual health, we might assert that unless Christians regularly meet together for worship and fellowship, there would be no Christianity.

Regularly sharing in worship together, sharing in the sacraments, binds us together, gives each of us support in our spiritual lives, gives us inspiration, and a desire to grow.

Question: Make a list of the reasons why this approach is important. Make a list of traps one might fall in to. How important is the liturgical approach to you? Why?

5. Starting with ourselves.

Thinking this way, we look at where we stand now, our questions, our needs, the choices we need to make in our lives now. From this standpoint we look at Bible and Church, and see what they may have to say about my present situation.

Question: *List the strong points and weak points of starting with ourselves, as we approach the service of God?*

Question: *Arrange these five approaches in order of importance, so far as you are concerned: Orthodoxy, "Being born again", Christian humanism, emphasis on liturgy, and person centred approaches.*

VIII

COMMITMENT IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

We began by saying that this book is to help prepare people for committed membership in a Christian church.

INTRO:

The intention is to make a bridge between what happens in a church and the pluralistic world of which it is a part. With all our differing beliefs we live in one world together.

To make sense of things we make use of science, the arts, philosophy and religion, and each has its place. And this book affirms what some scientists stress, and most religions stress, that we have to do with the ONE.

Chapter I: Looks at the ancient view of the universe, and then suggests that the *one* can be looked at in *four modes*

II: There is the question: "Who or what says 'I AM'"? The answer is given using the four letters of the Hebrew word for GOD.

III: This shows the Gospel of John chapter 21 exploring the question "Who or what says 'I AM'?" in the light of the philosophy of Pythagoras.

IV: The chapter on the New Physics and the Gospel explores the ONE from a scientific point of view.

V: explores the Mythic/poetic/metaphoric mode.

VI: What is the Bible and how did it come to be written? What authority does it have? What authority does the Church have?

VII: We explore "authority" a little more deeply: We look at Orthodoxy, Being born again, helping others, worship, starting with ourselves. These are alternative starting points in preparing oneself for full commitment to Christ in a particular church. It could be argued that there is a place for all of these approaches together.

All this is background study and thought before we look more closely at the church that we are intending to commit ourselves to. Churches are human institutions, just as societies, languages and cultures are human institutions, and as such have much of the divine Spirit in them, and much that is not so divine. All these institutions have their strengths and weaknesses, and moreover they are in a constant state of change and development.

But to face the facts, we have no choice but to belong to a culture, speak a particular language, take part in certain strands of society, and as religion is a group thing, no choice (if we are religious) but to belong to a particular church. That's the situation in the real world, and we have to work with what's there. So far as churches are concerned, people these days often set up new churches, where things are moulded to fit those people's hearts' desire and the beliefs they have at the moment. And sometimes for you the church is simply you and God out there in nature.

To set up a church of your own is not always a good idea. For you too are human and not always wise. You too can be wrongheaded and mixed up. Whereas if you are a member of a big church with a long history, you are a member of a church where there has been much work and discussion between scholars and leaders of varying outlooks for very many years, and the result can well be a more comprehensive, sane, and lifegiving community of faith than a heart's desire church which may well provide quite a narrow vision of things.

A church is a little like a major political party. There is a general history and aim which binds the church together, but really the church is a coalition of people whose beliefs differ in quite marked ways. In the Anglican Church, as we have remarked, there are Anglo-Catholics who share more

beliefs and practices with the Roman Catholics than most Anglicans. It is the stance of the Anglican church in New Zealand women and men are equal sisters and brothers in Christ at all times and in all respects. There are those interested in Feminist spirituality that focus more especially on the female aspect of spiritual reality. There are middle of the way Liberals. There are conservative Evangelicals, many of whom tend to interpret the whole Bible literally. And then there are the Charismatics. This last group is comparatively new in the Anglican church, and is having its influence on Anglo-Catholics, Liberals, and Evangelicals alike. And so it deserves some further study.

"Charismatic" comes from a Greek word meaning a "gift of grace", a spiritual gift coming from God. An important New Testament passage for Charismatics, would be 1 Corinthians 12.4ff: *There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us Spirit is manifest in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another by the same Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the same Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift of prophecy, and another the ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of the one and same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will. For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which many as they are, together make up one body.* [NEB]

The Charismatic movement is an expression of the human longing for a direct knowledge of God, knowing the direct action of Spirit. Christians expect sometimes to be aware of God's action when they are praying, Christian mystics have sought this knowledge in meditation, Spiritualists have sought this through trance mediums, and of course people of no specific Christian belief, have sought this knowledge through use of mantic devices, such as the ouija board, the tarot, the I-ching, and so on.

All Christians long for a direct knowing of God's action, but the Charismatics highlight this direct knowing as central to their faith. It has turned out that many Charismatics are literal interpreters of the Bible, and hostile to science; but many Charismatics are not at all literal-interpreters. Some are hostile to the institution of the Church, others find their membership of church confirmed and made satisfying. Some activities of some Charismatics might be seen a superstitious, not the true activity of

Spirit, and harmful to the individual.

In short Christians may agree in seeking the direct knowledge of the activity of Spirit in their lives; in doing so they may often serve God and each other very well, sometimes they may fall victim to hurtful error.

Without real experience of Spirit, Christianity would wither away. But it would be an Anglican kind of thing to say that seeking to be filled with Spirit has its place in the scheme of things, but that there is more to Christianity than that: we need good clear disciplined thinking, we need to be concerned with the needs of others, we do not need blinkered minds, which decide in advance in which way God is going to act in our lives, and we need to be aware of Spirit in the **WHOLE** of life.

We all need to be charismatics in some sense.

IX

THE FOURTH MODE OF SEEING REALITY: PRAYER or HOW DOES PRAYER WORK?

If we think about prayer, we need to think about God again:

What has been said about what we call "God"? We talked about the idea of a separate human-like God living on the top deck of a three-decker world. We saw that that idea of God just does not fit in with our present understanding of the universe.

Our YOD HAY VAV HAY (Yahweh) picture (in Chapter One) suggested that we should think of God as "All-that-is" containing our Environment, containing our spiritual-emotional-mental selves, working with our physical bodies. What we call "God" contains us. We are contained by "God".

If we thought of All-That-Is, as a "body or an organism" we could think of ourselves as "cells" or "souls" in that "Organism" or "Living Being". To call God a living Organism, is to use a *metaphor*. Metaphors say both true and untrue things. "God" is like a living organism, in that "he" appears to have thoughts, purposes, appears to show "herself" as the love connecting all things. The universe is like "his" body. But on the other hand the universe is not a body in the way we understand bodies of organisms on earth.

To see ourselves as "cells" in this "organism" is also to use a metaphor.

We are like cells, in the sense that we seem all to be connected together in this greater whole, this organism, and that we all depend on each other. Some say that we are like cells, in that when we look at each one of us hard enough, we can learn a lot about the WHOLE. But we are not like cells, when we remember that we are human consciousnesses, with long histories, and have our own individual lives.

How do we know that there actually is a greater mind or Spirit in which we take part?

Our brain and our bodily senses do not directly reveal to us that there is a greater Mind or Spirit. We say that there *must be* a greater Mind or Spirit, when things happen which seem to need explaining. It is a bit like watching a TV program. We can see the programme, but we can't see the radio waves flying through the air which bring the programme to the TV set. We figure there must be such radio waves being transmitted through the air, for how else can we see the programme? We cannot see God, this Greater Mind or Spirit. We have to work this out from what we CAN see. So what we have got to go on?

(1) We have already seen that physicists assume that there are several more dimensions to things than TIME, UP, BACK and ACROSS. Some physicists assume that some kind of memory independent of time, some kind of patterning of things resides, in these other dimensions. We have already mentioned scientists Rupert Sheldrake and David Bohm. There is "room for God" in what scientists have found out about the universe.

(2) Sheldrake and others suggest that when for instance godwits fly from Siberia to specific locations at the mouths of rivers in Canterbury, New Zealand, they are aided by memory in this Wider Mind, in this other dimension. How could the message "go from Siberia to Canterbury by a certain route" be encoded in the bird's genes? Animal instincts in general seem to demand other-dimensional memory.

(3) Human memory does not reside in any particular location in the brain. And it is guessed that all our memories in fact reside in this other dimension.

(4) We have given the example of a correct and detailed dream about the death of another person. As there are no possibilities of "radio transmission" between the mind of the now dead person and the mind of the dreamer, we may suppose that the "other-dimensional" mind of the dead person is connected with the "other-dimensional" mind of the dreamer through the Wider Mind.

(5) Throughout recorded history there are stories of meaningful things happening just at the right moment, happenings which are inexplicable except through the working of this Wider Mind, connecting us in the world which we know through our senses. There is a story of a rare 1929 biplane crashing outside a hangar on a strange aerodrome, breaking an important part, only for it to be found that a replacement for that part was stored in that very hangar, 45 years after the year of manufacture. Many of us may be able to tell personal stories where Question (so to speak) meets Answer in a way impossible to explain except in terms of the Wider Mind.

In the days of Homer, the gods were not always spoken of with respect. But the FATES were always spoken of with respect. It was felt that things were fated to happen, things happened through the operation of a mysterious other-dimensional power. The fates were seen as weaving our destinies.

Christians spoke of God's Providence and also God's predestination of our lives. Romans 8.28-9 *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...* "Predestined" is not so different in meaning from "fated".

How does all this relate to Prayer? We could use the metaphor of the mainframe computer and its satellite workstations. When we pray it is as if we were using our workstation to communicate with the mainframe which links us to all other workstations. We are interacting with all the data and knowledge stored in the mainframe. The data we give the mainframe becomes available to all other workstations. The mainframe gives us the help we need. The mainframe is the metaphor for the other-dimensional Wider Mind or Spirit. The workstation is the metaphor for the physical mind in the see and touch world. It is the mainframe that contains the collective memory of all that the workstations have given it, and the workstations cannot work except according to the plan laid down by the mainframe.

This is a useful metaphor. But it is only a metaphor. For the Wider Spirit is *not* a computer, but rather a better metaphor would be to compare the Wider Spirit to a Living Organism of which we are parts. We have no computer keyboard for communicating with That of which we are part. The tool (another metaphor) is our faith, and our surrender to other-dimensional Other.

We cannot consciously communicate with God, unless we have true faith, true belief, and unless we surrender to this belief in God. People can urge us to have belief in all sorts of irrational things. Belief in this Wider Spirit is

far from irrational. There are things about the universe which demand that we should have this belief. What is needed is not irrational belief or faith, but rather the willingness and ability to surrender in trust and faith to the unknown Other-dimensional, to be open to what comes. This surrender and openness can occur even though we are angry, depressed or sad.

Prayer is our interacting with Spirit

There are many ways we can interact with Spirit. Every time we call God to mind, every time we see the world around us as related to that God, every time we treat another person with respect as a child of that God, that is a kind of prayer. Prayer can be simply our life lived in companionship with God, in the faith and knowledge that we are all related to each other in Christ, in Spirit, in God, in the Wider Mind,.. whatever names we might like to give to it.

Prayer in this way can take the form of lovingly working with God to do "her" will, to work with the feeling that we are working in accordance with "his" plan, "her" predestination, the "fates" "he" ordained.

So prayer become a way in which we bring ourselves into the attitude of faith and submission to God, tune in to God, and bring ourselves into a readiness to act with God. Prayers of Confession, remind us to take the consequences of our actions very seriously, for they affect others both in the medium of Spirit, as well as in the light of day world. Prayers of praise lift up our spirits to be one with the Great Spirit. And prayers for others remind us to reach out to others in the spirit of love. Even if the "mainframe" were turned off, our very act of praying in all these different ways would help our hearts and minds to be in the right place, our attitudes would be positive, not self-centred, and we would be playing our part in making the world a better place.

But the "mainframe" is never turned off.

We "workstations" can often hear from the "mainframe". But how do we go about this?

One way is through **meditation**. One kind of meditation will involve us being still and quiet. We might look at a lighted candle as something to focus on. A flower. A beautiful scene. Or just shut our eyes. We would try to relax every part of our body in turn. Relax the muscles of our faces. Let all thought processes go, if at all possible. If mental chatter persists, we will not fight it, just disregard it and let go. Let go deep within one self, and have communion with the Deep Silence within. In this way we can practise

communion with the Other-dimensional, by simply surrendering to It.

And then there is an active kind of meditation, whereby we try and bring to mind all the ways in which Spirit is operating in our minds. This kind of meditation verges on prayer.

Another way, is through observing **meaningful coincidence** where the right things come together in our lives, in a way no human being could have organised them. We all have our personal stories. When we call to mind these meaningful coincidences, we are much helped in our communion with the Other-dimensional.

A further way, is through attending to the occasional thought provoking **dream** that we may have. This sometimes gives us insight into God's working in our lives.

We may seek to assist God's **healing** work in the lives of others, through our prayers. Remember, a way of understanding the problem of sickness, and evil, is to remember that we are thinking of God as an "Organism". With an organism if part is evil or sick the whole will suffer. If we see God as an organism, we will see God suffering with our suffering, and hurting with all evil that is wrought. But all organisms have ways of healing the afflicted parts of themselves, and we can well notice the ways in which God heals people physically, in their thoughts, and in their relationships.

We may deliberately seek an **intuitive** answer from God, through prayer. We ask God a clear question, and wait for the events of the next day or two to show an answer, for God acts in all things. Sometimes the answer may come in a dream. Some people can be guided to book references that can give a very clear and specific answer. Sometimes the answer comes as an inspirational feeling. Sometimes we have a peak experience, where we feel in the flow of spirit, and things seem just to unfold, as they should.

Finally, we find God through LOVE.

We may remember Jesus' way of summarising "The Law, the Torah" (Everything about God, in the eyes of the orthodox Jews): You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength...You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Love of neighbour must accompany love of God.

But Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus (not long before his crucifixion) as implying that our neighbour is not really different from Christ, not different from God. [Matthew 25.31ff]

At the last judgement, he says, there will be two classes of people, the sheep and the goats, and the sheep are the ones who have treated people as if they were divine. Matthew has Jesus speaking of himself as a divine King, as a human representation of the God who is in and above all things: *Then the King will say to the (Sheep) 'You that are blessed by my Father; come! Come and receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you received me into your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.....I tell you, indeed, whenever you did this to the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!'*

In the letter to the Hebrews we read *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

There is a poem by Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) which several generations of young people have learned by heart:

*Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:-
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?' - The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of all that love the Lord.'
Abou asks whether his name is in that book, and the angel said No. So
Abou says 'I pray thee then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men'.
And when next the angel appears with the book of gold..And lo! Ben
Adhem's name led all the rest.*

We can come close to God through other people. That is without question. But we can come close to God in worship through All that Is, and from whatever mode we are viewing All that Is, whether the Holistic, Prayer, Mythic, or Sensory-Physical. We can come close in song, come close in suffering, come close in temptation, come close in joy. Church is a place where ways of coming close are brought to our attention, so that we can practice what we learn in our daily lives.

Finding our God can be the most exciting life-long adventure, if only we embark on the way.

All this by way of preparing us to study the Bible, study the Catechism, and join in Church Worship!

APPENDIX for Anglicans.

THE CATECHISM

We now come to study the Catechism as presented by A New Zealand Prayer Book. At the beginning of this Catechism we read:

"This catechism is a teaching resource expressing the basic Christian beliefs and cast in the traditional question and answer form for ease of reference. Each answer can be used as an introduction to deeper and wider understanding. It includes a commentary on the Apostles' Creed but is not to be regarded as a complete statement of belief and practice."

As we continue our preparation for Confirmation, we will study this Catechism in the light of all the questions we have been exploring to this point. We will explore this catechism in the light of our personal experience, and our own thinking.

In our confirmation preparation we will explore and use the contents of A New Zealand Prayer Book. We will share together our own journey of faith. We will study the Bible. We will explore depth of relationship with each other and with God.

We carry out our explorations together believing that Purpose and Love undergird our lives, and that together we may find the meaning of relationship to Christ.

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From now on, we will bear these five points of view in mind, as we prepare for our confirmation. To keep balance between them, our times together will be split into three segments:

1. Worship from the New Zealand Prayer Book.
2. Background learning from Bible, Prayer Book and whatever is relevant.
3. Theological reflection. "Theology" means "thinking about God and ourselves."
4. Acting as Christians.

*

Exploring together in a group

When we are trying to learn something, it is always a good idea to start with what we already know and understand. We can then be very clear how what we are

learning fits in with what we know so far.

If we meet together as a group to explore in this way, we can invite each other to contribute short personal stories for the group to

a. think and feel about,

b. relate to the Christian tradition (Bible, Church, and related matters), and

c. relate to our Culture (meaning anything but the Christian tradition, everything else that affects our lives.)

To take one of these personal stories: it may be about making choices where feelings of guilt are involved. The teller of the story may want to take one course of action, but be filled with guilt at the effect it may have on others. "There are three of us who share a horse at home. I want to take that horse away with me on a camping holiday" One can discuss such a story, and really identify with the feelings involved in it.

The rest of the people in the group can try to remember personal situations where they have had the same feeling in making choices. When the group do this, the private story of one person is seen to be a specific example of the kind of situation most of us face.

Religion and especially Christianity constantly uses symbols to represent these basic human and spiritual situations. So the group can ask the question What symbol can we think of which best represents this feeling of being torn by guilt in making a decision? Members of the group may produce several drawings for the group to choose from.

An actual group chose a picture of a stick figure with down turned mouth, surmounted by a thundercloud, flanked by question marks, and the sun to the left of the picture, and the moon to the right.

In this actual situation the group thought that this picture represented their feelings very well, but the images of the SUN and the MOON led them into an interesting detour:

For in symbolism, the SUN sometimes represents the intellect, the left-brain, the reasoning process. It sometimes also represents the male, since the male traditionally is seen as emphasising the reasoning processes.

The MOON on the other hand represents the intuitive, the feeling, the creative, and the right-brain. And it is sometimes also seen as representing the female, traditionally seen as emphasizing the feeling and intuitive aspects of humanity. (We may agree that there is now a growing tendency to move away from these gender-related stereotypes.)

The group explored the SUN and MOON symbols further and agreed that in religious thinking we were emphasizing MOON thinking, the feeling, the

intuitive, and the creative, whereas in school we were more emphasising the SUN thinking, left-brain reasoning, weighing and measuring.

The leader asked the group how SUN and MOON were related to the images of PETROL and ENGINE. The group were clear that SUN thinking was the ENGINE, and MOON thinking was the PETROL, the motive power. The intellect (SUN) accomplishes little unless spirit, heart and feeling (MOON) are behind it.

The group then moved from their chosen symbol, to finding stories from the Christian Tradition which seemed to relate to the symbol.

Four stories came to mind: the story of Adam and Even and how they faced the guilty decision whether to eat from the tree of knowledge; the big decision of Daniel whether he would guilty obey the command to worship something other than God, or be thrown into the den of lions; in Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan, the guilty decisions made by the priest and the Levite to pass by the man lying there robbed and beaten, without helping him; and the story of Pilate trying Jesus, not wanting to condemn Jesus to death, not wanting the guilt-making decision, washing his hands of the guilt.

The group then moved away from Christian Tradition to Culture. What does our Culture say about Guilty Decisions? What came to mind was "Do what you feel is right" "consider other people", "make sure you don't regret your decision" "what will your parents feel?"

CULTURE was clearly SUN consciousness, left brain reasoning. "CHRISTIAN TRADITION" was clearly MOON consciousness, right-brain, to do with feeling and intuition.

The final question to be discussed was, Would it be the CULTURE which got you up and moving and wanting to do things, or would it be the CHRISTIAN TRADITION? The group felt that it would be the MOON-conscious Christian Tradition, that motivated. Our culture encouraged us to use our left brains to get things done. So once again the equations were made: MOON= CHRISTIAN= PETROL, SUN= CULTURE=ENGINE.

*

So we have now seen an example of how FOCUSING ON OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES is a necessary starting point if we are really to relate to Spirit through the Christian Tradition, and the Culture in which we share. (The method of focussing used in our sample group meeting, was based on the methods of "Theological reflection" advocated in the Education for Ministry courses put out by The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, USA.) If time allows, it would be good for members of a confirmation group to have several sessions following this

pattern.

But to keep things in balance we need to remind ourselves what is "ORTHODOXY" for our church, the picture of things that has been produced by much thinking of theologians, and leading church people. Other have wisdom to share with us.

But we have also to be "BORN AGAIN". To keep leaving behind the narrowness of self, and to embrace the wideness of Spirit.

There again, our faith and believing are somewhat futile is it doesn't influence what we ACTUALLY DO for others.

And finally, our faith and believing have to do with union with God and with others. Something very important is missing if we do not SHARE WITH OTHER PEOPLE IN WORSHIP, in faith and believing.

FOR PEOPLE WISHING TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

From now on, we shall be thinking specifically about a big church with a long history, called the Anglican in many parts of the world, but the "Episcopal" in Scotland and the United States of America. In New Zealand it is now called "The Anglican church in Aotearoa-New Zealand and Polynesia". Like all other big churches it has strengths and weaknesses.

What follows is for those who are choosing to be part of this church rather than some other church, which may have other strengths and other weaknesses.

The Anglican church is still the established and state church of England, but in the rest of the world it is simply one denomination of Christians amongst others.

The beginning of the Anglican and Lutheran churches.

It was in 1534 that King Henry VIII the power of the Pope in England was abolished, and the Church of England became independent from the Roman Catholic church, which sees itself as having a continuous history back to the time of Jesus.

There were political reasons for splitting from the authority of the Pope in Rome at the time, but it was very apparent that the Roman Catholic church at the time urgently needed reform. On the continent Lutheranism became established at the Confession of Augsburg in 1530, and in due course the whole of Northern Europe and Scandinavia became Lutheran. So it was only four years later that England's church too split from Rome. The Lutheran and the Anglican churches remained recognisably Catholic in church government, and in what happened in church

services. There was no great break with the past.. but nevertheless there were important reforms, including worship both in England and in northern Europe being conducted in the local language rather than Latin, and priests being allowed to marry. Amongst the Lutherans, the Scandinavians continued to have bishops, whereas the northern Europeans did not.

The Church of England as a state church, with the Monarch as the head, was attempting to include the whole nation within itself, and so naturally had to include people of differing theologies and points of view. And we might well agree that that is still its strength. It had to be comprehensive and not narrow. Throughout the history of England, there were two authorities in the land, Church headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Monarch. There were the secular (non-church) nobility, the dukes, earls, and lords, who sat in the House of Lords in Westminster, and there were the Church nobility, with archbishops being given the honorific titles accorded to dukes, and bishops the titles accorded to lords. These also could sit in the House of Lords. And although democracy in England dates back to the 1200s, universal franchise in England only came about in this century. The Church of England alongside the King and Parliament was very much a matter of government from above, from the ruling classes, and it has only been in the last few decades in England that there have been democratic church meetings, where clergy and parishioners have a strong say in what goes on in the church.

But the Anglican church throughout the world, although it regards itself as one church, and giving respect to the Archbishop of Canterbury, is really a federation of independent churches or "provinces" in the varying countries. And each province has a character of its own.

For instance in New Zealand, the new Anglican Church formed itself in a much more democratic manner than other Anglican churches, under the leadership of Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, in 1857. In Dioceses, there had to be agreement by the bishop(s), agreement by the clergy, and agreement by non-clergy parish representatives, before a decision was made. Bishops were elected by their dioceses, with majority consent of other bishops.

New Zealand was the first country to have votes for **women** (1893), although women were not allowed to vote in parish meetings until 1923. The New Zealand Anglican Church was amongst the first to have women as priests (1977), and is the first to have a woman as bishop. The Australian Anglican Church by contrast ordained their first women priests in 1992. (By comparison the Methodists had their first woman minister in 1959, the Presbyterians in 1965, the Baptists in 1973.) The Anglican Church in Great Britain still had no women priests in 1992.

Until 1992 New Zealand wide organisation of the Anglican Church was through the Bishops and General Synod. Then in that year, a new constitution was approved, which laid it down that matters affecting the whole church must be determined by the joint agreement of three "tikanga" (groups): the Tikanga

Pakeha, the Tikanga Maori, and the Tikanga of Polynesia. In this way there is an attempt to have our three cultural traditions playing an equal partnership in our church.

Until 1928, the Book of Common Prayer used in Great Britain, dating from 1662, was the only prayer book that could be used in the Anglican church. In 1928 there was a British revision, and used optionally in New Zealand. Then after 25 years of experimentation *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* was produced, with services in English, Maori, and prayers in Fijian and Tongan. We can be very grateful for the rich resources which this new book provides, and how much it is a New Zealand book. But if we compare this prayer book, with the 1662 Book of Common Prayer we can see that it belongs to the same or a similar Christian tradition. In addition though, if we inspect the Roman Catholic Missal, or a Lutheran prayer book, we will see that we all share in the pattern of worship observed by the Catholic Church from the early times of Christianity. We would see that Anglicanism and Lutheranism are as much "Catholic" as "Protestant".

In thinking about the Anglican church, we need to remember that it exists alongside and interacts with a large number of other denominations of Christians: In 1971 the Anglicans agreed to a Plan for Union in which it was envisaged that Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and the Associated Churches of Christ would unite to form one church. It was considered feasible that this could happen. But in 1976 this Plan was rejected by the Anglicans, and in 1981 the Presbyterians and Methodists also rejected the Plan.

The beginnings of Anglicanism in New Zealand can be traced back to the time when the Church Missionary Society sent missionaries to New Zealand in 1814. (The Maori word for the Anglican Church is the "Mihinare" or "Missionary" church.)

Samuel Marsden was one of these missionaries, and was to become the inspiration and driving force behind the missionary movement. He had been much helped from 1809 onwards by a Maori called Ruatara, who taught Marsden Maori, and of whom Marsden wrote "He has also attained to a very considerable knowledge of the Christian Religion, and revered it much."

It was estimated that in 1845, out of a population of 110,000 Maori, 42 700 regularly attended Anglican services, 16,000 attended Methodist services, and 5 100 were associated with the Roman Catholics. It has been argued that 1814-30 was a period in which the Maori were culturally assertive and the missionaries in a state of dependency. After this a cultural depression took over, and it became the Maoris who felt confused and dependent. And as time went on, the Maori culture was not given its due respect.

The Maori Tikanga today. Today there is a resurgence of Maori culture, and it is now legally the case that Maori culture and Christianity is an equal partner with

Pakeha.

Better relationships are being built, and there is room for much more progress in this regard.

In Alan Davidson's *Christianity in Aotearoa* p.3 we read that "*Pre-contact [with Pakeha] Maori society was holistic in its world view, holding together the past and present, the spiritual and the secular, life and death. The visions between Te Ao, light, and Te Po, darkness or death, were not closed, but allowed for a coming and going between the two. Similarly the gods were not distant from the world of people.*"

Maoris felt a close relationship of kinship with their environment. "It was a world in which people were very aware of the interrelationship of whenua (country) and wairua, (spirit), of land, life and spirit. This interdependence expressed itself in ritual, see above all in... the ceremonies surrounding death.

"Myths" which explained and gave meaning to life were passed down from one generation to another. The stories told how things came into being, and they helped to keep alive the beliefs, traditions, and customs of the Maori. There were popular fireside tales which all people could hear, mainly concerned with cultural heroes such as Maui who fished up the islands and Tawhaka who climbed the heavens to bring back baskets of knowledge."

Maori culture is making an increasing impact on Christianity in New Zealand, adding a richness to which justice can be done, only by the use of poetry. No justice at all can be done in such a short notice as this.