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CHURCH GOING AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

A STUDY OF THREE METHODIST CHURCHES IN THE

EDINBURGH AND FORTH METHODIST CIRCUIT

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## SUMMARY

This thesis explores some of the reasons why people attend one of three churches in the Edinburgh and Forth Circuit of the Methodist Church. It is an attempt to follow the life histories of a group of participants from their earliest recollections of ever being in a church through to the present day and to examine why they continued to go to church at various significant stages within their own life cycles.

The point of departure for the Thesis is a practical concern about why people chose to be associated with one particular church building and congregation and when, how and why they reassess previous decisions and actions. Existing approaches to this problem are examined with particular emphasis on two Scottish research projects.

The current debate about the theory of secularization is examined with reference to the contribution of Wilson, Luckmann, Berger and Martin. Secularization is an area of socio-religious concern which impinges upon any notion of the significance of church going within a life style and life cycle.

The organisation of the Methodist Church is described in order to outline the hierarchical structure of the church and to explain the

meaning and significance of the range of offices within that structure.

The thesis briefly traces the development of the Methodist Church within the specific Scottish context and describes in some detail the late nineteenth and twentieth century life of the three churches which the participants attend.

The life style and life cycle experiences of the eighty three participants who contributed to this study is told through their own words using the broad headings of Childhood, Adulthood and Old Age as a simple method of grouping together and comparing the separate life stories.

In the following chapter I investigate the possibility of constructing a theoretical process model of church going. The life histories of the participants are examined in relation to such a model. The following chapter explores some of the applications of such a process model.

## CHAPTER 1

### REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THE THESIS

#### THE CENTRAL PROBLEM STATED

This thesis is the response to questions which confronted me, initially, as a circuit minister in the Methodist church in Glasgow. I was stationed to a circuit where, eventually, I had responsibility for two churches. One was on a large housing scheme to the north of the city with a population of 14,000 and the other was a church in an inner city area about half a mile from the city centre.

All the regular and frequent attenders of the congregation of the church on the housing scheme were Scots living in the scheme. My wife and I were the only people of English origin to attend that church and the only attenders not to live in the scheme. Of the attenders at that church who were, or had been until retirement, in regular employment, the biggest group was that of school cleaners and janitors. In contrast the inner city church had a congregation which was scattered throughout the city of Glasgow and surrounding areas, including both north and south of the Clyde. At this church the variety of occupational activities included hotel kitchen labourers and medical consultants.

Less than a quarter of a mile from the church on the housing scheme was the Glasgow city boundary. Immediately over the boundary was what, to all intents and purposes, had become a residential suburban housing estate of the city of Glasgow. The majority of the housing stock here was privately owned in estates that had been built since the early 1960's.

Amongst the questions that I had to ask was why did people who moved into the private residential suburb and who had some Methodist church connections invariably choose to attend the inner city church which was some four miles distant and drive past the scheme church which was adjacent to where they lived? Why did those members of the congregation who left the scheme and bought houses in the adjacent residential suburb either cease to attend the scheme church or to attend much less frequently than they had done when they were resident in the scheme? Why did families that had moved into the residential suburb from outside Glasgow, and often outside Scotland, not go to one of the local churches of Scotland with other members of the community into which they had settled, especially when their children were involved with the children of their new neighbours in uniformed organisations in those churches? Why was one church characterised by a homogeneous congregation in terms of their place of residence and occupation whilst the second was so markedly diverse in both respects?

My interest in these questions became focussed in the events surrounding two families. Family "A" were Scots and Methodist who



moved into the residential suburb. Unusually they initially chose to attend the scheme church because it was the nearest - half a mile away. After six months they decided that they could not settle in the scheme church and went instead to the church which the wife had attended as a child and during the early part of her married life. That church was in another town some 40 minutes drive away. They lived opposite to one of the Churches of Scotland in the Suburb and had tried worshipping there for a short while before making the final break with the scheme church.

Family "B" were originally English and Methodist and had been regular attenders of the inner city church, travelling with their children for many years from outside the city boundary. After attending that church for over ten years they decided to attend a local church of a different denomination because they felt that it would be better for the children. Why was that particular time chosen?

In addition to these questions I also began to doubt the usefulness of annually completing a statistical return called the "Schedule for Local Churches". On the 1st of November each year every Methodist minister who is appointed to a station under the authority of the British Methodist Conference has to complete this schedule which, according to the wording on the schedule should, "indicate the state of the membership" for each church of which he has pastoral oversight. From the returns made on these schedules the Methodist Church in Britain compiles the annual membership

statistics which are published in the "Minutes of Conference" each year. The schedule comprises twenty four questions relating to membership statistics. They include returns for the number of members last year and this year. There are categories for the number of new members, members reinstated, members received from other churches and denominations in this country and from overseas, deaths, members who have ceased to be members, members who have moved to other circuits, churches and countries together with the number of baptisms and the number of people aged between 13 and 26, children associated with the church aged under thirteen. In addition a return is required for the average number of people attending worship during the month of October.

A member of the Methodist Church according to the Deed of Union of 1932, is -

*"a person recognised as a member of the Methodist Church in accordance with our rules for the time being in force with respect to membership of the Methodist Church". (1)*

The present rules in force are that, after a period of training and probation of not less than three months, those approved for membership are admitted to full membership of the church by the Church Council on the recommendation of the Pastoral Committee and are publicly recognised at a service known as "The Service of Reception in to Full Membership or Confirmation", conducted by the minister in the presence of the church and which includes the

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. During this service the candidates for membership confirm that :

- i. They will repent of all their sins and renounce all evil
- ii. That they trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour
- iii. That they will obey Christ and serve him in the church and in the world (2)

In the Methodist Church the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is open to all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge their need of him" and so is not reserved exclusively for members of the church. It is an "open" table.

The Duties of Members are -

- i. To avail themselves of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- ii. Membership involves fellowship, which it is the duty of all members to cultivate
- iii. The weekly Class Meeting is to be cultivated
- iv. All members are to be in a Class under the pastoral care of a Class Leader and to receive the annual ticket of membership.
- v. Any member who without reason is persistently absent from Holy Communion and meetings for fellowship is to be

visited by the Class Leader and the minister and if by prolonged absence he severs himself from Christian fellowship his name is to be removed by the local Pastoral Committee from the Class Book, whereupon he ceases to be a full member of the Methodist Church. (3)

One of the problems with the information which is collated from these annual returns of the number of people in membership of the Methodist Church lies in the extent to which these statistics are socially produced. Methodist ministers, indeed all clergy, are well aware of the decline in church attendance in Britain today. Decline is often assumed to be an indicator of personal failure - successful ministers are those whose congregations are growing and where there is much activity on and around the church premises, day and night, weekday and Sunday. A particularly successful minister is one who has revived a previously dwindling congregation. There is a temptation to regard the size of the congregation as a measure of success or failure. In "Beyond Decline", Robin Gill observes that,

*".. the more conscious churchgoers become of the prevailing decline of British churchgoing, the more they may be tempted to make such judgements. If only they could find a young minister, if only they could find an evangelical minister, if only they could find a minister who visited regularly , if only they could*

*find a minister who preached interesting sermons, if only....." (4)*

There are, to my knowledge, ministers who do not review the position of those members who no longer attend and remove their names from the Membership List as they are required to do under the standing orders of the "Constitution, Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church" and thereby inflate the returns for their own churches because they feel that the information given in this statistical return does reflect their own effectiveness as ministers.

Caution also needs to be exercised with the Membership Return figures in so far as there are also ministers who find ways of minimalizing the number of members because a per capita basis is one of the most common devices for levying the circuit assessment, the amount of money to be raised by a local church to pay for all the expenses of the circuit, district and the Connexion. The less members a church is shown to have the less money it has to raise. There are also pastoral problems in removing people from membership, even when they no longer attend church at all, especially when this would cause offence and distress to other members of the family or friends who continue to attend.

Jack Douglas (5) examined the acceptability of relying on official statistics to test any sociological theory of suicide. He demonstrated that the official statistics on suicide were biased

in a number of ways. For example, on the assumption that the Roman Catholic Church which has generally retained the law that a suicide cannot be buried with church sanction, whereas the Protestant Churches have largely abandoned this old law, then there might be an expectation that Catholics would attempt to conceal suicides more than Protestants. In a comparative study of the cantons of Switzerland it was found that the Catholic cantons had proportionately more accidental deaths than did the Protestant cantons and the Protestant cantons had proportionately more deaths by suicide. A possible interpretation is that Swiss Catholics have a higher rate of concealment of suicide.

Douglas also argues that:

*"...there are a large number of biases in the official statistics that parallel the official categories of social structure (class, occupation age etc.) in such a way as to greatly bias any theory constructed or tested by them. Most importantly, it seems most reasonable to expect that in societies, such as the western world, in which some groups morally stigmatize suicides and their families, there will be both differential tendencies on the parts of different (official) categories to have any 'suspicious' deaths within their families categorised as something other than 'suicide' and differential degrees of success in these attempts. Moreover, it seems most reasonable to expect that the attempts and the frequencies of success will be greatest in those groups which*

*are most 'integrated' in the society. The general implication of this very involved argument is that the greater the degree of social 'integration' of a group, the lower will be its official suicide rate as a result of the nature of the official categorisation process itself."*(6)

If we are to recognise the nature of the social production of statistics and even if we assume that the Membership Return does not grossly distort the statistics then, at best, the schedule can only indicate the numerical state of the membership. It cannot be a tool in answering my original questions about the nature of membership which is not a question of what is happening in terms of growth or decline but why people become members, remain members, cease to be members of a particular denomination or local church. Neither is it of any value in attempting to understand how those who continue in membership, denominationally or locally interpret the relative value and significance of what church membership means to them either throughout or at given periods in the life cycle.

#### THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past the activity of churchgoing in Britain has frequently been assessed and quantified in terms of the numerical incidence of church members and church attenders. (7) The Census of 1851, the first and only time that a question about attendance at public

worship has been included in the United Kingdom Census of Population, indicated that some 36% of the population were in church on the day of the census. However, within the results of the Census there were significant variations in the pattern. For instance, 57% of the population in Bedford and Huntingdon stated that they were in church on the relevant day compared to a 21% response from people living in London. Furthermore, other local studies since the Religious Census have also indicated the range of church going as an activity in various parts of the country. A survey in the British Weekly (1886) showed an attendance rate of 30% and one published in the Daily News (1903) of 20%. Studies in York found that 35.5% attended church every Sunday in 1901 but by 1947 this number had fallen to 13%. (8) Tables of church membership collected together by Currie, Gilbert and Horsley indicate that, for example there has been a decline in the numbers baptised, confirmed, married and buried by the Church of England since 1910 together with a reduction in the number of Easter communicants.

Such statistics point towards what was happening in terms of church attendance in Britain and they may give clues as to which classes in society are most involved. However, taken in isolation, they are unable to explain adequately "why" these recorded patterns are taking place.

This has been a study of a main stream denomination. It has also been a study of ordinary people in a main stream denomination.



William James in "The Varieties of Religious Experience" examines the documentary evidence of people, who with the exception of 'The Healthy Mind' had undergone extremely intense experiences of the Christian faith. His interest was in personal religion and religious understanding. He was not interested in the main stream institutional church. James defined religion in so far as "Varieties" was concerned in personal terms :

*"The feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (9)*

It was said of him, perhaps unfairly, that:

*"James was always attracted by cranks and geniuses and unclassified waifs, none of whom were impounded with the conventional ninety-and-nine, safely walled in by historic creeds and codes."(10)*

Robert Towler (11), on the other hand, examined conventional religion in the latter part of the twentieth century through letters written to Bishop John Robinson in response to the publication of Honest to God. He identified five main varieties of conventional religious consciousness. Towler's main contention was that:

*"...one cannot proceed to study religion at the most general and inclusive level of 'meaning systems' without first knowing the range of available 'meaning systems', so, I contend, one cannot study 'conventional religion' unless one first knows the range of ways in which people are 'conventionally religious'"(12)*

*"My argument is that we have yet to give an adequate sociological account of conventional religion, and that if we were to succeed in doing so we should be better equipped for the study of those remoter topics (new religious movements and modern meaning systems). We have much to learn about conventional religion before we can regard it as being sufficiently studied and adequately understood."(13)*

Towler's belief is that the people who are representative of the types of conventional religious experience which he identified might be found in the same church next Sunday. I have no wish to dispute that. What I hope to show in this thesis is why people of different conventional religious experience might be present in the same church next and every Sunday. We will see in the course of this study that the participants did not readily refer to matters of religious experience when they explained why they went to church. Indeed specific questions had to be included in the interview schedule to inquire of them about such experiences. The immediate response of why did or do you go to church was one of

personal contact with other people and not one of personal relationship with the Divine. It is my belief that the relationship with the Divine for most people in main stream churches is worked out in the midst of their continuing contact with other church goers. Before we can begin to understand what and why people believe we have to identify why they are in a context where matters of believe are relevant to their life styles. I hope that I have been able to demonstrate that an understanding of why people are there at all is of fundamental importance.

#### THE CASE OF SCOTLAND

The question is further complicated in so far as it may not be possible to draw conclusions about what is happening in Scotland from British based statistics. Dr John Highet, commenting in the Brierley and MacDonald Census of the Churches in Scotland 1984 said,

*"I know of some English based surveys which have grouped all those church members not professing an allegiance to an English or a Welsh denomination with the all-embracing and manifestly fatuous category, "Scottish Churches". I know too, of polls which have expressed, say the membership of the Church of Scotland as a proportion of the population of the UK, implying if not actually stating that, the small percentage they have*

*come up with shows that the Church is but a poor "also ran" in the religious statistics stakes". (14)*

In Scotland, denominational groups are an important factor when considering the nature and pattern of church attendance and even within the Church of Scotland, the structures and attitudes of at least three major presbyterian traditions (The Church of Scotland, The United Free Church and The United Presbyterian Church) are to be found which manifest themselves in the congregations and their social organisation. (15) Also, the Church of Scotland is so dominant a presence in the church scene that the other non-Church of Scotland protestant churches have had to assume their own distinctive ways of interpreting and relating to the established church, which has the result of differentiating their character and nature from their parent English body. In the Methodist Church, to take but one example, the style and organisation of the ordained ministry reflects the presbyterian nature of the Church of Scotland ministry far more than it remains faithful to the circuit based ministry of English Methodism. There is a difficulty, therefore, in taking the conclusions of socio-religious studies from other countries and then overlaying them on the Scottish church scene.

The Nelson and Clewes (16) study, based on Dawley in the West Midlands, claimed that there was a relationship firstly, between geographical mobility and religious belief and practice and

secondly, between social mobility and religious belief and practice. Their conclusion was that

*"geographical mobility reduces participation in corporate religious activities whereas social mobility increases such participation". (17)*

That I would suggest could be supported also in the Scottish church scene. However they also were of the opinion that,

*"In Britain it appears that individuals who have experienced a high rate of geographical mobility become detached from the membership of a Church. This is probably caused by the fact that in Britain the majority of worshippers have a primary attachment to their local church (or congregation) rather than to a particular denomination."(18)*

This may be true for England. Empirical observation suggests to me that it is not true in the Scottish context. English families moving north of the border tend to search for a church of their own denominational background and initially avoid the local parish church (Church of Scotland) unless travelling distances are excessive. Further investigation within the Scottish ethos is required before the Dawley conclusion can be considered as having relevance to Britain as a whole.

In an attempt to examine the specifically Scottish dimension there have been two major contributions published in the last 20 years. Peter L. Sissons of Edinburgh University produced a study of "The Social Significance of Churchgoing" based on the results of questionnaires, interviews and participant observation of the churches in the burgh of Falkirk undertaken between 1968 and 1971. The Church of Scotland in conjunction with Dr. Alex Robertson of Edinburgh University published the results of the "Lifestyle Survey" in 1987.

#### THE FALKIRK REPORT

Sissons decided to focus the research on the meaning of church membership and concentrated upon the individual rather than the collective and the structural organisation. His work examined church membership against three variables, communal and associational belonging, denominational differences and socio-economic class. He based his work upon an adaptation of Tonnies' concept of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, and Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge with their emphasis upon the ways in which personal reality is socially constructed. Sissons concluded that there were two distinctive methods of becoming church members(19) ; a person is either born into the church in so far as they were born into church involved families, or, they joined the church on a voluntary basis as the result of a decision of some kind. His research found that the major differences

between the communal and associational members lay in the meaning that religion and church membership had for them.

The section on denominational differences, whilst supporting Lenski's thesis that religion is one determinant in the adoption of life styles and values, also doubted his conclusion that denominational differences had no social significance when the Scottish religious scene was examined. Sissons work led him to the conclusion that

*"church membership has a social significance, in terms of social networks and friendship patterns, in the participation in voluntary associations, in political preference, and apparently in attitudes towards work that there are differences between the three denominational groups (Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic, Non-Church of Scotland) which are statistically significant, suggesting that the membership of the respective denominations makes a difference. .... Whether for good or ill in many areas of life membership of the church makes a difference."*(20)

The study found that the churches, structurally at least, perpetuated the distinction which prevails between the middle and the lower classes but not in a disruptive way partly because of the low representation of the lower classes and partly because of the middle class aspirations of the lower class. In some cases church membership appeared to be the more significant determinant

of behaviour whilst in other cases the major determinant is socio-economic class.

The final report commented that :

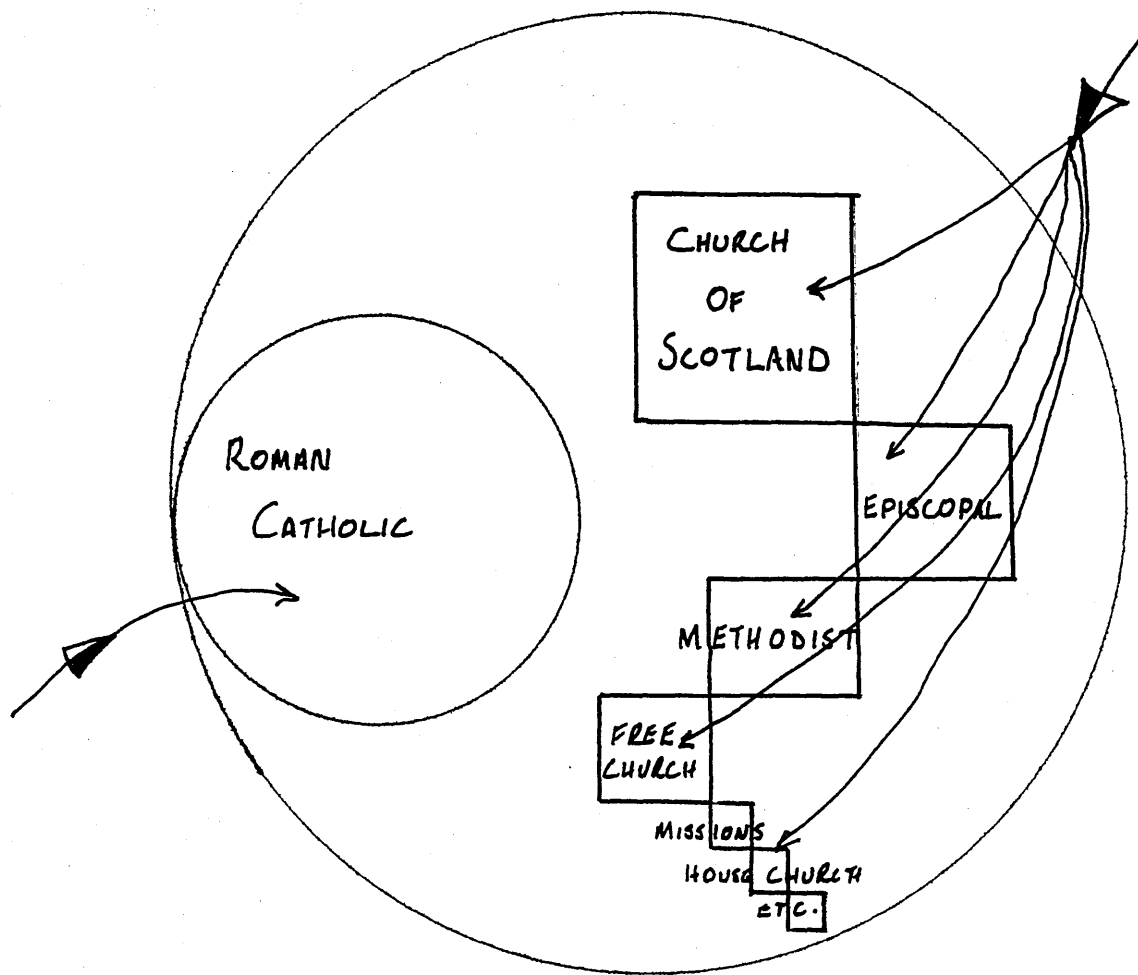
*"The influence of the family, the special significance of the congregation as a social group, the existence of social networks and the feeling of enjoyment and relaxation derived from involvement in church affairs are collectively more important for the church members than the isolated desire to worship God or to serve God"(21)*

In an attempt to understand the "Why" of church going, I find this to be a highly significant statement. Unfortunately whilst the report gives examples of these experiences and derived benefits from church associations it does not explore the relativities between them or whether there is any hierarchy of value. Neither does the report examine the effect on church membership or continuing membership when any one or a combination of these factors becomes unattainable or when there are competing, non-church (or another church) sources of the benefit and value. Nor is there any examination of how these derived benefits from church associations relate to the life cycle as opposed to the life style.

The Falkirk Report acknowledges that the model of communal/associational membership leaves unexplored a number of



other factors which might be relevant to church membership such as the means and meaning of joining a church and the process of religious socialisation. Consider the following model:



In order to enter into church going activity a means of introduction is required. The introduction may be to church going as a whole or, more usually, to a particular local building within a specific denomination. In Scotland the specific entry may be to the main line churches, represented in the model by the Roman Catholic Church, The Church of Scotland, the Episcopal Church, The Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, The Independent Missions or to a house church or local fellowship. After the initial introduction there will be methods of officially joining and remaining within that church. In addition there are also methods of introduction between the various churches and also barriers to further movement. In terms of the model the initial mechanism of entry may be by parental association and influence and this will apply to both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. In later life there may be a movement between denominations provided that the methods of entry can be found and any barriers to entry overcome. As far as the model is concerned the greatest barrier after initial entry is movement in either direction between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. In this case there is a specific doctrinal barrier to be dealt with in addition to any other sociological considerations.

Sissons in the Falkirk Report divides his participants into two groups of church members - the communal members and the associational members. He identifies these as two methods of entry into the church. It is admitted in the report that there is no detailed consideration of the means or the mechanisms involved in

such methods of entry. In the case of communal members the Report assumes that the family is a key factor to introduction into a church. This is probably a reasonable assumption to make. However, is the role of the family of similar significance in later years in the life cycle? What are the significant factors determining continued participation when the church goer leaves home, gets married, shares in alternative activities? What is the mechanism for re-entry into a church, either the same church building or a church of the same denomination in another location after a period of non-church attendance?

Likewise in the case of the associational members, what mechanism enables entry into a church community? Where in the hierarchy of significant factors are to be placed the influence of spouse, friends, opportunities for role and status fulfilment, intellectual (and spiritual) requirements and so forth?

If there are mechanisms of entry are there also barriers to entry either for former communal members become associational members within an alternative denomination or for the initial linking by associational members?

It is questions of this kind which I intend to address in this thesis.

### THE LIFE STYLE SURVEY

The Church of Scotland's "Lifestyle Survey" (1987) was based very closely upon a similar investigation in 1979 by the Swedish Free Churches and many of the questions in the Church of Scotland survey are identical to those used in the Swedish study. The Swedish survey was initiated and sponsored by Ansvar Mutual Insurance Company for Total Abstainers and the closeness of the two questionnaires is also reflected in a complete section of questions on attitudes to alcohol and four other drink related questions in section 3. In this respect it is skewed in its coverage from the outset and perhaps other issues of social concern would have had more relevance to the Scottish scene in 1987.

The study relied solely upon a questionnaire which grouped together issues relating to political and religious affiliation, and the degree of participation or commitment in political and religious affairs, together with opinions on a number of religious and, moral and social matters. The original intention was to obtain a sample of 1500 individuals. These were to comprise a random group of 500 drawn from Church of Scotland congregations and 1000 people drawn from the Electoral Roll. The original distribution of 1536 questionnaires obtained 528 completed forms. A further 647 forms were then distributed and together with 856 reminders to the original sample. The final response rate of 997

from a total of 2195 individuals was therefore, 45%. For the purposes of analysis, those people drawn from the Electoral Roll who identified themselves as members of the Church of Scotland were added to the sample of Church members drawn from the Congregational Rolls. This, according to the published report gave a total of 605 Church of Scotland members (.072% of the total membership of the Church), 47 people who identified themselves as Roman Catholic, 56 who belonged to other churches, including Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians and the United and Presbyterian Free Churches and 286 who admitted to no church allegiance. (Based on the data provided in the Report this leaves three respondents unaccounted for.)

The writers of the report have emphasised their use of established statistical sampling techniques and testing for statistical probability for findings which they considered to <sup>be</sup> significant and meaningful. (22) However one must ask what weight should be given to these claims of statistical accuracy when there was a response rate in any case of only 45%, and that after two attempts at obtaining ~~what~~ what they considered to be a sufficiently acceptable sample. There must also be some concern about their decision to treat a group of 47 Roman Catholics as being large enough to use as a separate category for direct comparison purposes and the combining of the responses of all the other denominations (from Episcopalian to Free Presbyterian) into one category for direct comparison purposes.

I have already noted that Scotland may have a distinctive religious ambience and that to simply base a Lifestyle survey on a Swedish survey may not be to ask the appropriate questions or to ask the appropriate questions in an appropriate way. There is no discussion of this problem in the report although there is a comparison with the Swedish results.

The questionnaire was completed by the respondent ticking a range of multiple choice responses to the set questions and simple one word answers to questions such as "what Sunday newspaper do you read?" Unlike the Sissons Survey there was no attempt to follow up the survey with extended interview or participant observation and as far as I am aware there is no intention of so doing. Indeed as the questionnaires seem to have been completed anonymously there is no possibility of a follow up with the original sample.

The Lifestyle Survey Report analyses the responses by age, sex, church commitment and church membership. The questions were asked and answered in relation to the present life style of the participants and whilst questions were asked about their childhood, such as when did you leave Sunday School (31) and earlier in your adult life did you attend church more frequently than you do now (16) there is no method by which changes in life style at different points in the life cycle can be assessed. Whilst there are comparisons between the young, middle aged and the elderly there is no comparison between the attitudes and responses of the same person when young, middle aged and elderly.

Most importantly there is no means of enabling an assessment of what, if any, changes there were at crucial points in the life cycle such as marriage and change of domicile or work.

It is surprising that it was not within the terms of reference of the Lifestyle Survey to consider the question of the meaning, significance and process of church going within the life style and life cycle. The inquiry despite its theoretical flavour is very superficial and potentially misleading.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH : STRATEGY AND TACTICS

I started with some basic practical questions about why people choose to go to certain churches and not to others and why they sometimes reassess their choices. The statistics collected annually by the Methodist Church can only tell me what is happening in terms of numerical growth or decline and as I have indicated there is an element of social production in these figures which needs to be considered when assessing their significance. When I turn to national surveys, once again there are indicators as to what is happening but very little on the how or why. In those studies which have gone beyond the what to the how and when there is a difficulty with applying the relevance of their conclusions to the Scottish religious scene which is not the same as the United States or even other parts of the United Kingdom. The findings of the Lifestyle Survey were by the nature of reliance on a questionnaire alone, incapable of answering

specific questions of "why" or "yes, but would it make any difference to your answer if....." The questions were asked of people at what was then the present time and no attempt was made to compare their attitudes and values of today with their own attitudes and values at various significant points in the past life style and life cycle. The Falkirk study of Peter Sissons laid a valuable groundwork in identifying that the influence of the family, the special significance of the congregation as a social group, the existence of social networks and the feeling of enjoyment and relaxation derived from involvement in church affairs are important factors in the "why" of churchgoing. But it left unexamined the factors which might be relevant in achieving them.

We need to move on from the present approaches to develop a process model of church going and this thesis is an exploration of such a theme. In order to do this we need to be historically informed and ethnographically aware.

In order to attempt to investigate the meaning, significance and process of church going within the life style and life cycle I have based this study upon three Methodist churches in The Edinburgh and Forth Circuit of the Methodist Synod in Scotland. The churches, described in detail in a later chapter are The Central Hall, Tollcross and Nicolson Square Methodist churches in the city of Edinburgh and the Dunbar church. The first two are town centre churches which traditionally drew their congregations



from the locality but, because of population mobility and the redevelopment of the town centre the local population has largely moved away and so both churches now have scattered congregations which travel into the city. There is thus a choice which must be made by people moving from another part of the country to Edinburgh and wishing to remain within the Methodist denomination as to which of these two centrally placed churches they attend. One of the questions which must be asked therefore is on what basis a choice to remain within the denomination and which church within that denomination to attend is made.

The third church is in a small country town where there is only one Methodist church and where the only alternative protestant denomination is the Church of Scotland. In this instance the choice has to be made from between Methodism, C of S, travelling out of the town or not attending at all:

Methodist churches were chosen as a field for investigation because my involvement as a Methodist minister gave me a straight forward access into these churches and the opportunity to be a natural and accepted participant observer. I was initially involved in the Dunbar church whilst its regular minister was in hospital and then convalescing from major surgery. In addition to being a member of the circuit staff I was involved with the Central Hall congregation because I worked for three days a week for a year in their community and welfare rights centre with a responsibility to developing care services for the elderly and

also I was asked to write a history of the Central Hall for their centenary celebrations. At the third church I work (because I used to be a Chartered Surveyor) one morning a week representing the church council on a development programme involving the rebuilding of part of the premises.

Permission was sought from the superintendent minister of the circuit to approach the three churches, one of which he had pastoral oversight. He first asked the circuit meeting for its approval for me to approach the individual church councils. However he was not entirely happy with this research project for reasons which he did not make clear and stipulated that I was not to ask any questions which might challenge personal faith and belief and also to avoid probing into possible areas of past trauma. How the latter could be completely safeguarded I did not know for it is often not possible to know that such issues are there until they surface and by then it is too late. His argument was that once these issues had been raised then someone else would have the responsibility of dealing with them. These conditions I agreed to observe as far as was reasonably possible.

The three church councils were approached and agreed to my interviewing a sample of the congregation.

The ministers of the three churches were asked to provide a ~~a~~ group of participants (10%) from their congregations which in

their opinion and knowledge represented a cross section of the people who attended their church - in the sample they were asked to reflect age/sex/social and economic profile of their congregations. This method of obtaining a sample was adopted as an attempt to satisfy the request of the superintendent minister that no person should be emotionally disturbed by the interview and it was hoped that the preselection would eliminate potential difficulties. This formed the original group of participants. However this snowballed in so far as some participants recommended other church goers who were willing and interested in being part of the exercise and when attending an interview the husband/wife/brother/sister or friend of the original participant was present and took part in the interview. In the interests of goodwill and the engendering of active participation by the respondents the snowballing of the sample was allowed to take place even though it would skew the age/sex/social and economic profile.

Interviews with two exceptions were conducted in the participants' home. In the case of ~~the~~ two participants because of matters of personal convenience, these were conducted at the Central Hall.

The procedure for arranging the interviews was to telephone the participant or otherwise contact them about a week before the interview and to ask for their co-operation in this study. I explained that I was interested in finding out why people went to the particular church that they did. They were told that their name had been suggested to me by their minister and that the

interview would be in confidence. None of the potential participants refused to be interviewed.

At the interview permission to record the conversation was asked and agreed to in all cases. Before the interview began it was explained to the participants that the interview would be typed out and that the contents would not be revealed to any body in the church or to their own minister. The type scripts would be used for academic research and the complete interviews would only be known to myself and the supervisor. In the final written thesis they would not be identified by name or address but by a code which was known only to myself. At any time during the interview they could ask for recording to be suspended or for recorded comments to be erased. This request was made by three of the participants. At the end of the interview the participants were told that the interview would not be typed up for another week and that if they, on reflection, were of the opinion that certain comments should not be used that they would be removed from the record. In only two cases was such a request made and the selected parts of the interview omitted. To safeguard the anonymity the interviews were typed by myself.

The interviews were not tightly structured. The basis of the interview was a conversation with the participant(s). The aim of the conversation was to take the interviewee through from their earliest recollections of ever being in a church building through to the present day and this was stated at the outset of each

conversation before the recording began. The tape recorder was a small pocket dictating type machine which would not be visually obtrusive and after the first two interviews I was able to have a conversation with the participant without the need to have my own guidance notes in front of me.

In order to direct the conversation the following questions were included:

What is your earliest recollection of ever being in a church?

Did your mother and father go to church?

Did your grandparents go?

What sort of things were there to do at church?

Was there another church nearer to where you lived?

Did other children from round about where you lived go to a church somewhere?

Was there anybody in your day school class who went to your church?

What other things did you do as a child apart from church?

Is the same true for your teen age years?

What happened when you left school?

[If appropriate University/college activities were discussed]

What happened when you started work? Did it affect things at church?

Where did you meet your spouse? [If appropriate]

What church connections did they have?

Did getting married make any difference to things that you did at church?

If you moved house how did you go about choosing a church to attend?

How did it compare to the last one you attended?

What sort of things are you involved in at church? How? Why?

What sort of things are you involved in which have no church connection?

Where do most of your friends come from?

Do you ever meet socially with people you know at church?

Have you ever thought of going to another church?

What would you do if you could no longer go to your present church?

What would you miss if you could no longer go?

What would you be glad to leave behind if you could no longer go?

[Do your children go to church?]

How far do you think the church has formed your social/moral/political outlook on life?

Should ministers express their own political opinions in a sermon?

Have you ever had what you consider to be a religious experience?

[In the case of people who had been highly geographically mobile some of these questions would be referred to for each church that they had attended]

As an illustration of the nature of a typical conversation, a full interview (of a participant who has since died) is appended to this thesis.

As a basic method of approach I started with the oldest participants and then worked towards the youngest. The oldest participant at the date of interview was 98 years of age and the youngest in mid-twenties. I chose the oldest first for the obvious reason that at the rate of one interview a week over a period of eighteen months some of the original group of participants might have died before an interview could have taken place. I did attempt to interview late teenagers but found the experience so difficult that no purposeful conversation was possible, partly because of my own inability to talk to them in any meaningful way and like Peter Sissons in the Falkirk study I have left this as an area of research for others to investigate.

The results of the interviews are analysed in later chapters.

As far as I am aware at the present time the question of the meaning and the significance of church going as an activity within the lifestyle and life cycle in a mainstream Scottish denomination has not been fully investigated. The aim of this thesis, then, is to examine, by the use of extended interview and participant observation the reasons why people chose to go to church; which church they choose to go to and why; and why when the original reasons for making such a choice are no longer paramount or valid they still continue to attend. Also I hope to investigate what happens in relation to church going at certain crucial events in the life cycle. Further, it is my intention to explore from the results of my survey whether there is any identifiable process of



church going in the life style and life cycle. If a process model can be constructed then it should be possible to apply it to the present debate about the significance of religion in society of which the Secularization debate is itself a part and also it might be a practical tool for use by ministers and others concerned with understanding the meaning and significance of church membership.

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## CHAPTER 2

### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND THE CONCEPT OF SECULARIZATION

#### THE SECULARIZATION DEBATE

Any investigation of the notion of church membership as an activity within the life cycle must address the question of secularization. This is a problematic activity for there are different and differing voices to be listened to.

In 1969, Alan Richardson, the editor of "A Dictionary of Christian Theology" (1) defined "secularization" in terms of the loss of ecclesiastical autonomy, role and significance in society. Larry Shiner (2), adopting an empirical method of approach had defined the process of secularization in terms of:

The decline of religion

The shift from 'other-worldly' to 'this-worldly'  
orientations

The 'disengagement' of society from religion

The transposition of beliefs and activities

The world is gradually deprived of its sacral  
character

The change <sup>from</sup> ~~form~~ sacred to secular society

During the debate of most of the 1960's there was no significant demand from within the debate to explore, for instance, whether the decline in the significance of the church is an inevitable indicator of a decline in the relevance of religion in society. Neither is much consideration given to the evidence from North America, Northern Ireland, Poland, Bulgaria and the Lebanon which have led other theologians and sociologists, notably David Martin, to challenge the assumptions of this method of identifying and developing a theory of a process of secularization.

It is not my intention to rehearse the whole debate on the theory of the process of secularization but I would like to do is to examine some, of of what seem to me, to be the key assumptions of recent contributors to the present state of the debate.

## THE PRESENT DEBATE

### 1. THE BRYAN WILSON POSITION

At the Consultation on Christian Witness in Secular Societies which was held at the Ernst Sillem Hoeve YMCA Centre in the Netherlands in January 1988, Dr Grahame Howes, fellow of Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge, and Adviser on Secular Affairs to

the Archbishop of Canterbury, gave what he chose to call, an operational definition of secularization as:

*"the process whereby religious practices, beliefs and institutions lose social significance."*

This is, of course, the point of departure long advocated by Bryan Wilson, a major contributor to the present debate ~~and~~ who continues to hold a thorough going theory of secularization. Wilson defines secularization as:

*"that process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness, lose their social significance.....religion ceases to be significant in the working of the social system. .... there may be other non-religious constraints which operate to hold men to religious institutions or persuade them to go through the motions of religious rituals." (3)*

Wilson argues that secularization is

*"the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious control of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of their time, energy and resources which men*

*devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands which accord with strictly religious criteria, and the gradual replacement of a specifically religious consciousness....by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter of fact description and with it, the rigorous separation of evaluistic and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations"*

(4)

The basis for his assumptions are the available statistics of church membership patterns and trends. In 'Contemporary Transformations of Religion', (5) for example, Wilson uses declining numbers attending Church of England Easter Day communion - just under 10% of the population aged fifteen and over before the First World War, 6.5% in 1960 and 5.6% in 1968 - as evidence of decline in the interest of the population in religion. He supports his argument by stating that, during the period 1930 to 1968 the electoral roll of the Church of England fell from 3,700,000 to less than 2,700,000 and quotes the falling membership statistics of the Baptist, Methodist, Congregational and English Presbyterian churches. He recognises, also, that in addition there is a group of people who operate with a "post office" notion of the church - it is there in every town and village, ready and available for those occasions

when they require its services such as baptisms weddings and funerals.

Wilson's conclusion, based upon such data, is that the incidence of regular church attendance is diminishing together with occasional specific attendance of the "post office" kind. There has been a decline, for instance, in the use of the church for marriage ceremonies. In 1859 93.5% of all weddings were conducted in church this had fallen to 74.3% in 1929 and 54.4% in 1973. Even these figures may not indicate the real extent of the decline in church going for of themselves they do not indicate what proportion of those using the church for marriage purposes do so from their own inclinations or out of deference to the wishes of parents or even for a whole range of other non-religious reasons. Nevertheless there is a definite discernible decline in the role of the church in the life style of significant numbers of people. Non-religious marriages in Scotland, for example, increased from 0.2% in the period 1861-70 to 15.1% in the period 1941-50.

However, such statistics cannot, of themselves, allow the simple conclusion that a decline in church attendance, membership and usage is an indicator of the demise of the religious dimension in society. All they can demonstrate is that there is a decline in the willingness of people to go to church. The question still remains to be asked of whether the unwillingness of people to go to church is any indication of the decline of the significance

of religion in society. They are an indicator of decline in churchgoing as a regular activity in life style. The central question of my thesis is to ask why inspite of this decline in churchgoing as an activity within the life style and life cycle do significant numbers of people still continue to go to church.

Robin Gill has criticised Wilson's use of the statistics of decline in church membership and attendance as an indicator of the process of secularization, and says that in so doing he (Wilson) has given "a spurious credence to the popular notion that churchgoing decline signals the demise of religion in society" (6) especially when Wilson comments that:

*"..religious institutions (the hierarchy, the priesthood, the social organisation, and the material plant) may continue little changed during a period in which there is profound change in general religious consciousness, as our many empty churches indicate." (7)*

Here, then is one of the problem areas in the debate. Is the decline in church attendance, a fact which is not in dispute, an indicator of the significance of religion in society or is it only an indicator of the decline in the role of traditional church based activities as the vehicle of mediation of the sacred? We also have a problem within this problem. It is the problem of definition of "the church". The word "church" is used freely to describe many concepts within the one word.



There is the "church" as in "The Methodist Church, meeting in Conference voted overwhelmingly against sin." That is the institution and its National assembly.

There is the "church" as in "the church should keep out of politics". That is the hierarchy who speak for it.

There is the "church" as in "I believe in the holy, catholic church". That is the world wide people of faith, militant and triumphant.

There is the "church" as in "church property stewards". That is the building where worship and meetings take place.

There is the "church" as in "Paul, to the Church of Jesus Christ in Ephesus". That is the people of God.

The Church of Scotland uses the word "kirk" to make some distinction between the national body and the parish; and Methodists have used the words "society", "chapel" and "Central Hall" to show when they are thinking locally. But what word do we use for the local congregation when it is not congregating? There is a problem to be aware of in the imprecision of language and the assumption that the hearer understands what the speaker is meaning.

For example, David Martin has been criticised for imprecision in his definition of "church". Throughout Martin's work there is an underlying belief that the Church can survive. But what is the church that Martin believes is capable of survival?

"It is not the church of normal sociological nomenclature (ie. church, sect, denomination cult etc.).....It is the Churchman's sense of the word, ie. part of the worshipping community which somehow falls within the realms of God's grace.....Martin is a practising Christian and is always talking about the Christian Church, not the sociological entity.....Martin's Christian world view is greater than the areas to which he is limited as a sociologist and, in remaining true to his religious beliefs, he is forced to avoid any sociological definition of the Church." (8)

I will return to David Martin's contribution to the current debate later.

There are two main threads running through that part of the debate which is represented by Bryan Wilson. I have already commented on the difficulty of assuming the decline in institutional, local, church attendance is a satisfactory indicator of decline in the significance of religion in society. The second thread of argument relates to his other major contention that secularization is "the gradual replacement of a

specifically religious consciousness....by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter of fact description and with it" ¶

In "Contemporary Transformations of Religion" Bryan Wilson expands upon this when he argues that over a long period of time the general direction of human consciousness assumed what he describes as a "matter of factness" orientation towards the world. (9) This process has involved the elimination of a supernatural view of the world and the belief in the possibility of manipulation by forces outside human understanding and comprehension. Wilson, like Peter Berger, argues that this process had its embryonic origins in Judaism. It was enhanced by the reformation and developed further with the spirit of Puritanism which rejected any idea that man could influence God, or that he could in any way secure his own salvation. One of the results was to make man conscious of his independence of spiritual or supernatural forces in the universe. The emergence of industrial man made him even more aware of his ability to understand and control the universe in which he lived his daily life. This was irreconcilable with the suppositions of faith in the supernatural and arbitrary unexplained authority. There has been a shift in society "from society conceived as a moral order to society conceived as a technical order." (10) Control in society is exercised by technical means, "traffic lights, our radar traps, our parking meters... the time clock.. the planning

authority... and the Trades Description Act." (11) . Wilson concludes that "As our society has become less dependent on moral regulation, and as our relations to each other have become more role-regulated and less personally involved, so the functions of religion have declined, and men feel less need for religion." (12)

The key to unlocking Wilson lies in his definition of "specifically religious consciousness". The religious consciousness in Wilson's understanding is one with ~~a~~ "a supernatural view of the world and the belief in the possibility of manipulation by forces outside human understanding and comprehension." The question must be asked of Wilson as to whether this is the only type of religious awareness with which mankind operates. If he is correct then there will indeed be the demythologising of the supernatural and arbitrary unexplained authority and its replacement by a rational understanding of society and moral order. However some doubt must be cast upon Wilson's assumed out turn of the onset of movement away from the supernatural and the arbitrary to "society conceived as a technical order" where control is exercised by technical processes alone.

The abandonment of a supernatural faith may well lead away from that type of religious orientation, but it does not necessarily mean the leaving behind of a sacred view of the world or moral order. The consequence may equally be the rejection of a faith

which is unreasonable in favour of one which at the present time is incapable of reason. Religious belief based upon superstition and manipulation is one type of consciousness among many. Wilson's identifications of religious consciousness, it would appear, is a mixture of two types of conventional religion identified by Robert Towler (13) in his analysis of responses to John Robinson's 'Honest to God', the theist and the gnostic. These are those who live out their life of faith on the assumption that God is totally omnipotent and omniscient in his dealings with his creation <sup>together</sup> with ~~a combination~~ of those who believe that religious faith brings with it a hidden knowledge about the purposes of God for his creation. Wilson's assumption of religious consciousness is not acceptable to, say, Towler's, description of the 'exemplarist' whose religious orientation and moral interpretations are based primarily upon the life, teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

What are we to make of Wilson's claim that the evidence of an abandonment of specifically religious consciousness is a society in process towards an "abandonment of mythical, poetic and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter of fact description" and in which moral order is being replaced by technical control? First of all, empirical observation and data simply don't support this interpretation of society. No one doubts the existence of legislative and technical means of regulation in society - Wilson's timeclocks

and traffic lights and Acts of Parliament - but he says nothing of those human examples when men and women act, sometimes in defiance of the technical controls, because they feel compelled so to act because of individual and communal notions of what is right and wrong - environmental issues, nuclear weapons and nuclear power, the poll-tax, Sunday trading, responses to third world deprivation, natural disasters, to say nothing of those who are prepared to risk their own lives for the benefit of others whether it be in a house fire or war.

The evidence of the work of present day poets, dramatists, musicians and painters must cast doubt on his assumptions about the abandonment of such artistic interpretations of nature and society. Perhaps what is happening when humanity rejects a supernatural, authoritarian interpretation of the world order is not the abandonment of the mythical, the poetic and the artistic, but the acceptance that there can be mythical, poetical and artistic expressions and voices carrying within them truths which the matter of fact descriptions can never begin to illuminate.

Robin Gill, and as we will see later, Berger and Luckmann, would argue that the interpretation of religion assumed by those represented by Bryan Wilson is a functional one. Others argue that a far more complex understanding of religion is beginning to emerge in society and that by focussing upon non-church forms

of religion they conclude that religious practices are far from absent. Gill's position is that Britain is less a secular society than a pluralist one. (14)

To the pluralistic interpretation, Wilson, has made the answer that,

*"...there are sociologists who profess to see in the growth of new cults important evidence that controverts the hypothesis that has become known as 'the secularization thesis' For them the new cults represent religious revival. In contrast I regard them as a confirmation of the process of secularization. They indicate the extent to which religion has become inconsequential for modern society.....They have no real consequence for other social institutions, for political power structures, for technological constraints and controls. They add nothing to any prospective reintegration of society, and contribute nothing towards the culture by which a society might live."*

(15)

This is quite obviously an area for much further research and is beyond the scope of this present thesis.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF PETER BERGER AND THOMAS LUCKMANN

Two highly significant contributions to the debate about secularization have come from Peter Berger (16) and Thomas Luckmann. (17)

Luckmann's analysis of religion in contemporary society is based on what he defines as a problematic relationship between the individual and society. His interpretation is based on the work of Durkheim and Weber, both of whom were concerned with the fate of the individual in a modern social environment and both of whom gave religion a key place in their explanations. Luckmann's thesis is basically that the institutional religion found in churches is not able to satisfy religious needs completely. He suggests that institutional religion is now on the periphery of modern society. On the assumption that this is so, Luckmann asks two basic questions. How did it happen? Have there been any replacements for institutional religion? The second question is outside the scope of this thesis. The first question is highly significant for my thesis.

But here a question must be asked. Is religion on the periphery of modern society? Is it always on the periphery or only in certain circumstances? What are the implications for the debate in using spatial language?



In the chapter in "The Invisible Religion", entitled "Church orientated religion on the periphery of modern society", Luckmann describes, in relation to churches in the United States and Europe, various socio-historical processes which have led to changes in the social structure. Such changes have in turn led to a transformation in the pattern of individual life in society and the decreasing role of traditional church religion in giving meaning to the pattern. There is no need to elaborate here on his analysis of what is happening with these western societies but we do need to examine his conclusion that church-based religion is on the periphery of modern society. Luckmann does not define or describe where the periphery is located, how far away from the centre it is to be found. The use of this kind of language does imply a locational distance within the hierarchy of significance of lifestyle activities. To talk of periphery implies also a centre. The periphery is some where near the edge whilst yet not at the edge. The use of locational language is to make a statement about the relative dominance of significance.

Luckmann's description and use of the peripheral location of church based religion assumes that it is consistently to be found at the margins. Empirical evidence would indicate otherwise. It is not necessarily located at the same place within the hierarchy of significance for each individual in society nor at the same point for that individual in differing contexts. Church based religion may have a central location in

matters of rights of passage, particularly at death. In the present situation in South Africa, the institution of religion, can hardly be at the periphery of society when it is the only organisation which can still form the focus of the anti-apartheid movement. The church may well be at the periphery for some people in matters of understanding the natural order whilst for significant numbers of others it may well be at the centre. In addition the locational foci may shift within the development of the debate say about nuclear power, taxation, or public transport as the human scale and moral dimension of such debates gains precedence over the mechanics of where and how to dump spent fuel rods, the needs to balance the national budget or the economies of privatization and people with a religious consciousness need to formulate a common view which is most efficaciously expressed through institutional church channels.

The centre/periphery model used by Luckmann is an inadequate tool for interpreting empirical reality without further qualification and circumstantial adaptation.

Mankind, argues Luckmann, needs to interpret his experiences into meaningful reality. This scheme of interpretation results from 'sedimented past experiences' (18) , and man transcends his biological nature by constructing a socially maintained universe of meaning. Man does not construct objective and moral universes of meaning from scratch. He is born into them and only develops them by a process of socialisation.

Industrialisation (urbanisation) is a sphere in which the individual has values and as a universe of meaning is developed in and from this sphere it becomes an alternative area of moral significance to the 'sacred'. In periods of rapid social change, he argues, the "sacred" is left behind because it is rooted in intellectual dogma and the 'specialists' who proclaim the dogma are themselves to some extent isolated from the change and so the younger generation do not find the same significance in the church (What fathers preach but do not practice will be seen by sons as rhetoric rather than being of ultimate significance). This may also account for the tendency towards conservatism in the remaining church members.

The institutional church has a problem of identification. If the churches accommodate themselves to the dominant culture of modern industrial society they therefore legitimise it and in so doing the old universe of meaning (the sacred) becomes more irrelevant. If on the other hand the church maintains its claim to represent and mediate traditional religion and the universe of meaning they survive primarily by association with social groups and social strata which continue to be orientated towards the values of a past social order only and yet again become increasingly irrelevant. (19)

However, this may not be the simple either / or situation that Luckmann suggests. It could be his either / or situation or it might <sup>be</sup> that there are other roles which are not included in any

one of the two situations set out above. This is not to deny the validity of what Luckmann is stating but it is to suggest that there may be functions of church based religion, unexplored by Luckmann, which have nothing to do with universes of meaning at all. Functions of the church which are related to, say, role and role fulfilment, life style and relationships. Some of these functions will be explored in the course of this thesis.

Religion, according to Luckmann, should give the individual meaning in the diverse areas of life but the "specialisation" of religion destroys the effectiveness and the more the sacred is eliminated from the secular so the plausibility of the religious institution weakens further. For those who desire to hold on to what they understand to be traditional religious interpretations of the world order, any points of conflict of the sacred and secular orientations may result in the partial withdrawal from the secular at such points.

The effect of this is that religion becomes a private affair. "Religious practices will be performed for a variety of non-religious motives and specifically religious beliefs will be compartmentalised into opinions which will have no direct relationship to the individuals' effective priorities and everyday conduct." (20) I assume, here, that the "specifically religious beliefs" referred to by Luckmann are matters of Christian doctrine and interpretation such as Creation, the

Birk,  
Virgin, the Resurrection and so on. This, once again is a problem of definition and language similar to that of Wilson's "specifically religious consciousness."

One of the consequences of the privatization of religion, concludes Luckmann, using an economic model, is that the individual selects different themes or products from a range of available 'ultimate meanings' and develops his or her own ultimate values based on their experiences of and in society and will, therefore, approach the religious institution, if they approach it at all, as a "buyer". The church thus becomes a significant meeting of private individuals with "private universes of significance". (21)

Peter Berger begins his analysis of secularization at Luckmann's starting point in noting the interdependent relationship between the individual and the society in which that individual lives. From the experiences (externalisation, objectivation and internalisation) of this dialectical relationship man heaps up the products of his own activities in the form of an externalised and imposing objective reality. Individuals in a society, argues Berger, organise their experiences into a meaningful pattern and construct a meaningful world (nomos) which is shared by the group. There is a tendency for the nomos to be identified with some ultimate truths (cosmos). Cosmos is the source of legitimation for the nomos.

Religion, then, according to Berger is the establishment of a 'sacred cosmos'.

Berger goes on to argue that "the same human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the relationship between the two always being a dialectical one". (22) For the relationship to remain meaningful there must be what he calls a "plausibility structure". Both religion and society are autonomous variables in a dialectical relationship so that if the plausibility structure is challenged one of the results will be the redefinition of the religious belief system. Berger applies his theory of religion to the historical process of secularization and suggests that the formation of the Christian church had the effect of segregating from religious influence the rest of society's institutional framework, the world, in which the sacred had no jurisdiction. Having made the initial break, the potential for secularization in the spheres of social activity became well established. With the separation of religion into its own sphere the plausibility structure between religion and its social location breaks down. The secular becomes an autonomous area of human activity. It becomes more difficult for religion to maintain its plausibility because society as a whole no longer confirms it. The interaction has been broken down. One of the results of this segregation is that pluralism becomes possible because individuals who do not accept religious beliefs are no longer a socially segregated group representing a threat to the traditional religious system, but

are distributed in many different areas of society. The maintenance of religious belief becomes a subjective privatised affair. There exists a whole range of competing religious enterprises rather than the over-all religious orientation which gave legitimacy to the world.

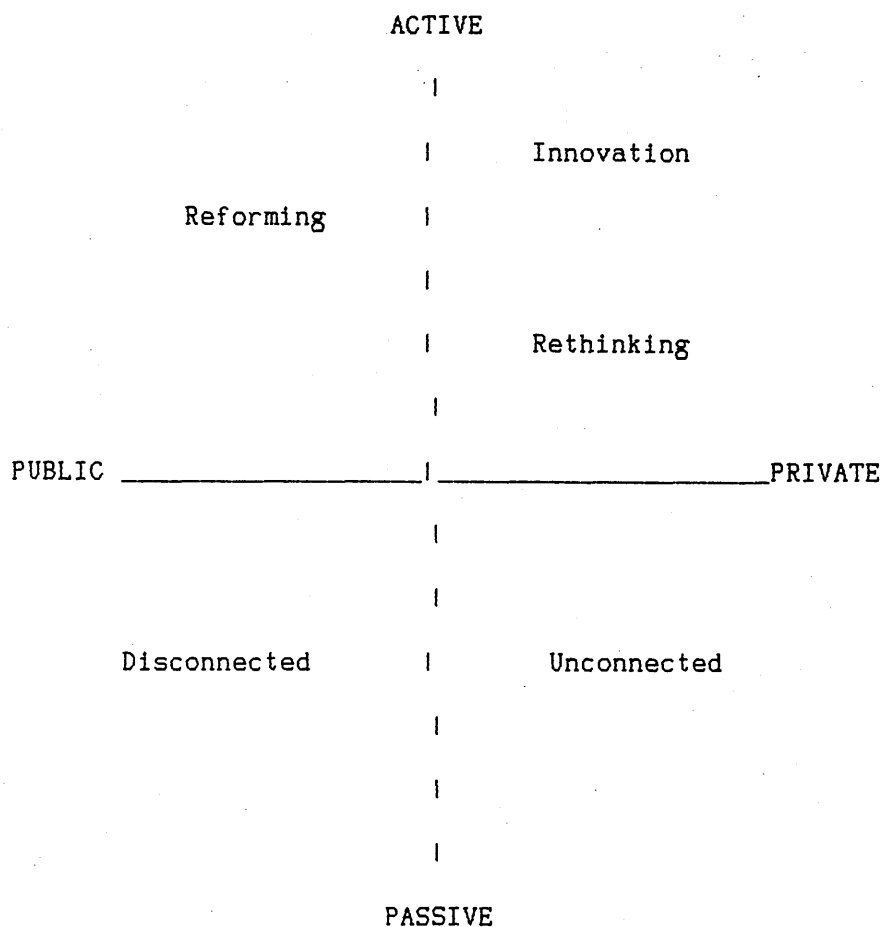
The bureaucratic nature of the mainstream denominations does not significantly undermine Berger's notion of the churches being competing religious enterprises. Most denominations are committed to ethical principles. However, whilst the moral principles themselves remain unchangeable, within specific circumstances a church may maintain in theory that morality is specifiable and absolute and yet in practice it may condone or at least tolerate deviations. How many Roman Catholic couples in Britain ignore their Church's teaching on contraception? A theory of moral unity is not supported by the empirical diversity of practice. The debates in the Church of Scotland General Assembly on the morality of abortion which have taken place since the 1960's also illustrate the gulf between theory and practice on social pronouncements in the churches. Or take the result of the "Lifestyle Survey" of the Church of Scotland where 47% of those isolated as highly committed, found nuclear weapons to be an effective deterrent and 42% believed them to be morally unacceptable.

Secularization, argues Berger, leads to Individualism because the institution of religion is increasingly seen as irrelevant

and unenforceable. The consequence of this is that religion has to be sold (to Luckmann's buyer?) and if it is to be sold then it has to be attractive to the individual and take their present needs into account. The things most likely to appeal to the buyer are in terms of personal religion and morality, family and neighbours. There will, therefore, be little success with economics or politics because these are not seen by individuals as a relevant sphere of non-secular interest. This is not to deny that economics and politics are not proper areas in which the church should engage in debate but it indicates that this is how it may be perceived by individuals who do not normally operate within a sacred frame of reference. Hence the attempts by the Bishop of Durham to effect change in Government thinking on public transport, the poll-tax and the general drift of Conservative Party taxation policies were attacked by politicians not on the validity of his argument but upon the notion that these were issues where he had no authority to pronounce.

The thrust of the argument of Luckmann and Berger seems to be that present day religious activity is becoming confined to an individualistic area of relevance related to personal spirituality and morality. Are they justified in making these assertions on the basis of present empirical evidence. If we consider the following model:





In this model PUBLIC and PRIVATE indicate the areas of life in which the religious orientation of an individual (or groups of individuals) is located. PASSIVE and ACTIVE indicate the degree of engagement of religious orientation with the whole society in which the individual or likeminded group lives.

The Luckmann/Berger thesis places religious activity mainly within the PRIVATE/PASSIVE quadrant. Religious activity is a personal devotion concerned with personal and family morality

and as such is unconnected with the economic and political world. This is worthy of further study and it is dangerous to make broad generalisations, but, Luckmann and Berger may have some justification for defining the majority of religious experience in terms of this quadrant. The evidence of my own participants suggests that there is a gap between their own religious experience and their moral/social/political outlook on life. Most of them being convinced that such matters are shaped by family environment and the work place rather than by clerics and the church. And the evidence collected by Robert Towler in The Need for Certainty of the varieties of religion in four of his five groups (Conversionism, Theism, Gnosticism and Traditionalism) would be located in this same quadrant.

However to affirm that this is where the bulk of religious experience is to be found should not be to deny the actuality that religious experience is also to be found in the other quadrants of the model.

If the PRIVATE/PASSIVE quadrant is unconnected, the PUBLIC/PASSIVE is disconnected religious experience. In this quadrant we would find, for example those who take part in Public Religion either as participants or spectators - Coronations, Openings of Parliament at one end of the spectrum and carol services, harvest festivals, christenings, weddings and funerals at the other.

The PRIVATE/ACTIVE quadrant is that area of religious activity in which we find religious people who reflect upon the meaning of religion in the present age. Here we would expect to find a place for John Robinson, Don Cupitt and others.

For some the PRIVATE/ACTIVE rethinking of their religious interpretation leads them into the fourth quadrant of PUBLIC/ACTIVE religion as they become involved in working out not just for society but also in society the implications of their religious rethinking and innovation. For some it will be public statements on current political affairs as we hear from the Bishop of Durham and the Professor Whyte, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when they challenge intellectually in public the political interpretations of society of the Government of the day. For others a more physical involvement is the result of their thinking. So that Canon Kenyon Wright becomes the convener of the Business Committee of the proposed Scottish Convention Geoff Shaw became the Convener of Strathclyde Regional Council, leaders of the base communities in Brazil are challenging on the basis of their interpretation of Christianity the political order in their own country.

The complexity and diversity of the PRIVATE/PUBLIC/ACTIVE/PASSIVE matrix also has a bearing upon the controversy surrounding the debate about the role (or lack of role) of Methodism in the development of modern social and

political life in Britain. Robert Moore, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics, (23) critically surveys the historical and sociological treatment which Methodism has received from Halevy, the Hammonds, Thompson, Hobsbawm, Wearmouth and others and in summary concludes that:

*"Commentators have been unable to grapple with the problems raised by Halevy because they have interpreted 'Methodism' in a very general sense, and based their understanding of it on orthodox statements by religious functionaries. Historians have also dealt with Methodism and its effects in different social and economic circumstances and not asked precise questions about its effects in particular, specified circumstances. (24)*

A disregard of the specific social and economic context of religion may lead to an elision of the private and the public; the active and the passive dimensions of religious faith when in reality it is not so for the person of religious faith. At a particular time within the life style and life cycle one expression may be more relevant than another. One kind may indeed be peripheral whilst another may be close to the centre of personal concern and orientation.

Thus, Luckmann and Berger have concentrated on the PRIVATE/PASSIVE nature of Religion largely to the exclusion of the other three possibilities, small those these three may be in

comparative numerical strength. But, unless these three are also brought into the frame of consideration we will continue with the confusion about religion being on the periphery of society which we noted earlier in this section.

Berger and Luckmann have a common prediction for the future of religion:

*"The interpretation that Berger gives to the process of secularization ends with a picture of contemporary religion that is identical to to the 'invisible religion' of Luckmann: religion has become pluralistic and privatized, a matter of choice and a source of sacred symbols from which men may construct their own 'invisible' religions." (25)*

Bryan Wilson, on the other hand, as we have already noted, believes that this kind of religious orientation adds nothing to the culture by which a society might live. Is the 'Invisible Religion' so pluralistic and privatised that it can no longer be defined as religion within any conventional working definition of the term?

## THE CHALLENGE OF DAVID MARTIN

David Martin (26) introduced some innovative thinking in to this area of socio-religious concern by challenging what he believes is a distorted and overworked use of the word "secularization". His book, "The Religious and the Secular", although claiming to be "a work of 'demolition'", is in reality a work of disaggregation, denying a general, universal and inevitable historical process of secularization, and investigating the nature and meaning of the word "secularization". Secularization is problematic for Martin, being "amongst the richest of all words in its range of meaning" (27) . He discounts the simplistic equating of "this worldliness" and "other worldliness" with the secular and the sacred and explores the meaning of the concept within the areas of religious institutions and customs and the areas of thought, attitude and the arts.

Whilst Martin provides a basis for understanding the process of secularization which avoids the Wilson confusion of church attendance and religious belief, he is for one who claims to be concerned about precision in use of language, imprecise in his definition of "church", "religion" or "secularity" which can exist outside of his own thesis. He never arrives at a working definition of any of them. This is one of the conclusions reached by Johnathan Harrop in a paper entitled "The Limits of Sociology in the Work of David Martin" (28) . Harrop's paper is

the  
essentially a criticism of an essay by Martin entitled, "Can the Church Survive?" although he then uses this as a baseline from which to examine Martin's sociology of religion.

Earlier in this chapter I have referred to the problem of attempting a definition of the word "church" and have noted Martin's theological emphasis within his definition. Similarly, in attempting to define 'religion' Martin does not conceal his position of the religious man that he is.

*"When I think of religion I usually have in mind certain more or less consistent orientations towards the world, limited in number, with various correlates regarding the nature of man, the meaning of life and history.....these orientations usually involve a transcendent vision of man, society and nature." (29)*

It is difficult to discern Martin's own basic assumptions which he takes as his point of departure for his examination of the concept of secularization. He understands it to be;

*"immensely complicated, and the trouble with the concept of secularization is that it attempts to simplify that complexity in the interests of ideology or of over-neat intellectual economy" (30)*

Harrop thinks that this is no more than an attempt at a partial definition but in the light of some of the difficulties that I have discussed with the notion of centre/periphery, assumptions about the elimination of the mysterious and the poetic with technological and instrumental control and the problem of identifying churchgoing with religious orientations, then Martin's identification of the dangers of simplistic definition must be taken seriously.

Perhaps it is because Martin is aware of the difficulties of precise definition that he fails to establish adequate, clear working definitions of either secularization or religion. But, in my opinion, one of the inadequacies in his work is his failure to come to terms with the empirical reality of the decline in church attendance and the loss of social significance of the church going. In "A Sociology of English Religion", Martin questions the adequacy and relevance of statistical data relating to patterns of church attendance. He somehow manages to reassess the data and suggests that nearly 50% of the population are in some measure church attenders, admitting only to "some mild erosion of the conventional rites of passage" (31). Such an interpretation of the statistics must be open to criticism in the light of the reduction in baptisms, church marriages, denominational membership returns, religious broadcasting and so on which have been analysed by Gilbert Currie and Horsley in "Patterns of Church Going since 1730."



*"In the abstract Martin argues consistently against secularization. In the concrete he appears like the 'prophet crying in the wilderness' arguing against the seemingly inexorable trend of history whenever the opportunity arises."*  
(32)

Martin can be irritatingly evasive and it is difficult, most of the time, to discern just where he does wish to take his stand within the current debate, a problem compounded by his intention to demolish the concept of secularization in "The Religious and the Secular" which he then followed 9 years later with "A General Theory of Secularization." His contribution to the present debate has been to open it up to the possibility that there is not necessarily one process of secularization but many and that they are contextualised within frames of historical events which can be traced back to crucial events in history.

*"'Crucial events' which are the culmination of a series of antecedent processes shape sets of tendencies which fructify in a given culture." (33)*

Part of Martin's general theory of secularization is that because the process of history is not inevitable or necessarily cross cultural, then there can be no one general process or interpretation of secularization. Secularization is a tendency within a crucial historical event and ~~that~~ there are, therefore, several basic patterns of secularization which are historically

and culturally identifiable. "A General Theory of Secularization" contains a wide ranging discussion of the national variations in the general patterns of secularization, especially in relation to the political aspects.

It is strange that Martin should use, therefore, as an argument for the elimination of the concept of secularization "that secularization is less a scientific concept than a tool of the counter religious ideologies of rationalism, Marxism and existentialism". The value of the contribution that he makes is in his assertion that there cannot be a general universal process of secularization, there are many manifestations of it conditioned by culture and history. Which of the conceptualisations have been used by the Marxists, extentialists and rationalists? In any event, such an argument can only be useful within this debate if rationalism, Marxism and existentialism are correct in resect<sup>P</sup> of their own analysis of the social significance of religion. If their understanding is flawed or based upon an inappropriate model then secularization is an irrelevant tool.

## SECULARIZATION AND SELF AWARENESS

The secularization debate is problematic and multifaceted. There are questions still to be asked of some of the basic assumptions adopted for the interpretation of the empirical data; questions of definition and the use of language. However, there still remains the empirically verifiable fact that there are decreasing numbers of people who have any contact with the institutional church at all and of those who claim some initial contact less become members and remain members of the church as an institutional organisation. And yet, even though membership of the institutional church is in decline there are significant numbers of people still remaining in institutional church membership.

In my thesis I wish to suggest that the significant factor in institutional church membership or non-membership is choice. Choice becomes a reality when there is both awareness of Self, that is self determination and the awareness of attainable alternatives which the aware self may choose to achieve, suspend or reject.

The difficulties within the present debate about the process of secularization may be linked to trying to schematise the individual awareness of self and choice into a coherent process when no coherent process is in fact developing. Perhaps it is too neat an explanation for what are complex and varying

processes of human development, taking place at different levels of self awareness, and in societies where choice is attainable in different and differing degrees and where self awareness leads not to one inevitable choice but to one set of related choices amongst many others. A person may choose, if choice is available, to locate the Self within a Sacred universe of meaning or within a non-sacral universe. Sometimes there may be the real possibility of understanding the meaning of Self within both universes at the same time or within both at different times without denying the validity of either of these universes of meaning. This would give some foundation to Bryan Wilson's assertion that I have already referred to that

*"..... there may be other non-religious constraints which operate to hold men to religious institutions or persuade them to go through the motions of religious rituals" (34)*

And also it justifies the critics of the Wilson type position when they point to the evidence of the United States, Eastern Europe and South Africa, asking for a pluralistic interpretation of the nature of the significance of religion in society.

A brief historical review might illustrate the notion of developing self awareness and attainable choices. The Reformation was about the rediscovery of the importance of the self after eight hundred years in European history when the

church had claimed to be the one true state and when there was a general assumption that the church had an overriding political authority. (35) The Reformation coincided with the final collapse of the western church-state. An imperial papacy had given a measure of unity to the Middle Ages, not by abandoning the ideals of the ancient world but by attempting to give them new life. Canon Law replaced Roman Law, Crusaders replaced the Legions of Rome, the medieval kings became the tributary dynasties under a Roman pope. The unity of the Middle Ages from the seventh to the sixteenth century comes from the effective preservation of a unity that derived its strength from the ancient world. The modern world began when that strength, despite all the talk of humanists about the rediscovery of classical literature and culture, ebbed away. The ultimate destruction of the whole medieval social, political and intellectual framework accompanied the religious cleavages of the Reformation. From Bede to Luther the papacy had been the dominant influence in western Europe.

The Reformation began again the development of the importance of Self, the significance of the individual. Christ, it was preached again, had died for the sins of the individual once and for all. Salvation comes not through religious works and penance but through faith. Not through structures and organisations but from one divine to one human person. No priest needs to stand between the individual and his or her

Saviour as an intermediary. It is a personal relationship. The self is important. Salvation is a matter of personal faith.

Nevertheless the sixteenth century awareness of self was still located within the focus of a Sacral Universe of meaning. Weber explored this link in relation to the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination and the Work Ethic. Weber suggested that post reformation man constantly needed to prove his faith in worldly activity:

*"A life of diligent, systematic hard work could become the religious equivalent of a monastic asceticism, though the economic consequences were very different. 'Christian asceticism strode into the market place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life in the world, but neither of nor for the world.'" (36)*

However, even in the Church of Scotland which incorporated the doctrine of predestination into the Westminster Confession this inter relationship of the world of work set within the will of God became increasingly difficult to sustain as the possibility of choice was realised.

*".... in many areas of the south observance of the Sabbath was for a long time even into the eighteenth century so scrupulous as to amount almost to a superstition; yet there*

*were always those weak souls giving way, however strict the kirk session - millers unwilling to stop their wheels, salt masters unwilling to quench their fires, fishermen unwilling to leave their nets, countrymen everywhere unwilling to leave the harvest or the sowing when the Lord sent fine sabbath weather." (37)*

The power of the ministers through their kirk sessions to censure and punish the wayward in their parishes was widely exercised. Most of the offences seem to have been related to either adultery or fornication when the offenders were heavily punished;

*"...generally by being forced to stand dressed in sackcloth, bare headed and bare footed, first at the door of the kirk and then on the public stool of repentance on every sunday for six months or occasionally for several years, and sometimes by whipping and fining as well." (38)*

It is doubtful whether it had the desired long term effect.

For real choice there must be attainable alternatives. Smout A Century of the Scottish People 1830 - 1950 notes that when there are alternative attractions church going declines within the population. This was especially so when the new theology coincided with new pastimes. European scholarship at the end of

the nineteenth century was challenging the literal interpretation of the Bible, Scottish theologians began to use the new tools of literary and historical criticism and despite the heresy trials of W.R. Smith, Marcus Dodds and George Adam Smith, the church in Scotland began to tackle the central issues of biblical scholarship with a new openness. If the date of Genesis or the authorship of the four gospels could be questioned then what about the traditional concept of heaven and hell? If God is now a God of love and not a God of eternal wrath then he would not send you to hell but give you a second chance and so it did not matter if you were a bit of an agnostic and <sup>did</sup> not go to church too regularly. All would be well in the end.

*"As a piece of homespun logic this had considerable strength and consistency. It caused the death of hell, the liberation of many from psychological terrors, and the cooling of much fervour amongst the laity." (39)*

The alternative attractions of football, cycling (which carried men past the church instead of to it), modern literature and socialism were diverting peoples attentions and energies.

*"Ministers were especially jealous of football, for above all it aroused exactly the heart-warming zeal and total devotion which they themselves had tried so hard, so painfully and so totally unsuccessfully to arouse for God."*  
(40)



In the Victorian era churches and chapels were, by comparison to today's observation, well attended, Middle class respectability, like Calvinistic piety, was confirmed by regular churchgoing, there was an expansion in church building and restoration. It was a time of missionary enterprise and there was a great outpouring of religious tracts, publications, sermons, books periodicals and newspapers. However, it was also characterised by religious doubt and uncertainty. Doubt and uncertainty permitted the possibility of choice. There were the influential minds of unbelievers or those who held to a faith which was unorthodox which further opened up the area of choice - Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, George Eliot, James Froude, Matthew Arnold, George Meredith. The authority of the church in the nineteenth century was attacked from many sides notably in the realms of natural science and literary and biblical criticism. Others turned their backs on Evangelical and Catholic orthodoxy because of the apparent inhumanity of the Christian understanding of salvation especially regarding the everlasting torment of Hell. Many, including J.A. Froude, Francis Newman, and George Eliot, were repulsed by the stress of the church on the future rewards of heaven which prevented any possibility of and responsibility to improve the conditions of life in the world. It was in the discoveries of natural science through the work of men like Lyell, Buckland and Darwin that <sup>the</sup> greatest challenges to Victorian faith and belief were to be found and the bitterest of battles were fought and largely lost by an establishment seeking to remove alternative choices.

Liberal theology had tried to meet the challenge of modern science, historical biblical criticism and philosophy, it was increasingly under attack from theologians like Johannes Weiss, George Tyrrell, and later Karl Barth but the First World War severely shook the confidence of those whose religious belief was founded upon the idea of the inevitable progress through mankind's own intellectual enlightenment and moral effort.

During the twentieth century many more areas of life have become "secularised", including the hospitals, art, universities and social services. In the case of social services where the church still has an important contribution to make to the overall level of support given to the community it is increasingly dependant upon financial support from local and central government. The Methodist Homes for the Aged Housing Association has in the last ten years entered into joint ventures with the Housing Corporation and its homes at Granton, East Kilbride and Milton in Glasgow would not have been possible without the provision of central government financial assistance. The work of the Methodist Church's National Children's Home at Cathkin House in Glasgow ended in the mid-1980's when the Stathclyde Regional Council ended a long standing funding arrangement in order to fund its own in-house care services.

The choice between a sacred and non-sacral orientation towards a perceived universe of meaning is not a choice between the moral

and the amoral. A life style founded upon a secular understanding of meaning and purpose is not one which is lived within a moral vacuum. The twentieth century development of the Women's Movement, often strenuously opposed by the church is one example of an ethical interpretation of human life conceived outside the formal structures of the institutional church which is still often only begrudgingly accepted by Synods of the Church. Largely the church has followed in matters of environmental concern and it is only in the 1980's that at an international level there has been the formation of a churches' Commission on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation". The Nuclear Disarmament Movement does not rely on a sacred interpretation of meaning or morality to give it validity, a fact underlined by the need in some quarters of the church to establish Christian C.N.D. to give the movement a sacred dimension.

The above are no more than observations and hopefully others might take up the theme of choice and awareness and develop it further. I offer it as a possible approach to interpret some of the data which has emerged from the secularization debate.

The secularization debate has usually focussed upon the declining influence of the church in society. In this thesis I will examine why in a time in human development when people are choosing not to go to church, significant numbers still choose to do so. The major participants in the debate have emphasised

the question of why people leave the institutions of religion and only briefly developed any theory as to why people chose to remain in church membership. It is almost as if the only deliberate, conscious considerations are to leave or to join. There has been little emphasis on why and when people remain.

In pursuing the notion of choice and self awareness as key elements in understanding sacred orientations to and interpretations of life style, I will suggested that there are two crucial phases" - Encouragement-Coercion and Value-Choice. I will investigate at what points in the life cycle there is most likely to be a reappraisal of what gives value and when further choice possibilities are enhanced or restricted and what happens at such identifiable points.

There is an obvious similarity here with the work of Luckmann and Berger in that there is a significant element of individual choice and personal preference at work within the process - the buyers and the sellers of religion. But it does occur to me that both Berger and Luckmann examine the nature of the religious institution from the outside looking in. That is to say, their notion of church membership is focussed upon people who are not continuing members of the institution.

I am endeavouring to ask the question from the inside looking out by posing the problem of why do those who are already

members, not buyers but fully paid up shareholders, not selling out at the present time. The obvious answer is because they choose to do so. The more difficult question to begin to answer is why do they choose to do so. From the information provided by the participants in my study, part of the answer is that they remain members for other than religious reasons, such reasons include Relationships, Status, Role, Belonging, Life Style, Activity and Integrity. These may be some of Bryan Wilson's uninvestigated "non-religious constraints which operate to hold men to religious institutions or persuade them to go through the motions of religious rituals"

Even though all the participants in my study were in church membership at the date of the interview, I believe that there is a method of approach which allows for turning the question around and by asking what is it that enables people to remain in membership and whether these factors vary throughout the life cycle and whether they are more critical at some points than at others, then we might have an indication of why and when other people leave the church.

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### CHAPTER 3

#### THE METHODIST CHURCH - ITS STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

This study is concerned with the life of people within three local Methodist Churches in the Edinburgh and Forth Circuit. The aim of this chapter is to describe the structure and organisation of the Methodist Church so that some of the terms and expressions used later in the thesis can be described and set in context. The description will concentrate on the local organisation at local church and circuit level and deal in somewhat less detail with District and Connexional structures. Certain changes were made to the organisation of the Methodist Church from 1974 onwards following a review ~~of the~~ of the Church's structures. In order to explain the meaning, function, seniority and significance of the various offices and how they have changed since 1974 it is necessary to go into some detail about the nature of the pre-1974 Leaders' Meeting, Church Trustees and the Quarterly Meeting and the post-1974 Church Council and Circuit Meeting.

The Methodist Church has, in effect, a four tiered structure

- The Local Church
- The Circuit
- The District
- The Connexion.

However, the Constitution of the Methodist Church only recognises three levels of operation. The local church is a



constituent part of the Circuit. The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church defines the basic unit of the Church as the Circuit.

#### THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE CIRCUIT

"The Circuit means one church or several churches united for mutual encouragement and help (especially in meeting their respective financial obligations) formed into or recognised as a Circuit by the Conference" (1)

It is to the circuit that ministers are appointed by the Conference and not to the local churches. The Circuit is under the charge of the Superintendent Minister and he or she has the right to preside at every official meeting connected with the circuit or with any local church connected with the circuit.

The expression "Superintendent Minister" means

"The minister whose name stands alone or first in the list of ministers appointed to the circuit by the Conference".  
(2)

A "local church" or "society" is

"The whole body of members of the Methodist Church connected with and attending one particular place of worship belonging to the Methodist Church" (3)

A member of the Methodist Church means -

"a person recognised as a member of the Methodist Church in accordance with our rules for the time being in force with respect to membership of the Methodist Church". (4)

The basis of membership is that "All those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and accept the obligation to serve him in the life of the Church and the World are welcome as full members of the Methodist Church" (5)

After a period of training and probation of not less than three months, those approved for membership are admitted to full membership of the church by the Church Council on the recommendation of the Pastoral Committee and are publicly recognised at a service known as "The Service of Reception in to Full Membership or Confirmation", conducted by the minister in the presence of the church and which includes the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The Duties of Members are -

- i. To avail themselves of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- ii. Membership involves fellowship, which it is the duty of all members to cultivate
- iii. The weekly Class Meeting is to be cultivated
- iv. All members are to be in a Class under the pastoral care of a Class Leader and to receive the annual ticket of membership.
- v. Any member who without reason is persistently absent from Holy Communion and meetings for fellowship is to be visited by the Class Leader and the minister and if by prolonged absence he severs himself from

Christian fellowship his name is to be removed by the local Pastoral Committee from the Class Book, whereupon he ceases to be a full member of the Methodist Church. (6)

For pastoral Care purposes the members of the local church are divided into "Classes" under the care of a "Class Leader". The Class Leader is appointed by the Church Council to meet with and have care of their Class. Originally Wesley directed that the local Societies were divided into classes which met weekly for mutual support, fellowship, prayer and Bible study and reflection on their Christian lives. Classes continued to meet on this basis in most local churches until World War II. The last Class to meet in this way within the churches which form part of this study was Mrs McLaren's Class which met at the Central Hall, Tollcross until 1951. Gradually their function was replaced with the introduction of house and similar fellowships within the church.

Even though the Class Meeting has virtually disappeared within Methodism in the United Kingdom, the office of Class Leader still exists. The evolved roll of the Class Leader today is as a link person between the local member and the minister of the church which they attend. Some Class Leaders still meet with their classes on a social level. In recognition of this change the office of "Pastoral Visitor" was established in 1974. Pastoral visitors are appointed by the church council to exercise pastoral care but not to meet with a Class. (7)

The care of the membership, then is not the sole prerogative of the minister of the local church. It is one of partnership with the local members. The Church exists to exercise the whole ministry of Christ (8) and is the basis for the shared ministry, ordained and lay in the church. (9)

The Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property. (10) The role and functions of the Church Council are recent in British Methodism. It owes its existence to a review of the organisation of the Methodist Church which was undertaken in the early 1970's. Its present functions were previously undertaken by two bodies within the local church; the Leaders's Meeting and The Church Trustees. The Trustees were appointed by the Circuit Quarterly Meeting (see below) and their responsibility was to hold local property for and on behalf of the Methodist Church under the terms of the Model Trust Deed of the Methodist Church Act 1929. Usually the local Trustees were leading laymen from the local church, the Circuit and Neighbouring Circuits. The Trustees meeting was chaired by the superintendent minister of the Circuit. Under this system of management, each church operated two accounts, the Society Account (for general church purposes with the exception of property) and the Trust Account (for the property). The Trustees were responsible for the maintenance of the fabric and also for the letting of the premises. Money was paid to the Trustees from the Society Account, sometimes there were special collections

for "Trust Funds" at services like the Harvest festival and the Chapel Anniversary and for special projects extra fund raising events were held by the local church. On occasions there could be friction between the Trustees and other members and leaders of the local church who wished to do certain things on the church premises for which the Trustees would not give permission. The usual examples were youth clubs and youth organisations which the Trustees would not permit fearing damage to the property. As long as the Trustees were in office the local church was never the master in its own house. This division ended after 1974 when the Church Council also assumed the power to act as "Managing Trustees."

The Leaders' Meeting as the title suggests, was the meeting of the leaders of the local church together with the minister of that church. It met once a quarter and could meet more often if such extra meetings were deemed desirable or necessary.

The Leaders Meeting had two main functions. (1) One was to act as a court of discipline and the other was as a body responsible for the work of the Society and apart from matters of property it was the decision making body within the local church.

When the Leaders' Meeting was acting as a court of discipline or when it was reviewing the Roll of Members it consisted of the following persons:-

1. Ministers and Probationers appointed to the Circuit

- ii. Any Supernumerary Minister or Wesley Deaconess having responsibility within the society
- iii. The Class Leaders and Assistant Class Leaders, Leaders of Classes of Members in Training
- iv. The Society and Poor Stewards.

For all other purposes the Leaders' Meeting consisted of the above office bearers together with:-

- v. The Sunday School Superintendent
- vi. The Local Secretaries of:
  - Overseas Missions
  - Women's Work
  - Home Missions
  - Christian Citizenship
  - Baptismal Roll
  - Local Youth Council
  - Wesley Guild
  - Christian Endeavour
  - Youth Fellowships
- vii. The Leader of any teenage Youth Club.
- viii. The Representatives elected by the Society
- ix. The responsible officer from each women's group
- x. Local Preachers who were also members of the society.

The chief executive office bearers were the Society Stewards and the Poor Stewards. The Society Stewards were the local lay leaders of the church; the Poor Stewards were charged with the care of the poor and needy. Members elected to the office of Society Steward and Poor Steward at the December Meeting of the Leaders' Meeting served for one year, they were eligible for re-election after their year of office.

The main duties of the Society Stewards were -

- i. To be the treasurers of the Society Fund and to meet all the financial obligations on behalf of the society.
- ii. To be responsible for seeing that all services, meetings and engagements in connection with the Society were held; being in attendance upon the preacher before and after the

service; and in the event of the failure of a preacher to take the service to see that a service or suitable meeting is held.

iii. To see that all necessary arrangements are made for Baptisms, after due notice has been given to the minister.

The Poor Steward responsibilities were: -

i. To make provision for the proper administration of the Lord's Supper and the holding of Love Feasts and on all such occasions to take a collection for the Poor Fund.

ii. To attend at the administration of the Lord's Supper and be responsible for directing the approach of the Communicants to the Lord's table.

iii. Be the treasurers of the Poor Fund. They shall present to the Leader's Meeting each quarter a statement of receipts and disbursements, and shall hand to the minister or to the respective Leaders such sums as the meeting may determine for distribution in relief.

These were key offices in the life of the local church and ensured its continuity. Methodist Ministers in the days of the Leaders' Meeting were appointed to a circuit for an initial period of three years which could, under various regulations be extended to five and more. The appointment of a minister begins on the first Sunday in September and at that time the Society Stewards and Poor Stewards are already in office and have been for eight months (if elected for the first time to office in the preceding December) and in most cases for considerably longer. There was no reason why the same steward could not be in office when a new minister arrived and still be holding office long after he and possibly his successor had left the circuit.

In each local church there would be an Annual Society Meeting (12) which received reports from the various organisations in

the local church and which elected representatives to the Leaders' Meeting from the congregation. They were elected in the proportion of one representative for every thirty members, up to a maximum of eight representatives.

The local committees of the Church (13) Finance, Overseas Missions, Women's Work and a The Local Youth Council received work which was delegated to them by the Leaders' Meeting and gave reports and recommendations back to it. All the committees of the local church were chaired by the minister of that church.

With exception of the leaders of the various youth organisations, who would be represented by the Secretary of the Local Youth Council all the members of the Leaders' Meeting and the local church Trustees were members of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. This, therefore could be a very large meeting indeed and was fully representative of the local churches which made up the circuit.

Those eligible for membership of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting (14) were:-

- i. Ministers and Probationers appointed to serve in the Circuit together with those serving external organisations.
- ii. Wesley Deaconesses
- iii. The Circuit Stewards
- iv. From each Society in the Circuit:
  - Class and duly appointed Assistant Class Leaders
  - Leaders of Classes for members in training
  - Baptismal Roll Secretary
  - Representatives appointed by the Annual Society Meeting
- v. Trustees of Places of Worship and Manses



- vi. Fully accredited local preachers
- vii. Circuit Chapel Secretary
- viii. Circuit Lay Treasurer of Connexional Funds
- ix. Circuit Lay Secretary and Treasurer of:
  - Overseas Missions
  - Women's Work Committee of the Methodist Missionary Society
  - Lay Secretary of the Juvenile Missionary Association
- x. Lay Secretary and Treasurer of the Circuit Youth Council
- xi. The General Superintendent of each graded Sunday School
- xii. Secretary and Treasurer of each local Youth Council
- xiii. Leader of each teenage Youth Club
- xiv. Secretary of each Wesley Guild, Christian Endeavour
- xv. Lay Secretary and Treasurer for the Home Missions Fund
- xvi. Lay Secretary for Christian Citizenship
- xvii. Local Secretaries for :-
  - Overseas Missions
  - Home Missions
  - Women's Work
  - Christian Citizenship
- xviii. Secretary of the Women's Fellowship Circuit Committee
- xix. Circuit Education Secretary.
- xx. A responsible officer from each women's groups
- xxi. Any lay member of any Connexional Department

In addition if the Superintendent of any Sunday School had a seat on the Circuit Quarterly Meeting by virtue of another office, the local Youth Council may elect another representative in place of the superintendent. No one was eligible for membership under 18 years of age. It could be a very large meeting affording many opportunities for men and women to be involved in making and being responsible for the policies of the church.

The Committees of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting were:-

- Finance Committee
- Connexional Funds Committee
- Overseas Missions Committee
- Women's Work Committee
- Christian Citizenship Committee
- Circuit Youth Council
- Circuit Women's Fellowship Committee

The Circuit Class Leaders Annual Meeting  
The Circuit Manse Committee  
The Local Preachers Meeting.

The function of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting was to review "the state of the Work of God in the Circuit" (15) and to exercise general oversight of the spiritual, numerical and financial condition of the societies within the circuit. They were to review annually the condition of the Methodist Trust Property. Another function was to appoint the Circuit Committees with Secretaries and Treasurers, representatives to the Synod (in the ratio of one lay representative for every minister in the circuit) and the Circuit Stewards. They had the responsibility for making preliminary examination of candidates for the ministry and the Wesley Deaconess Order.

The Circuit Stewards(16) , usually two in number, were elected at the December Quarterly Meeting and remained in office for one year. They were eligible for re-election. Their duties were largely the same as those of the local Society Stewards except that they were in relation to the Circuit as a whole. But in addition they were responsible on behalf of the Quarterly Meeting for proposing to the meeting the names of ministers to serve in the circuit including the names of any existing members who should be invited to remain in the Circuit after their initial three year appointment. Additionally the Circuit Stewards were ex-officio members of the District Synod together with the representatives elected by the Meeting to represent

them in the District. These representatives were elected in the proportion of one for each minister in the circuit.

#### THE POST 1974 STRUCTURE

The new structures which were adopted after 1974 brought about several significant changes at both local church level and to a lesser extent at the Circuit level.

In so far as ministers are still appointed by the Conference to the Circuit, the Circuit remains the basic unit within the Church. The usual minimum period of a minister's appointment is now five years which with the approval of the Circuit Meeting (the old Quarterly Meeting) and the approval of the Conference can be extended to seven or more years.

The functions of the Church Trustees and the Leaders' Meeting are now the responsibility of the Church Council (17). The members of the Church Council in matters concerning the local property act as Managing Trustees. Their powers and responsibilities are set out in the Methodist Church Act 1976.

Standing Order 600 defines the "Nature of the Local Church" :  
"The Church exists to exercise the whole ministry of Christ. The local church with its membership and larger church community, exercises its ministry where it is and shares in the wider ministry of the Church in the world. In this one ministry

worship, fellowship, pastoral care, mission and service are essential elements. Administration and training enable their fulfilment. In the Methodist Church these various tasks are undertaken by the local church, through its Church Council and Committees, in union with the ministry of the Circuit of which it is a constituent. It is represented in, and represents locally, the Circuit Meeting which is the policy making court of the Circuit." (SO 600)

The work of the Church Council is to unite the severally responsible members, officers and ministers in one working community. It has authority to take decisions for the church and to manage its affairs. The General Church Meeting has a responsibility to consider the whole ministry of the church and every part of it and to make appointments to the Church Council that will ensure the co-operation of the whole church in that ministry. This requires a proper representation of men and women, old and young, and of those who are new comers to the church.

The Church Council may appoint committees (SO 603) which will have authority, in their own areas of responsibility, to initiate action, co-ordinate the work done in the church, advise the church council and report to it, being subject to its authority and oversight.

The main committees (18) appointed by the Church Council are The Church Family Committee, The Neighbourhood Committee, World Service and Mission Committee, the Property Committee and the Finance Committee. In addition the Pastoral Committee in each church has the duty of care of the members of the church, training for and all matters related to membership, and acts as a court of discipline.

There is no longer a requirement for the superintendent or the local minister to be the chairman of all the circuit and local church committees. SO. 501 states that <sup>it is</sup> the right of the superintendent, or failing him one of his colleagues, <sup>to</sup> ~~shall~~ invariably chair the Circuit Meeting, the Circuit Consultation (if any), the Local Preachers Meeting, the circuit General Purposes Committee, the Church Council, the Annual General Church Meeting and the Pastoral Committee. Circuits and local churches are authorised to nominate laymen as chairmen "of such committees...as are proper to their gifts, interests and abilities." (SO. 501(2)). These appointments are made by the Circuit Meeting on the nomination of the Circuit Committee or the local Church Council. This was a major departure from the procedures of the past and recognised the role of the layman within the local church and circuit. A second and somewhat related change in the new committee system gives the Church Council power to appoint non-members whose names are on the Adherents Roll of the local church or members of other denominations who work in the local church to office within the

church or to membership of its committees (except where such appointment gives a seat on the Church Council, the Finance Committee or the Pastoral Committee) (SO. 606(3)).

The membership of the local Church Council where the membership is 30 or more is:-

- i. The ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit.
- ii. Any Supernumerary minister having pastoral charge within the Circuit and any one residing in the Circuit who is "authorised to serve the church as a minister".
- iii. The Deaconesses appointed to pastoral charge in the Circuit.
- iv. Any Deaconess or lay pastoral worker employed by the Circuit Meeting who have pastoral responsibility in the local church.
- v. Any full time youth worker employed by the church council who is a member of the local church
- vi. At least two and not more than four church stewards.
- vii. The Church Treasurer.
- viii. The Sunday School General Superintendent or Leader.
- ix. The Secretary of the Pastoral Committee and one class leader or pastoral visitor for every 100 members or part of 100, appointed by that committee.
- x. The Secretary of the Council
- xi. Two persons appointed by the property committee.
- xii. Two persons appointed by each of the following committees, namely Church Family, Neighbourhood, World Service and Missions and Finance, if constituted, if not, then two persons appointed by the Church Council to represent the area of the Committees interest.
- xiii. Representatives elected by the General Church Meeting, namely 6 for upto 100 members and one additional for every twenty members or part of twenty with an overall maximum of 15 representatives.
- xiv. The Convener of the Consultation on worship if constituted. (19)

In Churches of less than 30 members the Church Council consists of:-

- i. Ministers, probationers and deaconesses as in i - iv above.
- ii. Two church Stewards and the church treasurer.
- iii. All members of the local church who are willing to serve.

The method of appointment and the role of the old "Society Stewards" and "Poor Stewards" have changed under the new system. They are now known as "Church Stewards" and "Communion Stewards", respectively.

The Church Stewards are elected and appointed to serve for one year by the General Church Meeting which is normally held before the end of April and they serve for one year but they are eligible for re-election although they are not permitted to remain in office for more than six years without an interval out of office. There is no limit to the number of church stewards that can be appointed but no more than four of them can have a seat on the Church Council. The particular duties of the Church Stewards are :-

- i. To be responsible for seeing that all services, meetings and engagements in connection with the Society were held; being in attendance upon the preacher before and after the service; and in the event of the failure of a preacher to take the service to see that a service or suitable meeting is held.
- ii. To see that all necessary arrangements are made for Baptisms, after due notice has been given to the minister.
- iii. Arrange for the taking and due recording of collections and remitting the money to the Church Treasurer.

SO 623. sets out the general responsibilities of the Church Stewards, which are to be responsible with the minister for giving leadership over the whole range of the church's life and activity. They are particularly charged to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the one ministry of the church. To this end it is their responsibility to uphold and act upon the decisions and policies of the Church Council.

In accord with this general responsibility they are to arrange for one of their number to serve on each of the church committees.

The Communion Stewards are appointed by the Church Council at its February meeting to serve for one year and may be re-appointed, subject to the six year rule. Their duties are now to:-

- i. To make provision for the proper administration of the Lord's Supper and the holding of Love Feasts and on all such occasions to take a collection for the Poor Fund.

- ii. To attend at the administration of the Lord's Supper and be responsible for directing the approach of the Communicants to the Lord's Table.

- iii. Where a collection is taken for the Benevolence Fund at the Lord's Supper, they shall take it and record it and hand it to the Church Treasurer.

The Benevolence Fund is now under the direct or delegated authority of the Church council.



The office of Church Treasurer, formerly the responsibility of the Society Stewards, is to receive all church monies, maintain the necessary accounts and meet all the financial obligations of the church.

The Annual Church Meeting elects representatives directly to the Church Council up to a maximum of 15. They serve for a three year term and give continuity to the Council. They are eligible for re-election for a further three year term and then may not be re-elected "until after an interval".

At the February Meeting of the Church Council, the Council's representatives to the Circuit Meeting, (20) formerly the "Circuit Quarterly Meeting" are appointed. From each church the representatives are:-

- One Church Steward
- The Church Treasurer
- Two representatives from the local church for every 50 members and one for every additional 50 members.

It is noted, therefore, that the total membership of the Church Council no longer have a right to attend the Circuit Meeting as they did in the days of the Leaders Meeting.

The Circuit Meeting which meets at least twice a year delegates work to and receives reports and recommendations from its Committees. The main Circuit Committees (21) are:-

- The General Purposes Committee
- The Ministries Committee

The Mission Committee  
The Education and Youth Committee  
The Social Responsibility Committee  
The Property Committee  
The Women's Committee.  
The Local Preachers' Meeting

Generally, the Committees of the Circuit Meeting are made up of the appropriate members of the local church committees. The Circuit Meeting appoints the Secretaries and Treasurers (If necessary) to these committees. Whilst the Superintendent Minister may be the chairman of these meetings, the Circuit Meeting may appoint Lay chairmen.

Each Committee is represented on the Circuit Committee by its secretary and one other representative (in the case of the Missions Committee by two representatives and the Local Preachers' Meeting by a maximum of nine) and these together with the Circuit ministers and the representatives appointed by the local Church Councils make up the Circuit Meeting.

Circuit Stewards are appointed as before, and have the same responsibilities. The Circuit Treasurer is responsible for receiving circuit money, maintaining records and presenting financial statements to the Circuit Meeting. Each local church contributes towards the costs of the circuit, including ministerial stipends, through a levy known as the Circuit Assessment. The Assessments are calculated by the Circuit Treasurer, meeting with the local church treasurers and approved by the Circuit Meeting.

The Circuit Meeting appoints representatives to the District Synod.

#### THE DISTRICT SYNOD.

A Synod of each District (22) is held in September and May, there being a Representative Session only, in September, and Ministerial and Representative Sessions in May. All ministers in the District are members of the Synod, together with lay representatives elected from the Circuits and ex officio members. Each Circuit is represented by two Circuit Stewards together with one representative for every minister or probationer in the circuit plus one additional representative. The Synod itself elects at least nine and no more than twenty four lay members to serve for three years.

The Chairman of the District Synod is a minister without a circuit appointment and who has been nominated by the Synod and appointed by the Conference to serve in that office. His initial term of office is six years but this can be extended with the approval of the Synod and the Conference.

The function of the Synod is to give effect to the decisions of the Conference; discuss matters referred to it by the Conference; send down reports to and receive reports from the circuits; and receive reports from its various committees and

officers. The Synod forms the link between the Conference and the Divisions on the one hand and the Circuits and the local churches on the other.

Each District Synod at its Spring meeting appoints officers to be responsible within the District, in conjunction with any committee which may be appointed for the same purpose, for the work of the Divisions, namely two secretaries and a treasurer for each of the following Divisions :-

- Home Missions
- Overseas
- Education and Youth
- Social Responsibility
- Property.

The officers report to the Spring Synod. Associate Officers are appointed by the Synod to be responsible for particular work associated with any of the committees. For example a District Social Responsibility Committee also appoints associate officers for Radio and Television, Community Relations, Methodist Homes for the Aged and World Development. Normally a District Officer or Associate Officer, after six years continuous service is not eligible for re-election before the expiry of one year. The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church does not stipulate whether Officers and Associate Officers are to be ministers or laymen. In practice one of the secretaries is a minister and the other a layman.

A District Policy Committee (23) acts in an executive capacity between meetings of the Synod and also has the responsibility of formulating and promoting policies which will advance the mission of the Church in the Circuits and Local Churches and supervising the use of resources of manpower, property and finance and to assist churches and Circuits having exceptional problems.

The members of the District Policy Committee are the Chairman and Secretary of the District Synod, together with the treasurers and secretaries (the officers and associate officers) of the various committees. The Synod may also add as associate members, in any number and by any method which it deems to be expedient, any other eligible person. The Methodist Synod in Scotland adds to the District Policy Committee each Circuit Superintendent and one layman elected by the Circuit Meeting.

The Synod elects representatives to the Divisional Boards and to the Conference. In so far as the numbers to be elected by each district is concerned this is allocated by the preceding Conference, in such a way that the Conference may consist of equal numbers of ministers and laymen. With the exception of the Island Districts the minimum number of representatives from each synod is four ministers and four laymen.

In addition the Synod elects members of the Divisional Boards and other connexional committees. The details of the representation are set out in SO. 418 :

General Purposes Committee - one layman  
Home Missions Board - one layman  
Overseas - one minister and one layman  
Boards of the Division of Ministries  
    Education and Youth  
    Social Responsibility  
Property Board - A district property secretary  
Central Finance Board - One person  
Stationing Committee - one layman.

#### THE CONFERENCE AND THE DIVISIONS

The Conference (24) which meets annually in June, is the supreme Authority of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. The term "Connexion" is frequently used within British Methodism to denote the Methodist Church as a whole. This expression dates back to the time when the early Methodists still shrank back from becoming a denomination separate from the Church of England and when referring to the nationwide organisation referred to themselves as a "Connexion" - a linking (connecting up) of all the "Societies".

It is the responsibility of the Conference to consider the reports submitted by the committees of its Divisions; the stationing of ministers; the interpretation of doctrine; the determination of the policy of the church in all its departments; the amendment of the Standing Orders within the

framework of the constitution; and the hearing of all cases of discipline and alleged heresy. Under the terms of the Deed of Union the Conference may not alter the Doctrinal Standards of the Methodist Church. Between the meetings of the Conference its legal powers were exercised by the General Purposes Committee and the Divisions under the direction of their Boards or committees.

The Conference meets in two sessions. The Ministerial Session and the Representative Session. The President of the Conference is always a minister and the Vice-President, a layman. They hold office for one year only and are elected by the vote of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference. The Representative Session consists of about 650 members, half ministers, half laymen, elected by the District Synods, together with the Chairman of each District and the secretaries of the Departments who sit ex officio. There are also with twenty four ministers and twenty four laymen who are elected directly to the Conference by the Conference and hold office for three years. The Ministerial Session, which considers matters relating to the selection and training of ministers, stationing, discipline of ministers and other related matters, meets before the Representative session. (Until 1963 it met after the Representative session). The members of the Ministerial Session are those ministers elected by the District Synod, ministers who attend ex officio together with any other minister who had indicated, before hand his wish to attend and who has received

the permission of his District Synod to attend. Such ministers who are not elected (other than those who were ex officio members) attended at their own expense.

Before the present reorganisation the work of the Conference was undertaken by the following Departments:-

- The Department of Connexional Funds
- The Department of Home Missions
- The Department for Chapel Affairs
- The Methodist Missionary Society
- The Methodist Youth Department
- The Department of Local Preachers Affairs
- The Department of Christian Citizenship
- The Methodist Education Department
- The Department of Ministerial Training
- The Wesley Deaconess Order of the Methodist Church
- The Department of The London Mission
- The National Children's Home
- The Methodist Publishing House.

These were reorganised after 1976 to become :-

- The Overseas Division.
- The Home Missions Division
- The Division of Social Responsibility
- The Division of Ministries
- The Division of Education and Youth
- The Division of Finance
- The Division of Property

In addition, there are committees of the Conference which deal with matters such as Doctrine, The Stationing of Ministers, Law and Polity and Faith and Order, The National Children's Home and the Publishing House. The Divisions and Committees are serviced by Connexional Secretaries appointed by the Conference together with full and part time professional, administrative and clerical staff.



The above can be very briefly summarised as follows. The local churches are grouped together in "Circuits" to which ministers are appointed for a limited period and are known as "itinerant ministers". Each "Circuit" is in the charge of a "Superintendent". In British Methodism "District Chairmen" preside over Synods. The local church elects representatives to the "Circuit Meeting", the Circuits send their representatives to the District which in turn sends representatives to "Conference".

The Methodist Church throughout its structure provides a diverse range of functions to be filled by its members from the opportunity to serve in the decision-making courts of the Church to practical tasks as property stewards. This offers scope for people of different abilities and aptitudes to do something and be somebody within the organisation of the Church and may be one of the factors which maintains church going as a significant activity within the life style and life cycle.

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(22) Ibid p 208 ff

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(24) Ibid p 124 ff.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SCOTLAND

#### THE SCOTTISH CHURCH CONTEXT

The Act of Union, 1707 confirmed Presbyterianism as the established policy for Scotland. It was, therefore, the opposite pole to the established church in England in matters of church government and order. However, by 1790 they share significant similarities, neither had any time for the puritans, both were plagued by an evangelical party within their own churches and popular dissent or seceding groups were challenging their complacency.

At the end of the eighteenth century there were two parties within the Church of Scotland struggling for supremacy, the Moderates and the Evangelicals. The Moderates were in the ascendant. They were distinguished by several characteristics, including their preaching styles, but the main difference was their attitude to patronage. Lay patronage had been restored in 1712 with the provision that the patron's nominee to the office of parish minister had to be called by the church after due trial and in theory the church retained the right to reject the nominee. The Moderates understood this provision as only one of formality, whereas the Evangelicals wanted it to be a reality. With the ascendancy of the Moderates the rights of the patrons had become absolute. The Moderates who held strict obedience to

civil and ecclesiastical law were not prepared to countenance any proposals for reform.

This inflexible position made it very difficult for the Evangelicals to proceed with effective proposals for church extension in the new areas of population. They were continuously frustrated in their attempts to put suitable ministers into appropriate parishes. Or worse, they were unable to prevent unsuitable nominees from being appointed. Inevitably there followed a most involved and intricate conflict within the established church.

From 1762 to 1780 the Evangelicals were almost completely powerless. But things began to change in their favour when the control of the General Assembly passed from Principal William Robertson of Edinburgh University to Principal George Hill of St. Andrew's University. Under Principal Hill the unacceptable face of Moderatism, nepotism and pluralism, became more blatant than ever before. The moderates began to lose in prestige and credibility whereas that of the Evangelicals rose by comparison.

The revival of the fortunes of the Evangelicals was enormously advanced by the adherence of Thomas Chalmers (1780 - 1847) to the cause. He had spent most of his life as an academic and yet at the same time he was also a man of action, liberal evangelical, brilliant mathematician, pioneer of popular education and an advocate of modern methods of poor relief.

Chalmers' overriding concern was that the church should bring the Gospel and a christian education to the whole of the Scottish nation, including, and especially to the urban poor. In 1815 there were only 19 ministers serving the whole of the rapidly growing town of Glasgow. If the vision of Chalmers and men of like mind was to be fulfilled, then there must be greater freedom in the founding of churches where the urban poor were together with the appointment of suitably gifted ministers to lead the congregations. This brought Chalmers into conflict with the Moderates who were still insisting on enforcing the rights of the patrons to appoint their nominees. What became known as the Ten Years of Conflict began with an attempt in the General Assembly of 1833 to pass the Veto Act which would secure the rights of the parishioners to reject if necessary, the patron's nominee and ended in 1843 when 431 (out of 1203) ministers left the Establishment and formed the Free Church with a new General Assembly with Chalmers as its first moderator.

Within two years, five hundred places of worship were opened for which £320,000 had been contributed for their construction together with a further £100,000 for new manses. The Free Church carried away about one third of the membership of the Established church.

By 1874, patronage had been abolished by Act of Parliament. 1847 had seen the unification of two previous secession churches, the Secession Church and the Relief Church to form the United

Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The United Presbyterians united with the Free Church to become the United Free Church in 1900.

The Disruption and its consequent results were set in what so far has been understood as the last great attempt by the churches in Scotland to make strenuous efforts to persuade the entire population to become actively and continuously religious.

At the beginning of the Victorian period, "A universal stillness fell over Glasgow and Edinburgh (except the unredeemed slums) at the time of divine worship and pervaded small towns and villages from dawn until dusk." (1) But by 1900 the "whistles of trains and the rattle of trams past the windows of city churches and the bells of cyclists in the villages became more persistent every year." (2) The Sabbath in 1900 was not dead but churchmen were very much on the defensive. They were conscious of the drift of people away from church attendance.

Who were the main church attenders? In the late eighteenth century in rural areas there was something like universal involvement in the Parish Church which was perceived by the local community as being central to both secular and sacred life.

*"At an early hour on Sabbath morning, dogs, men, and lasses assembled in the churchyard, each for purposes of their own: the elderly portion squatted on gravestones, or, leaning with their backs against the walls of the church, smoked, snuffed, and*

*talked of markets, crops and the farmers' prospects, while the younger portion collected in groups, said 'soft things', simpered, laughed and talked scandal. Seldom a Sabbath passed without dogs winding up their gambols with a fight, either in the churchyard or in the church itself, during the service. No sooner had the minister pronounced the benediction than the congregation flocked to the door.....Advertisements of bargains, lost property, rousps, and so forth were then made by proclamation, at the church doors, on dismissal of the congregation."* (3)

The situation was different in the towns. By 1820 ministers were commenting on the large amount of indifference among the working classes. Thomas Chalmers estimated that 60% of families ought to have some church connection but only 20% were thought to have such links. Even before the Victorian era began two thirds of the town population had no connection with a church.

In the country by the 1890's many presbyteries in the South of Scotland were still able to report that virtually all the families had a church connection and that people came to church with a fair degree of regularity. However, north of the Forth, especially in areas of migrant agricultural labour the situation was much less so. Men had slipped out of regular church going habits. Things were different in the East coast fishing villages where people were found to be leaving the Church of Scotland for

other religious bodies like the Brethren, Methodist and Faith Missions of various kinds.

The mining areas were different again. By the 1890's these had become strongholds of indifference. It has been estimated that in Hamilton, for example, as many as one half of all households did not attend church. In Dunfermline threequarters of families had no known church connection.

Enthusiasm was lacking amongst those who went to church. In the towns the main support came from the middle classes, but even here the ministers noted a cooling of interest in family worship in the home. There developed a spirit of church going by convention rather than by conviction.

The skilled manual workers and artisans who had been the backbone of the innercity churches were gradually waning in enthusiasm, although at the beginning of the twentieth century the Scottish Labour leaders had had a strong connection as young men, especially with the United Presbyterians. The low paid urban workers were even less committed and this was the trend that had so alarmed Thomas Chalmers but despite the efforts of the Free Church to reach the urban masses there had been little change in the pattern of church attendance. Five out of seven non-catholic families had no church connection.



So why was there this decline in interest amongst the population and particularly amongst the poorer classes in church attendance and church connections?

The pew rent system, long and arduous working hours, poor housing, poor food and the problems of alcohol and their related demoralising effects of the population have all been advanced as reasons for the decline in interest in church attendance. But these conditions had always existed in the countryside and had not stopped people going to church. When the pew rent system was ended there was no mass return. Shorter working hours and the Saturday half day did not increase church congregations. There was no significant return to church going when housing conditions and living standards gradually began to improve.

At the end of the nineteenth century, ministers were blaming football, cycling, modern literature and socialism as being the causes of the general decline in churchgoing. But perhaps the plain truth was that, "the working classes could no longer see the point of the kind of church they were faced with in the towns and villages of Scotland." (4) The churches had lost <sup>their</sup> ~~there~~ all embracing function within the local community. During the nineteenth century the Evangelicals had stopped the church being the market and meeting place. At the same time the towns had pubs, theatres, music halls, and football grounds. There was much more to do in the towns, so many more alternative attractions.

Much of secular life had been eroded from church control. The Schools, Poor Relief and Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths had been transferred from the church to the civil powers. "The State and the amusement industry had taken away much of the significance of the church in everyday life." (5)

The attitude and life style of the working classes had changed. Ministers were increasingly seen as being on the side of the middle class and the establishment. The ministers were thought to be in conflict with the aims of socialism. During the first part of the nineteenth century it might have made sense to the skilled manual classes and the artisans for the church to instruct them in ways of thrift, restraint and social improvement, but because of the changes in the industrial structure of the twentieth century and the rise of the welfare state such qualities of life became increasingly irrelevant.

The working classes were excluded from positions of influence in the churches. Ironically this was especially so in the Free Church. The Free Church instituted by Chalmers and his followers to reach the urban masses, had by the disruption cut itself off from the sources of finance available to the Established church and was increasingly dependant upon the subscriptions of the middle classes to keep going. Those who generously supported the church expected returns by way of influential office which would give them a measure of control over the way in which their money was spent.

For all their differences, the Moderates and the Evangelicals believed in heaven and more importantly in hell. Hell was frightening. Very frightening. So frightening was hell that the only way to avoid the eternal flames was to assume that one was numbered amongst God's elect and to live out the appropriate good life which involved obedience to the words of the minister and regular church attendance. Those who were truly amongst the elect would be the most zealous in the observance of these things.

The doctrine of Hell took such a battering in the late nineteenth century that it never regained its persuasive powers again. There was a two pronged attack - theological development and biblical criticism. The theological attack came in the form of questioning <sup>author of</sup> the hitherto accepted doctrine of Election. John Campbell, "The Nature of Atonement" (1856) argued for a more loving basis of the faith. He was expelled from the church. So too had John Morrison. Both had argued that salvation was freely available to all who wanted it and who accepted that Christ died for all and not only for the elect. The scientific work of Lyell, Miller, Darwin and others was eroding the fundamentalist understanding of the Bible and new schools of Biblical criticism developed in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century were percolating their way through the church. Despite a succession of heresy trials including those of Marcus Dodds and A.B. Bruce in 1890 ordinary people were becoming aware of the main lines of the argument. It was becoming accepted that if God is a God of love then he cannot condemn most people to hell and man's place may not be finally

fixed by death. There was a general feeling of faltering as some ministers ceased to preach about heaven and hell and concentrated upon social and moral issues of the day. It is one of those paradoxes that the discovery of the love of God was a cause of a decline in church attendance.

#### METHODISM IN THE SCOTTISH CONTEXT

It has been said that "Methodism leapt the Atlantic but stopped on the banks of the Tweed." (6)

Methodism differs radically from Presbyterianism in matters of Doctrine, Ministry and Membership but it also displays many similarities in the broad outlines of its discipline and polity. The Leaders Meeting (Church Council) corresponds exactly to the Kirk Session. The Circuit Quarterly Meeting (Circuit Meeting) to the Presbytery. District Synods to those of the Church of Scotland. The annual Conference with the General assembly and both are presided over by an annually elected minister.

But these similarities conceal fundamental differences. Methodism is centred in the beliefs of Arminius with the emphasis on universal redemption and Christian perfection and that stands in complete contrast to Presbyterianism with its traditional dependence upon Calvin and predestination.

There is an itinerant and imposed Methodist ministry unlike the called and settled ministry of the Church of Scotland. The church is divided into Circuits to which the ministers are appointed compared to the individual charges of the Kirk. The dependence of Methodism on local (lay) preachers had little appeal in Scotland with the church's ordained and academically qualified ministry. The insistence upon the weekly class meeting as a test of membership placed the emphasis on fellowship rather than on simple religious instruction. Scotland, therefore confronted Wesley and his preachers with problems.

John Wesley first visited Scotland in 1751 but it was not until 23rd of April 1753 that he first preached in Edinburgh and no attempt was made to preach regularly in Scotland until Christopher Hooper came from Methodism's northern headquarters in Newcastle in 1759 and preached in Leith, Dundee, Aberdeen and Peterhead. Two years later Hooper was convinced that:

*"....there was a fair prospect of a great harvest in North Britain, until men of corrupt ideas stirred up the spirit of vain controversy: we then spent our time and strength about the meaning of words instead of promoting the love and fear of God"(7)*

Methodism and Wesley in particular found an ally first in Wilhelmina, Lady Glenorchy and then in Lady Maxwell. In 1765 Lady Glenorchy became attracted to the Doctrine of Justification by

Faith and hence the preaching of John Wesley and his preachers. In 1770 she opened a chapel in which ministers of every denomination who held to the essential truths of the Gospel might preach. She met Wesley on his visit to Edinburgh in 1770 but felt unable to join the Methodist Society which met on the Calton because she could never accept all the Methodist Doctrines and thought that Wesley went too far in the doctrine of perfection. An entry in her diary for 7th March 1770 records,

*"....he was stealing Arminian doctrines into Scotland and sapping the foundation of our faith under the pretext of greater sanctity and strictness than others..."(8)*

By 1771 her ecumenical services were approaching crisis. Ministers of the Established Church were refusing to preach in her chapel on account of the Methodist preachers. This difference in doctrine was unpleasant to Lady Glenorchy and she gave up her connections with the Methodists and excluded them from her chapel.

Support came from another leading member of Edinburgh society in the person of Lady Maxwell, a close friend of Lady Glenorchy, who regularly attended the morning and evening services at the Calton which met at times other than service time of the Established Church and she even met in a class with some of Wesley's preachers. She was a financial supporter of the Methodist work in Edinburgh.

Until 1765 Methodism was progressing slowly in Scotland and Wesley, his preachers and congregation were held in esteem. However in 1765 there was a controversy which severely hindered the spread of Methodism. In that year a pamphlet war developed between James Kershaw (one of the Edinburgh preachers), Wesley and Dr. Erskine the Minister of Greyfriars and one of the influential Evangelical Party of the Church of Scotland. Erskine was a friend and supporter of George Whitfield who had split with Wesley in 1748 on differences of interpretation of the doctrines of Election and Christian Perfection. Erskine managed to raise a storm of ultra Calvinistic controversy and opposition to the spread of Methodism. Circumstances were never favourable for Methodist work in Scotland again. Edinburgh Methodism suffered a severe loss of prestige and encountered growing opposition from the ministers of the Established Church.

John Pawson, writing to a fellow Methodist preacher in 1785 notes the anti Methodist feeling in Scotland:

*"...what think you of the following pious prayer offered up to the Love of God in public by a Seceder Minister: "Lord, sweep away the Methodists from the face of the earth with the besom of Thy destruction! Lord, bless some of us this day, it would be an unkah thing if Thou should'st bless us all....."(9)*

The clash with Calvinistic doctrines is reflected in Wesley's letter to Robert Dall in Edinburgh:

*"Certainly Calvinism is the direct antidote to Methodism, that is Heart Religion....."(10)*

Wesley would not compromise on his stance against Calvinism and neither would he permit his preachers in Scotland to adopt and adapt Scottish ways of church order and government. John Pawson had experimented with a Scottish form of church government in Glasgow. Pawson may have had a greater insight into the needs of Methodism in Scotland but Wesley who would not depart from his Anglican traditions ended the experiment. Wesley wrote in a letter to Crowther, the preacher at Dalkeith:

*"Sessions, Elders! We Methodists have no such customs; neither any of the churches of God under my care. I require you Johnathon Crowther, immediately to disband that session (so called) at Glasgow. Discharge them from meeting any more. And if they will leave the Society, let them leave it. We acknowledge only preachers, stewards and leaders among us, over which the Assistant in each circuit presides. You ought to have kept to the Methodist plan from the first. Who had authority to vary from it. If the people of Glasgow or any other place are weary of us, we will leave them to themselves. But we are willing to continue their servants, for Christ's sake, according to our own discipline but no other...."(11)*

There seems to have been no love lost on either side of the debate. In 1785 a seceding congregation from the Bristo United



Presbyterian Church which in 1885 became the congregation of Broughton Place United Presbyterian Church considering leasing on a temporary basis a chapel formerly used by the Methodists until something more suitable could be purchased. But the proposal was violently opposed by the congregation on the ground that the building had been used by Methodists and was therefore *"unfitted for worship ..... the stone and lime had been infected with Wesleyanism and would thereby taint and corrupt the worshippers!!!"* (12)

#### SCOTTISH METHODISM DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA

When Wesley died in 1791 there were 1179 members of the Methodist Church in Scotland (13) . By 1819 the total stood at 3,786. Membership reached its peak in 1819 and by 1826 the Wesleyan Establishment considered abandoning the cause in Scotland. Adam Clarke believed that apart from Edinburgh and Glasgow, Methodism had no hold in Scotland and that if the other chapels were sold it would only mean a slight loss in the total membership and that the savings thus effected could be better deployed elsewhere. Jabez Bunting was of the opinion that:

*"I think if Methodism in Scotland were put to auction, it would be the best thing that could be done with it, except Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth and perhaps Ayr. We have spent more money in Scotland than we can account for to God....."*(14)

Even in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the work required large subsidies from the rest of the Connexion if it were to carry on. However, the situation in Scotland was little different from Britain as a whole.

The options open to Methodism at this time were to sell up and get out; to strengthen the number and quality of preachers in the hope that the denomination might become more viable; to convert Scottish Methodism into a low cost exercise suitable to the financial abilities of the local people. In the end nothing was done. The result was that the more able preachers were not willing to come to Scotland from England knowing that they would have all the problems to wrestle with. The situation persisted through the 1820's and 30's.

The end of the 1830's and the beginning of the 1840's saw some improvement in the situation and despite problems with the Shoebothamites in Dundee and seceding trustees in Edinburgh the preachers began to send back to the Conference more optimistic reports regarding the Scottish work. Capital debts on buildings, thanks to the new central Chapel Fund had reduced significantly. There were larger numbers of members and adherents and a consequent increase in income through the pew rents.

Scottish Methodism has been distinctive from the rest of the British Connexion in different ways and at different times. In Wesley's life time there had been rows about whether there could

be services in Methodist Chapels at times which coincided with the hours of public worship and over the frequency of Holy Communion. In England the 'Sunday Service of the Methodists' contained the prescribed manner for the administration of the Communion, whereas in Scotland, the Districts adhered to the order of administration of the sacraments sanctioned by Mr Wesley for use in Scotland, which was the same as that prescribed in the Church of Scotland. In Scotland Communion was administered quarterly, in England monthly. Gowns and bands and the title Reverend and Minister of the Methodist Church were permitted in Scotland long before they were allowed in England. From Wesley's time on there was a demand for a separate Scottish Conference.

#### METHODISM AND THE DISRUPTION IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The Wesleyan Methodists supported the Evangelicals at the time of the Disruption. They were, at the same time, considering their own position regarding Church and State politics and the nature of ecclesiastical government. Before 1843 they had supported the Scots evangelicals and petitioned Parliament in their support saying that the lack of legislative action would mean the inevitable secession of a large part of the Kirk. The Conference of 1843 encouraged financial support of the Free Church. There were close relationships between Jabez Bunting, the Secretary of the Conference and Thomas Chalmers. Bunting said that he had

*"been refreshed in spirit by the Scotsman's ministry and had been particularly impressed by his views on the management of religious causes in urban areas" (15)*

After the Disruption the Scots expressed their gratitude for the support of the Wesleyans and Thomas Guthrie promised that if ever the Wesleyan Methodist cause had its back to the wall they had only to send across the border, and they will find Scotland, perhaps hands not so full of gold, but hearts full of love and tongues as loud. (16)

However, during the Wesleyan Reform troubles in 1849, the Free Church leaders were put on the spot and were only able to offer lukewarm and for the most part private support for Bunting's position.

At the time of the Disruption Bunting received regular reports that the pro Free Church stand was creating a favourable climate of public opinion for Methodism in Scotland. But some of the Methodist leaders were concerned that his support on the one hand might ~~called~~ into question the need for a continued separate Methodist identity in Scotland and on the other that there was a danger of overstretching the financial resources of the movement. John Maclean believed that the distinctive role of Methodism in Scotland was to moderate the severity of the influences of Calvinism, to moderate the hostility of the established Kirk and

to act as a breakwater to the ferocity of anti-episcopal wrath.

He expressed the matter thus;

*"Let us give as much money to the Free Church as we can spare from our people - but don't let us hand **them** over too."*(17)

Chapter 5 tells some of the late 19th and 20th century development of the church through the history of the three Methodist churches which are relevant to this study.

In 1989 there are 48 Methodist churches in the Methodist Synod in Scotland. They are located across the country in the shape of a figure '2' from Inverness, along the Moray Firth, south to Aberdeen, south west through Dundee, Perth and Stirling and east from Girvan through Paisley, Glasgow, the Central belt and Edinburgh through to Dunbar. The Church at Eyemouth is under the authority of the Newcastle Synod.

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(1) p 183 T.C.Smout A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950, London, Fontana Press, 1987

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(4) p202-203 T.C.Smout A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950, London, Fontana Press, 1987

(5) Ibid p 203

(6) A remark quoted by John Bowmer, Archivist to the Methodist Church in the forward to Edinburgh Methodism 1761-1975 by Alan Hayes, Published by the Author, Edinburgh 1976.

(7) Jackson T. (ED) Early Methodist Preachers, 3rd Edition. Methodist Publishing House, London 1865 cited p 1by Hayes Edinburgh Methodism 1761-1975

(8) p 30 Hayes Edinburgh Methodism 1761-1975 , Published by the Author, Edinburgh 1976.

(9) Ibid p 59

(10) Ibid p73

(11) Ibid p 71

(12) Ibid p 21

(13) p4 Alan Hayes and David Gowland Scottish Methodism in the Early Victorian Period, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1981

(14) Ibid p 5

(15) Ibid p 14

(16) Ibid p 20

(17) Ibid p20

## CHAPTER 5

### THE THREE CHURCHES

The main source of information for this section has been the written records of these churches as it is contained in the minutes books relating to these three churches. The major sources used were the Leaders' Meeting minute books and the Church Council minute books. These are likely to contain an overview of the main activities of the church and the associate organisations.

The preservation of these minute books is somewhat patchy. The Leaders Meeting and Church Council Books for Dunbar are available intermittently until 1932 and then there is no record until 1974 to the present day. A search of the Circuit Archive, the Circuit safe, former secretaries' personal papers and the Scottish Records Office has failed to trace them. It has been possible to fill the gaps to a very limited extent by using the minutes of the Annual Trustees Meeting at Dunbar and through conversation with Mr Sholto G.D. Millar who has served on the Leaders Meeting and the Church Council for most of the missing years of written record. It is, of course under these circumstances, impossible to give exact dates and statistics, but as the main purpose here is to reproduce an overall impression of the life of the church so that later chapters can be set in context and not to compile a detailed history per se, this, it is hoped, is not too serious an omission.

The preservation of the relevant Minute Books for Nicolson Square is also incomplete, especially from 1885 to 1915. Whilst it may be possible that the lack of records are due to much of the Leaders' Meeting business not being worth recording, it is most probable that like Dunbar they have been mislaid or somehow lost for ever.

Somewhat surprisingly the Nicolson Square minutes are not as detailed as might be hoped and with the exception of matters of property and finance they only give the barest account of the general life of the society. This account of the history of Nicolson Square has used the minutes as a reference framework and has relied, with the permission of the author, on Dr Alan J. Hayes' book, Edinburgh Methodism 1761 - 1975 : The Mother Churches (1) for most of the detail together with reminiscences of some of the members.

By comparison, the written records of the Central Hall at Tollcross are complete with the exception of the period 1951-1954. This, in itself, is not without interest as this covers most of the period of the ministry of the Rev. Levi Dawson which was not altogether a happy one for minister and congregation. Possibly the loss of this minute book is the result of a hand, unseen, to draw a veil over the episode.



## NICOLSON SQUARE

John Wesley did not preach in Edinburgh until his second visit to Scotland in April 1753. By 1761 a regular group were meeting "in a large room, lately an Episcopal Meeting House" (John Wesley's Journal ). Land was eventually purchased in the Low Calton for the building of the Octagon Chapel which was opened for public worship sometime during 1765. Worship continued here until 1815. There was an interruption in 1777 when the roof was found to be in such a dangerous condition that the congregation had to cease services until repairs had been carried out. This area of the city was one of building development and gradually the Octagon Chapel became surrounded by tenements and commercial buildings and by 1813 it was completely surrounded and overlooked by other buildings. So much so that it was described by Valentine Ward, the then chairman of the district as "a dirty, dark dangerous hole, which reflected dishonour on the whole Connexion." (2) The property was sold to the Commissioners of the Regent Bridge on 6th May 1815 for £1,900.

A site on which to build a new chapel was found on what was then the southern outskirts of the City in Nicolson Square. Work started in 1815 on the new building and was not completed until a year or so later at a cost of £5,500. For several years there were various legal battles with adjoining owners and continuing financial difficulties. The Nicolson Square Chapel was opened for worship in May 1816. The debts incurred in the building of the

premises, which included the Manse were considerable. In 1828 it stood at £5106. The debt was finally cleared with a payment of £300 in 1862. Immediately after the debt was paid off the Trustees embarked on a series of improvements. The Chapel was repainted, pointed and cleaned and one of the first pipe organs in the city was installed in 1864. The total cost of the works, excluding the organ was £579 in all.

It gives an indication of the character of the congregation in these days of the second half of the nineteenth century to note that one of the members was Sir James Falshaw, the first Englishman and the first Methodist to be Lord Provost of Edinburgh (1874). When he retired from Civic life he was vice-chairman of the North British Railway Company and was associated with the Tay Bridge disaster.

By 1875 the financial affairs of the chapel had improved so much that the Trustees felt able to purchase a small area of ground adjoining the chapel. Further property was acquired in 1910 on which the Epworth Halls were subsequently built. The Epworth Halls were built partly to meet the accommodation needs of the growing Sunday School (227 scholars and 25 teachers) and partly to mark the centenary of the building of the chapel. Once again there were families of some wealth associated with Nicolson Square. The Taylor Family gave £1,000 towards the £6,000 cost of the fitting out of the Halls and the furnishings and the Trustees were able to give a personal promissory note of £1,000 against a

loan from the Star Life Assurance Company. The outbreak of War delayed the opening of the Epworth Halls which was performed by the Rev. A.J. Seaton from the Methodist Central Hall at Tollcross, Edinburgh, on the 4th November 1916.

An examination of the Ministers and the Society during the period before the Great War will reveal something of the ambience of the Nicolson Square Society. In the mid nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism was at the height of its autocratic powers. Its authority and discipline could be brought to bear against the high and lowly within the Connexion alike. Thus it was that William Willan, the chairman of the Edinburgh and Aberdeen District, had to face charges of "intentional falsehood" of giving good references to the Archbishop of York to a Mr Allen, formerly a Wesleyan Minister who was seeking admission to Deacon's Orders in the Church of England. He gave these references knowing that two months previously Mr Allen had been under a charge of drunkenness and had avoided investigation of the charge against him. Mr Willan was acquitted of the charge of intentionally misleading the Anglican church but had been indiscreet and accordingly was removed from the Chair of the District.

Within the Nicolson Square society, Messrs Robb, McKay, Turner, Forrest, Wells and others were brought before the Leaders Meeting at different times during the 1850's charged with bringing the church into disrepute through their involvement with the Wesleyan Reform Movement, which involved on one occasion "distributing

bills at the Chapel gate on Sabbath mornings". At first they were warned by the Leaders Meeting to cease their activities and when they did not their membership of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was withdrawn. A Mr Bladworth, in a discipline case that started with the Leaders Meeting and ended up being considered by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference meeting in Newcastle in 1862, was removed from the office of Class Leader for charging "with dishonesty and falsehood the four adjudicators of the Prize Essays, on their method and intention of awarding the prizes". (3) He was not, however, expelled from the Society.

The Nicolson Square Chapel enjoyed a position of privilege and some prestige within Edinburgh Society. In 1877 they were visited by General Ulysses S. Grant. Following his final victory in the American Civil War, and his term as President, he was on a visit to Edinburgh and as the Scotsman at the time reported "....Yesterday forenoon, General and Mrs Grant, the Lord Provost and Lady Falshaw....attended divine service in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Nicolson Square." (4)

Not all were people of power and influence, however. The minutes (5) record a detailed Poor Roll. This was a list of poor members of the Society who were to receive money or money and bread. Some received ½ ton of coal or an equivalent cash allowance. The list continued to be kept until 1882.

The Rev. Enoch Biscoombe was appointed by the Methodist Conference to be the minister at Nicolson Square in 1895. Two years later, however, there was a disagreement between the Senior Circuit Steward and the Quarterly Meeting as to whether he should continue as minister. The dissatisfaction seems to have centred around his ability as a preacher and there followed an instruction to the Invitation Committee that before a superintendent was appointed in future, the Circuit Stewards, or two members of the Quarterly Meeting should hear him preach.

There is a lack of written records about the society from 1885 to <sup>which was</sup> 1900, a time of steady growth in the numbers in the District as a whole, <sup>^</sup> ~~and certainly~~ By 1910 there was still a great deal of optimism about the future of Nicolson Square. An article at the time (6) reports :-

*"... The future of Nicolson Square is hopeful. True there are problems which still have to be faced. Aristocracy has moved away and its former haunts are now thickly inhabited by a population amongst which there is a splendid scope for mission work... The past history of Nicolson Square has been great and gracious, and there is every ground for believing that when in the future history comes to be recorded, it will have to be said that its latter glory has been even greater than its former...."*

Despite the lack of detailed information, financial records of the church indicate that on several occasions in this period before the Great War, payments were made to or received from the Sunday School, Mothers Meeting, Boy Scouts and the Band of Hope. The widow of the man who founded the Band of Hope at Nicolson Square is still alive at the date of writing this thesis and was

able to recall some of its activities and members. Mr Mitchell, the founder, was a civil servant who moved from London to Edinburgh to join the staff of the then recently established Scottish Office. His wife and daughters were the only helpers that he had and when he died in 1940 there was nobody at the church willing to carry on. Mr Mitchell was the son of German nationals who had become British citizens before World War I. He anglicized his name from Mikelbacher to Mitchell because of the wave of anti-German feeling during the war. His widow still feels that the members of the church of that time were party to this hostile sentiment and gave the family no support at all. Most of the children who attended the Band of Hope came from Potter Row, a slum area near to the church.

During the Great War the Women of the Church formed themselves into a working party and between 1914 and 1919 met on Tuesdays from 3-30pm until 9-00pm to knit and sew comforts for servicemen. In that time they produced:

1344	pairs of socks
533	body belts
206	scarves
52	helmets
104	pairs of gloves
10	waistcoats
15	jerseys
14	shirts
280	property bags
5550	men's bags
200	felt gloves (7)

Troops stationed in Edinburgh were invited to a soldier's club which met on the church premises.

The twentieth century history of Nicolson Square is punctuated with financial crises as far as maintaining the church fabric and the ministry is concerned. In other areas they were generous givers and even during the Great War donations included <sup>gifts to</sup> Belgian Refugees in Scotland, Home and Overseas Missions, the Royal Infirmary, The Salvation Army, Methodist Schools, The War Emergency Fund, The Seamen's Mission, St. Dunstan's Hostel and the Sudan United Mission.

In the years following 1915 when the records resume there was the ministry of two outstanding preachers at the Square, Maldwyn Hughes, and W.L. Waights. The Poor Roll had continued through the closing decades of the 19th century and six members were still in receipt of assistance. This was the time when the new Halls were occupying much of the attention of the Leader's Meeting but money does not appear to have been a significant problem and regular payments were made to the Trustees for this work. The Society seems to have been flourishing up until 1914. But, by the time that the First World War was only two years old there is evidence of severe decline and the Circuit Stewards were unable to balance their books.

Late in 1920 the envelope scheme was adopted, to include both pew rents and the Sunday collection. The two day bazaar raised £900 for the reduction of the debt on the circuit account, the Manse Trust Account and for other work. The basement of the church was no longer used by the Sunday School who had moved into

the Epworth Halls and was converted so that it could be used by a newly formed mens club.

In the inter war years there were some prominent Edinburgh families represented in the Nicolson Square congregation. The wealthiest families had pews at the front of the church which were boxed in with high backs and sides, the door to these pews gave them the appearance of loose boxes and they were often referred to disparagingly as the stables. Seated in these pews were the Chief Constable of Edinburgh, Miss Taylor, The Carghills who owned the Broxborough Hotel. Also there were The Christies, famous Edinburgh Jewellers, The Clarks and The Downs who owned and ran two of the exclusive dress shops on George Street and The Clarendons who were cap makers. Also in the congregation at the same time was Mr Charles Nightingale a leading Edinburgh solicitor and Mr Fruin who was the equivalent of what today are known as Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. A well known member of the church was Mr. T. R. Todd surgeon at the Royal Infirmary.

This wealth of undoubted business and administrative talent no doubt, in part, accounts for the large committees at Nicolson square devoted to raising money for Overseas Missions and the National Children's Home and Orphanage together with fund raising committees for all manner of church and charitable purposes. It does not account for why the church was always short of adequate funds for maintenance of the property.



Such influential people also, in some part accounts for the clash of personalities which occurred from time to time. There was one such incident which took place on the 21st February 1923, very similar to the Bladworth affair of 60 years previously. Mr Bruce complained about the spiritual work of the church. In particular he called into question the dancing which had been allowed at the Sunday School Social, but which had been disallowed at the choir soiree. All dancing was detrimental to the work of the church, according to Mr Bruce. The Sunday School Superintendent explained to the Leaders Meeting that the dancing had arisen spontaneously and that he was not prepared to ban it. The matter came to a vote and Mr Bruce lost by 3 votes to 11. (8)

Finances were becoming increasingly difficult and in 1923 the deaconesses appointment was only saved by a grant of £50 from the Sunday School and a grant of £200 from the Shipley-Hunter Bequest.

1925 saw the departure of the Rev. W.L. Waights and the arrival of Rev. A.E. Whitham. Evidently the old fire had not gone out at Nicolson Square for during his ministry, the eminent preacher, Whitham, was summonsed to the Leaders Meeting and told to improve the content and quality of his sermons. Another indication perhaps that at least a section of the congregation were used to getting value for money and would not accept what they considered to be less than the best that a person was capable of.

The finances continued to deteriorate. The annual request from the Salvation Army was declined with regret in 1933. The policy of paying high fees to visiting Ministers for special and specific services was deprecated and whilst the Stewards did not want to seem "failing in generosity" it was suggested that travelling expenses and a simple allowance only should be paid.

The activities of the church during the 1920's and 1930's included:

- Young Men's Club
- Boys Club
- Girls Club
- The Choir
- A Men's Study Circle - to consider social work in the area
- Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides
- The Band of Hope
- The Ladies Sewing Meeting

These were in addition to the church committees and work parties to raise funds for Overseas Missions and the National Children's Home and Orphanage.

By the end of the 1930's the Leaders Meeting was concerned about the decline in church attendance. However, before any plans could be made to halt the decline the Second World War intervened and nothing else is heard about courses of action for reversing the trend.

By 1940 a long standing tradition was ended in that the cases for financial assistance of the poor members of the congregation

would be considered by the minister and not in front of the open Leaders Meeting.

In 1943 Mr Charles Nightingale was elected the Vice President of the Methodist Conference.

The immediate Post War years saw renewed concern over the falling attendance at the Sunday services. By 1946 the membership had fallen to 212, in that year alone 47 members moved to other churches and 77 members were recorded as having ceased to meet. This seems to have been the bottom of the trough for by the May of the following year the improved attendance was remarked upon by the leaders meeting. There were also 67 students attending Sunday worship.

Dr. Franz Hilderbrandt, a close friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was appointed minister of Nicolson Square in 1951. He challenged many of the ways into which the congregation at the Square had settled. He revived the practice of issuing Quarterly Tickets and restored the use of the Book of Offices. These, he instructed, should be given out by the class leaders but not to people who never attended the church although they were able to do so. The existing membership roll was brought up to date after a considerable period of neglect and finally stood at 200. In 1952, the covenant service was held for the first time since 1933.

The fabric of the premises was in a poor state of repair. No maintenance had been carried out for eleven years. £1075 would be required over the following two years, the total sum being £2500. This large sum was raised by a combination of an odd job scheme by the scouts and guides, a bazaar and gift day, a choir concert, teas, talks and the covenant scheme. At an early stage, some members of the church thought that help should be sought from the Central Hall trustees and other churches, both inside and outside methodism. Not all agreed, others being of the mind that the society should do its utmost from within before seeking out side help. Dr. Hilderbrant was not too much concerned about the financial side of things, being firmly convinced that this support would be forthcoming in time, once poor attendance and apparent apathy of the members in regard to the spiritual state of the society had been attended to.

The Leaders Meeting of October 1952 saw the need for the society to put its own house in order, and that there was a need to give more attention to the meaning of membership. The question of members who had ceased to meet, and the urgent necessity to attract additional members was uppermost in their mind.

Dr Hilderbrant's stay was a short one and he left in 1953 to take up an appointment at Drew University in the USA. That Summer the restoration and renovation work was well underway and it was hoped that notwithstanding a freak storm which damaged the building, it would be opened again on September 6th.

The task of completing the scheme and sorting out the finances which had now risen from the original £2,500 to £7900 fell to the incoming superintendent, Kenneth Bloxham. It was imperative to improve the weekly giving of the congregation, especially as it was also clear by now that a new heating boiler was required. The old power of the Trustees was still manifest at Nicolson Square because the Leaders Meeting discovered that the position of the hymnboards could not be changed without their permission.

The consolidation of society and premises was continued by J. Cyril Downes. This was a time of change in the church, particularly in terms of membership. The local population was moving away to new housing schemes in the city and the congregation was becoming one which was gathered from the outer edges of Edinburgh. There were many birds of passage and the Square which had started life in the respectable part of town was now very much a downtown church. What had once been a very populous area saw its people moved out and away to the new peripheral housing schemes. This was particularly noticed in the youth organisations which went into rapid decline from this time on. The 1950's and 1960's also brought other problems. This was the time of redevelopment proposals and for many years there was great uncertainty as to whether Nicolson Square would disappear in a new university/commercial development planning for the south side of the city. The deteriorating economic situation of the early seventies together with the increasing emphasis on the retention of historic buildings ended these proposals. Nicolson

Square received a grade "A" listing as being a building of Architectural and Historic interest in the early 1970's.

There was hardly any work amongst young people by the end of the 1970's. There is no mention of any of the uniformed organisations in the deliberations of the Church Council. For a while a youth club was reformed and lasted until 1982 since which time there has been no provision for young people at Nicolson Square apart from the Sunday School. From the early 1980's onwards there has been a problem with finding members of the church willing to serve as Sunday School teachers and an attempt to find a youth club leader so that a youth club could be started once again had no success in 1986.

For many years Nicolson Square has been the home of the Edinburgh Methsoc and one of the circuit ministers is appointed by the Conference to have oversight of Methodist Students at the two Universities and various Colleges of Higher Education in the City. They have been a significant section of the congregation at Nicolson Square and one of their number is annually elected to the Church Council.

At the beginning of the 1980's the Church Council began to think seriously about the role of Nicolson Square and how to make the best use of its premises. For many years the Epworth Hall had become a burden on the church, it was expensive to maintain and the church had few organisations which were able to make use of

this suite of premises. For several years there had been short term lettings and annual lettings at the Edinburgh Festival. In 1982 the Epworth Hall was let to the Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (SACRO) and remains let to them to this day at a rent of some £6,000 per annum.

The large basement area of the church was also causing concern. There were severe problems with dry rot. Money had to be raised to eradicate this problem and at the same time the Church Council began to ask how this area of the church could be better used. The matter was referred to a small committee who eventually brought back the suggestion that the basement of the church could be turned in to a community centre. The church set about raising the necessary money to finance the scheme for the alterations. The drawings for this had been prepared by two members of the church, one of whom is a Structural Engineer and the other an Architect. This scheme is presently being considered by the Manpower Services Commission.

An experiment in worship was tried in 1982 and became known as "The Long Sunday". Those who joined in the experiment came to church at 9 o'clock on Sunday morning for classes and discussion groups, followed by a break for coffee and the main service at the usual time of 11am. This was followed by a church meal. The experiment was repeated on four occasions but in the end was abandoned because, whilst it was felt to be worthwhile, it did not enjoy the support of the majority of the congregation.

The main regular organised activities of Nicolson Square today are :-

The Choir

The Sunday School

The Epworth Club

The Epworth Club exists mainly for retired people and is run along the lines of a luncheon club with a speaker. It was born out of the failure of the Women's Fellowship to attract members on winter evenings and a day time organisation was thought to be more practical. "Square Walks" are a summer event at Nicolson Square. Members arrange walks in Edinburgh and East Lothian for any member of the church who wishes to join in. There are House fellowships and Study Groups, informal fellowship lunches in members homes and monthly church lunches.

In recent years a significant number of newcomers to the Nicolson Square congregation have moved to Edinburgh because of their employment, particularly with the Universities or the Civil Service. The recession of the 1980's slowed down this incoming movement so much so that since Christmas 1987 six families, all connected with the University or Civil Service have moved away from Edinburgh and no new families have moved in.



The membership at Nicolson Square is 161 and the average morning congregation is 75 people.

#### DUNBAR METHODIST CHURCH

Over the door of the church, which stands in Victoria Street, Dunbar, there is a plaque which reads,

Erected 1764  
Enlarged 1857  
Renovated 1890

In 1755 a troop of Dragoon Guards who had been serving in Flanders came to Dunbar, then a Garrison town. Amongst them was a group of men who had been under the influence of the Moravians. Once settled in the town they hired a room and met together for prayer and Bible Study every morning and evening. A number of towns people began to join their meetings and to join the society. Two of the towns people who helped with the formation and development of this little society deserve special mention. One was Thomas Rankin who as a young man had come under the influence of the original soldiers from Flanders and later was to emigrate to America where he became a pioneer of Methodism in that country. The other was Andrew Affleck, tenant of Chesterhalls farm, who remained a member of the Dunbar society for over 50 years. It was he who gifted the land on which the church was built in 1764. (10)

Nine Trustees are named in the first Trust Deed of the property and they included John and Charles Wesley. The church was quite small, the outside walls being whitewashed and the interior plainly furnished. The original church occupied that area where the pulpit and organ are now to be found. After his tenth visit to Dunbar on May 17th 1770 (he was to make eleven more visits, the last being in May 1788) John Wesley wrote in his journal, "In the evening I preached in the new house at Dunbar, the cheerfullest in all the Kingdom."

The small congregation struggled to survive until the arrival of the Rev. Duncan McCallum in 1817 when the membership increased quickly. McCallum, a highlander, could preach in Gaelic as well as English. However, by 1844 the society was again in trouble and the Methodist Conference proposed that the minister be withdrawn from Dunbar and the church closed. However, other counsel prevailed and it was decided to give the church one more chance, <sup>under</sup> ~~under~~ the ministry of a young Scot, Alexander McAuley. It was during his ministry that the congregation grew so much that the old building was no longer large enough and in 1857 additional ground was purchased from the Earl of Lauderdale and the original building enlarged.

By 1880 the membership had fallen to 17 members and once again closure seemed certain. In one last desperate attempt it was decided to send a bright young man to Dunbar. He was the Rev. J.N. Barret Houldsworth. Within a short time he had enlivened

the congregation and endeared himself to the whole town. The congregation <sup>also</sup> grew, ~~this time to over flowing~~ the enlarged building and further extension and renovation became necessary.

During this renovation the present oak pulpit and the stained glass windows, which are such a feature of the church, were installed. Both the pulpit and the windows were originally in St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. They were removed from there in 1872 when that building was restored. There is something of a mystery why they ended up in Dunbar and whether any of this is connected with the spelling mistake in the word "RESSURRECTION" (sic) in one of the windows.

Barret Houldsworth's ministry in the town ended in a tragedy which profoundly shocked the town. On the afternoon of August 10th 1892, the well loved minister was drowned whilst bathing in the sea near the rocks at the west end of the town. The news of his death was received with a widespread grief and as a mark of respect and affection the stone over his grave in the Parish churchyard was subscribed for by the children of the town. There is a tablet to his memory on the east wall of the Methodist Church.

But the work which he started carried on and in 1909 a new hall was built on to the east wall of the church. During both the World Wars this hall was used for recreational and educational

purposes by servicemen and women stationed in the adjoining barracks.

By the turn of the century the membership numbered 72. Many of the families associated with the church were fisherfolk living in the streets round the church, others were fish process workers, farm workers and small shopkeepers. There were evidently several poor families connected with the Society, in March 1908, 8/10d was paid out of the poor fund to the District Nurse for services which she had rendered to the Brown family.

(12) In 1915 a request for financial help for a family linked to the Abbeyhill Church in Edinburgh, and part of the same Circuit, Nicolson Square, was reluctantly turned down on the basis that "no contribution to any church outside our own can be made on the ground that occasion might arise when demands would be made on the fund for deserving cases connected with Dunbar Church".

(13) . By 1922 there was not enough money in the poor fund to help all those in need in the church. (14)

the

Money has always been a problem for <sup>the</sup> congregation and over the years there were numerous rounds of Jumble Sales and other fund raising efforts just to meet the day to day running expenses of the church. When asked for a day's collection to support the work of the Methodist Church's National Children's Home and Orphanage in June 1915, the Leaders Meeting felt unable to accede to the request "owing to the demands upon the resources of the church" (15)

In an attempt to raise extra money for the church, a Ladies Work Party was formed in 1924. Initially this was to raise funds to enable the church to be redecorated. This organisation continued to operate until at least the 1930's although they complained from time to time that they were not receiving the support that they expected from the members of the church neither did they always feel that they were getting the necessary financial reward for the goods which they produced.

An annual fund raising event which was also the social occasion of the year was the Soirée in December. These had become established in the life of the church by the turn of the 20th century and continued until 1939. The soiree was an evening's musical entertainment with items by the choir, organ recitals and guest soloists. Families were involved with providing refreshments in their family pew. Seat rents were in operation at Dunbar until the introduction of the Envelope Scheme in 1921. Each family invited guests, who paid for their ticket to the Soirée, to join them in their pew. Between the pews was placed a baker's bread tray. This was covered with a table cloth and the families best china tea service and, of course, the home baking.

There were other regular social events during over the winter months in the years of the first quarter of the 20th Century. Usually these would have a devotional or educational purpose behind them. On Monday 13th November 1916, The Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Hughes was invited to lecture, and a silver collection for

church funds was taken. The theme for a similar evening in October 1921 was "Up and Down the Tigris" - a lecture given by The Rev Leslie Duncan, minister of the Church of Scotland at Cocksburnpath. So popular was this evening that the Parish Church Hall had to be booked for the event. (16)

A succession of ministers tried to encourage midweek devotional services. In the winter of 1914 the minister led what he chose to call "a series of discourses". In 1919 the theme was "Topics of the Day". The theme for the winter of 1920/21 was "Chapters in the life of John Wesley". Open air services were held in the summer of 1916.

In 1915 the minister, again during the winter months, conducted special monthly services on a Sunday evening at which he hoped "to attract people to the church" (17) Similarly there were lantern lectures after the Sunday evening services in 1933 "to entertain a class of people who were not in the habit of attending church". (18)

There was a weekly prayer meeting at the church on Thursday evenings at 7-30pm and later this moved to the home of a Mr Thompson in a small house near to the church. There were proposals to hold cottage meetings at the neighbouring village of Spott, but whether these ever took place is not revealed in the written records of the church.

How much support there was for the midweek meetings is not known. Perhaps they catered for only a few of the members of the church. Certainly there was only a luke warm reception in the Leaders Meeting on 14th September 1916 to the minister's suggestion "that a meeting of the members should be held at the beginning of October to rally them for the winter work. A conversation took place but no decision was arrived at"(19) There is no record of the meeting ever taking place.

The society at Dunbar is some 25 miles from Edinburgh and has always operated its own version of the standing orders which regulate the holding of office within the society. There was an incident in May 1927, the details of which are not recorded which led to the resignation of Mr R.A. Robertson, a member of the leaders Meeting and Miss Stark, for many years a Society Steward and Secretary of the Leaders Meeting. This prompted Mr Sholto Millar Snr to propose that whilst "deeply regretting the circumstances" of their resignation that the church "break with long established precedent at Dunbar, and conform in greater degree with the letter of Methodist Law and annually appoint, observing the rule that no one shall remain in office for above three years except in exceptional circumstances" (20) Perhaps he had in mind the fact that a previous Society Steward, Mr Bertram had held office for 18 years (1897 - 1915). Mr Millar demitted office as a Society Steward after a three year term of office in 1918. Later his son, Sholto Millar Jnr was appointed as a

Society Steward and in 1986 had held that office, continuously for 25 years, having already served in that capacity on previous occasions. The reason for this was the reluctance of other members of the society who were prepared to hold office. Mr Millar retired from all his offices in September 1987. He was Senior Society Steward, Church Treasurer, Class Leader, and Property Steward. He was also for many years the Treasurer to the Church Trustees. Apart from one year when he went to live in Edinburgh he has held office in one capacity or another since 1925.

Geographically the Dunbar Society is out on a limb and the Leaders Meeting felt aggrieved that not only were they responsible for paying the travelling expenses of their minister when he went to preach in Edinburgh but they were also responsible for the expenses of visiting preachers to Dunbar. These could be costly to the society for it was the custom of preachers to be put up at the Roxburghe Hotel, there being no satisfactory public transport to Dunbar from the Capital on Sundays. They must have been a good source of revenue to the Roxburghe for on one occasion in 1925, the owner Mrs Hitchman, cancelled the bill of £3 for a weekends accommodation. Grateful thanks were sent by the church. (21)

From 1926 onwards there is repeated concern about the failure of the church to attract teenage children. the Leaders Meeting noted that "when children leave the Sunday School they drift



away from the church, and are lost to the church" (22) The minister was authorised to set up some kind of "Youth Activity". The Wesley Guild was formed in 1926 with this aim in mind and met until the second world war. From the late 1940's there was an Epworth Club for young people. The members were not children. Most of them were working men and women in their late teens and early twenties. The members of the Epworth Club requested a meeting in 1950 with the Leaders Meeting and the Trustees to discuss the approval of dancing at their club night. This request seems to have been readily agreed to.

Dancing may not have been a social concern for the members but gambling was and on the 9th May 1926 a Special Leaders Meeting passed the following resolution:-

*"...this meeting affirms its strong opposition to the adoption by the State of any method which would utilise betting or other forms of gambling for revenue purposes such as the imposition of a betting tax and also the creation of a new vested interest by the licensing of bookmakers".*

A copy was sent to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the local Members of Parliament asking them to vote against the proposal.

During both World Wars the church was used every day except Sunday by troops stationed at the Barracks across the road as a place for reading, writing and recreation. In the first World War refreshments were given to the soldiers once a week. Entries

in the Trust minute books confirm the the Hall was also used for short periods by the military for instructional and educational purposes. For a five month let in 1916 the church received £19/10/0d from the army. (23) At the outbreak of the first World War the Parish Church proposed that intercessory services be held once a week, the Leaders Meeting at the Methodist Church expressed "the hope that the day and the hour fixed for these services would in no way interfere with the Wesleyan Church Service" (24)

The years immediately after the Second World War saw the development of a large youth club at the church which ran until the mid 1950's. The Church Choir and the Junior Children's Choir ceased in 1952. Since this time there have been spasmodic attempts to establish Youth Clubs which have never lasted for more than a year and in 1960 there was a Women's Guild meeting at the church but it did not re-commence in 1961.

The Sunday School functioned until Easter 1984 when there were only two scholars and it was abandoned.

Apart from the monthly prayer meeting and Bible study and church committees, there were no other mid week meetings of any kind at the church held on the church premises. In 1986 a Church Lunch Club was formed, meeting on Wednesday's and attracts about 12 people.

The membership of the church as at October 1986 was 59 members and the average Sunday Congregation was 20.

#### THE METHODIST CENTRAL HALL, TOLLCROSS.

In the years leading upto 1888 Methodist worship and witness in Edinburgh had been centred in and around the Nicolson Square Church. However, by the 1880's the Nicolson Square church could no longer minister to the needs of Methodist people in the new building developments of villas and tenements which were taking place in the West End of the city and neither was it suitably located to take an active part in the evangelism of this new population.

The Rev. T.T. Lambert, minister of Nicolson Square, was also the Chairman of the Methodist Synod in Scotland and under his chairmanship a Committee was formed to build a new church in the West End. The Methodist Synod in Scotland had at its disposal the Borrie Bequest which amounted to a disposable sum of £100 per year and this it was decided, "after much discussion and much hesitation to earmark for three years in order to provide the stipend of a young, unmarried minister whom the Conference should be asked to appoint to begin the work in Edinburgh". To avoid the difficulty which Methodist Constitution and Practice and Discipline created about the limiting of ministerial appointments to three years only it was decided not to bring the

new church under the jurisdiction of the Nicolson Square Quarterly Meeting but to set up a separate organisation under the direction of a special committee and the Chairman of the District. In 1888 the Committee was appointed and instructed to secure as quickly as possible suitable premises for the beginnings of the new Mission.

The Committee were not all of one mind as to what would form the basis of suitable premises. There was a suggestion that they should rent two rooms in a dwelling house knock down the partition walls and begin there. Jackson protested feeling that if they had started there then the cause would have died. He was looking for something bigger and more daring. In this he had the support of Lambert. After several weeks of searching for suitable premises a hall occupying a central position was found to be available. This was the Albert Hall, Shandwick Place, "a place of entertainment, not of the highest class, and with a general air of tawdriness about it." (25) The Mission was only the Sunday tenant of the Albert Hall and so could not convert it into anything that resembled a place of worship. The natural lighting was poor and the heating and ventilation were inadequate. To provide a pulpit, Jackson records they had to rig up a small temporary platform on the stage making room behind it for a piano and the choir who sat with their heads in the slope of the drop curtain which shut off the paraphernalia of the music hall stage. The minister had to go straight from the street to the stage platform as there was no vestry and the

stewards had to count the collection in the chair bottoms after the congregation had gone.

The Albert Hall, however had its advantages. It was well situated on one of the main roads of the city and only a few hundred yards from the west end of Princes Street. Access to the building was easy, there were no steps and the unecclesiastical look of the entrance was not off putting. As there was only one entrance, minister, office bearers and congregation came in and out by the same door and this led to a feeling of camaraderie and enabled strangers to be recognised and welcomed. Dr. Jackson relates that "I remember how in later years, when "the little one" had become "a thousand", older members would sometimes lament the loss of the "happy family" feeling that marked those first days..."(26)

The Mission opened its doors for worship for the first time on Sunday November 4th 1888. There is no record available as to how many people came to the services on that first Sunday but at the March Quarterly Meeting Of 1889 a membership of 50 was recorded this was doubled in an other year and by March 1891 201 members were returned. During this time a Sunday School was formed begun and one or two society classes were formed.

Jackson realised that the city of Edinburgh did not just consist of families but also young men and women living and working away from home; shop assistants, domestic servants, clerks, students

and so on. Whilst he was not opposed to the system of pew rents and the concept of the "family pew" he was astute enough to realise that the young unattached whom he hoped to attract to his services would not want and would not take a family pew and neither would they care to wait in a queue in the street until all the regular pew holders had been accommodated. If two or three of them wished to go to church they would want to sit together and without the feeling that they were sitting in the seats belonging to another. The announcement that all seats were "Free" was a welcome and attractive move. The early days of the Mission were also helped by the comparatively few Sunday Evening Services in the City. There was no attempt to draw people from any other church to which they were already attached.

The congregations during the winter of 1888/9 were about 80 or 90 in the mornings and about 200 at night. For the first Anniversary Service the Synod Hall of the United Presbyterian Church was hired and the guest preacher in the morning was Dr. Marcus Dods, professor of New Testament at New College, Edinburgh, and the congregation on that occasion was over 2000.

In 1890 there was a great Exhibition in Edinburgh and the city was crowded with thousands of visitors attracted to the city. Dr Jackson advertised a series of sermons on the subject of Judas Iscariot. At the first service so many people arrived that many had to be turned away as they were unable to gain admission to the Albert Hall. George Jackson called a meeting of the office

bearers of the mission and they decided that for the duration of the summer they would try and hire the Synod Hall from the UP Church. This they were able to do and on the third Sunday evening the Synod Hall with seating accommodation for over 2000 was full. As a result it was decided to extend the lease after the summer and for the Mission to remain in the Synod Hall until their own premises could be found. They remained in the Synod Hall until 1901. The membership of the Mission Continued to grow.

March 1889	50
March 1890	100
March 1891	201
March 1892	290
March 1893	357
March 1894	393
March 1895	527
March 1896	608
March 1897	666 (27)

These are the annual returns of members of the church. The congregations were much larger than these figures might at first suggest. During this period for much of the year 1500 to 2000 hymnsheets were printed weekly to meet the needs of the congregation. In addition to the usual activities of a Methodist Church of the time other activities were brought into being; a Saturday night Temperance Public House, a Sunday evening At Home for young people and a men's meeting.

A visitor to the Mission reported that the work had been brought about by the sheer preaching force of George Jackson. This

visitor wrote in an article in the Methodist Times, October 23rd 1980, " There has been no social work. By newspapers and placard he has called the people to hear him and when they have come they have come and come again." On the Sunday when the visitor was present the preacher was the President of the Conference and the visitor also commented that the congregation "were for the most part regular church goers. They were well dressed, know how to behave themselves....and when a well known hymn was sung could altogether dispose with their hymnsheets"

The visitor went on to remark that "it was abundantly plain that Mr Jackson had not reached the lapsed masses" Nevertheless the congregation was estimated at 2000 although it was noted that less than 100 stayed for the prayer meeting.

In nine years the Mission had gathered one of the largest Methodist congregations in Edinburgh or even in Methodism. The Mission Committee felt that if the work were to expand still further then suitable premises must be found. Even if a suitable site could be found there was still the problem of how the money was going to be raised. The costs of securing a site, preparing plans and the actual building of new premises were estimated to be in the region of £50,000 in addition to the day to day running of the Mission. The Connexion realised that the raising of £50,000 was beyond the means of Scottish Methodism, let alone Edinburgh, and commended the project to English Methodism. But



that meant in order to make the commendation effective, George Jackson travelling widely to make the case for the Mission. Week after week as soon as his Sunday duties were over he would pack a bag and travel the country making his appeal to who ever would listen. In the Methodist Times for April 12th 1900 there is a report about a dinner at the Liberal Club to meet the Rev. George Jackson from Edinburgh. George Jackson is reported to have said at the dinner "that his business was preaching, not raising money - so he would like them to help so that he could get on and mind his own business"

Help for the mission came from Mr John Cooper, who in the 1890's was the City Engineer for Edinburgh. He was a Presbyterian but from time to time had joined in the sunday evening services and had become aware of the problems which the Mission were having in finding a place of their own. He was willing to share his inside knowledge of the City's redevelopment proposals with George Jackson. The City Council, it transpired, wanted to build a new tramway depot at Earl Grey Street not more than a quarter of a mile away from where the Mission was presently meeting. The problem from the Council's point of view was that the access to their site was not wide enough for the passage of Tramcars. In the way stood a building used as an Episcopal Day School and some other property. Cooper recommended to the Council that they should purchase the school and assured them that after they had taken what they needed for the road he could find a buyer for the rest. The buyer being the Mission. This then left the

problem of the adjoining property occupied by a baker. The baker was prepared to move out if suitable alternative premises in the same locality could be found. A suitable site was found but it was occupied by five tenants on leases. Jackson says that "Three of them accepted a bribe and went. The other two were obstinate. One of them was a sweep ....the other a bird fancier. A bigger bribe and presently they also went, and we had our site." (28)

The land deals so far had cost the Mission £20,000 ,building and other costs amounted to over £30,000. The original contractor went bankrupt when the new building was only partly completed. A second builder was found to complete the work and finally the new Mission building was completed and officially dedicated and opened on Thursday October 17th 1901. The total scheme had cost £53,000.

At the first mission Anniversary 1250 men attended the afternoon meeting and the evening congregation numbered 2,300 and many others having to be turned away. The average congregation in the first year in the new premises was 600 in the morning, the evening congregation rarely dropped below 1800.

The activities begun in the Albert Hall and the Synod Hall continued in the new premises. The Sunday School and the Choir have existed from the beginning in the Albert Hall to the present time. In the early days there was a strong emphasis on

Temperance work. There are no references in the minutes of the Leaders Meeting to suggest that the Temperance Hotel begun at the Synod Hall continued at the Central Hall but there continued to be a Temperance Society for Adults which continued until 1933 together with weekly meetings of the Band of Hope Union which met continuously until after the Second World War. The leader of the Band of Hope obtained permission in 1903 for the use of a room for their orchestra to practice in. Mr Hardie and Mr Hutchieson were appointed to the Municipal Temperance Committee (1910). The Leaders Meeting in 1904 had given its support to the "10 o'clock closing of Licensed Premises Campaign" in the City. Members of the Hall involved in the "Catch My Pal" movement were given approval to form a meeting to be held on Tuesday evenings in November 1910 and this organisation through which members of the church sought to bring in their workmates ("pals") to hear about Christian Temperance ideals existed until 1940.

The new Central Hall, like its predecessor, the Albert Hall, continued to be a place which attracted the unattached young people who had come to the city to find work and in the autumn of 1908 the members of the Boys Club decorated and prepared one of the rooms as a parlour for girls who were away from home. This work was under the direction of Sister Edith who in the same month also founded the Women's Meeting.

The long term objective of the minister and leaders was that the weekly social activities of the Hall would attract people onto the premises and once settled into the habit of attending then there was the possibility of being able to to improve them spiritually, morally and culturally.

The Sunday School, "Catch My Pal", and The Band of Hope which are referred to above are three examples of what might be called "attracting" organisations. There were many others. Perhaps the most ambitious was the Saturday Evening Concerts. These were in existence in 1903. At this time the Central Hall was the largest auditorium in the west end of Edinburgh and it was not until the Usher Hall opened towards the end of 1913 that the Mission had any serious competition in this field. The Saturday Concerts were held once a month and they were no amateurish small time event. They attracted large audiences who came to hear and see some of the leading singers and musicians of the day. Over the years names like Greville Nash, Frank Titterton and Isobel Baillie appeared at the Central Hall, Tollcross. As one member of the Hall said, "We had all the posh singers up". Season tickets were sold. In January 1907 the first Agent was appointed by the Mission to book artists and arrange the concerts. A sandwich boardman was employed (and insured) by the Hall to advertise these concerts in the street in addition to newspaper advertisements.

At one time it looked as if the new Usher Hall would mean the end of these concerts because once they started their season of public concerts it became increasingly difficult to book performers. However, the Saturday Concerts continued until 1935 when they finally ceased. Once again, part of the aim of the concerts was to provide a high quality performance available to people in the west end together with the hope that once the concert goers were on the church premises they might find the mission's other events and services, which were extensively advertised in the concert programmes, sufficiently attractive for them to join in the activities and work of the Mission. So popular were these concerts that there often weren't seats available for the stewards and permission was eventually given by the Leaders Meeting for extra chairs to be brought in to the main hall for their use. In the winter of 1913 there was so much trouble with overcrowding that the Leaders Meeting discussed trying to arrange for "Two or Three policemen" to be provided to help with the crowd control. (29)

The Saturday Concerts were not the only form of entertainment at the Hall. There were "cinematograph exhibitions" these appear not to have been completely trouble free. An outside exhibitor leased the Hall for these performances and the Leaders eventually stopped them in 1907 after difficulty in collecting the rent and concern about "the nature of the entertainment". They did resume in 1909 under more direct control of the Mission and after the Hall had been altered to meet the provisions of

the new Cinematograph Act. In 1903 weekly Gospel Lantern Slide Lectures were held for a time but there is no indication of the popularity of this event.

In addition to the letting of the Hall to the cinematographer there were numerous other lettings to outside organisations. These included the use of the premises by the United Free Church for their Assembly in 1905; a concert for the Queen's Unemployment Fund; Dr Barnardo's Home; the Edinburgh Central Musical Association for rehearsals. On 29th January 1909 the main hall was let to the Coopers who were on strike in order for them to stage a concert to raise money; it was proposed that they should have the use of the hall free of charge but the majority view of the leaders meeting prevailed and they were charged £7-7-0 as "it would be a bad precedent to give it free".

(30)

There was little attempt at what might be described as active witness and evangelism although in 1908 and 1913 there were halting attempts at open air services at the junction of Bread Street and Lothian Road. Unlike the Manchester and Salford Mission the Edinburgh Central Hall never engaged in large scale social work. The Manchester and Salford Mission (1885) had a long tradition of serving the urban poor and under the general philosophy of the Wesleyan Urban Missions of "personal contact with the fallen poor" It is estimated that before 1914 they dealt with 40,000 cases a year and by 1920 had a staff of 30-40 workers. (31) An outside comment on the Edinburgh Mission was

that they never had sufficient money to engage in "full social work". (32)

The emphasis at the Edinburgh Wesleyan Methodist Mission lay in the direction of "self improvement". The various Temperance organisations to improve personal and family social habits; a Penny Savings Bank introduced in 1910 and which continued to encourage thrift until its closure in 1932; Scouts and an attempt to set up a Boys Brigade which foundered when the leader was unable to take on the work at the last minute; Boys and Girls Clubs with wide ranges of activities including gymnastics, wood carving and later a boys football team. There were the various Class Meetings which met on the Hall premises for spiritual guidance and mutual care; the Sewing Class, a time of getting together for fellowship as well as making items for sale in aid of Foreign Missions. The Hall had two libraries. There was a Sunday School library which was in existence in 1902 and a Men's Meeting Library. The Men's Library, as it came to be known was initially managed by a committee of six men and received its funding from a charge of 6d per member per year and a grant from the church of 6d per member (at least in its first year (1910)). The men's library did not always have a smooth history, dogged with the frequent resignations of librarians, demands to make it more useful and missing books (80 books missing in 1911). There was a Literary Society which joined with the newly formed Wesley Guild in the middle of 1914.

The Men's Sunday Afternoon Meeting which had been started by George Jackson at the Synod Hall could still draw a large gathering and an average attendance of 1500 was not uncommon at this time. Mr Jackson used "to lay the Bible and the newspaper side by side and speak upon questions of social and national importance, social purity, temperance, righteousness and the like". (33)

George Jackson had never enjoyed robust health and in the Autumn of 1905 he suffered a bad breakdown. Before leaving on a cruise to the Canaries to help revive his failing health he wrote to the Chairman of the District saying that he had decided to resign the Superintendency of the Mission at the Conference of 1906.. On the first Sunday in September 1906 he began seven years ministry in Toronto and the Rev'd Frederick Benson became the new superintendent. For seven years he exercised a ministry to an ever increasing congregation at the Hall.

On the whole, the years up to 1914 were years of great activity and confidence at the Mission. Numbers were increasing and the range of organisations was growing.

The Hall minute books reveal nothing of any discussions which went on within the Mission about the justification or otherwise of the Great war. Most organisations confined themselves to the practicalities of the situation. The Ladies Sewing Meeting stopped sewing for Foreign Missions in order to make up parcels



for men of the church on active service and with the permission of the Leaders Meeting a "War Fund" was established to meet their expenses. In October 1914 it was observed that the attendance at the Sunday morning prayer meeting had become "meagre". The National Anthem was sung in the morning and blinds were drawn at night.

Much continued as before. The youth organisations, the Wesley Guild, the women's meeting, the mens Sunday afternoon class. Even the Saturday evening concerts continued albeit at reduced fees to the artistes. The Mens library still had 54 members and still books were going missing, this time a further 70-80 books were unaccounted for. More books were purchased and a new Committee elected. The Missions own Penny Savings Bank became linked with the Scottish War Savings Committee.

In July 1915 a Soldiers Rest Room was opened, for which the charge was 1d. This did not prove to be a very popular venture and soon closed. It re-opened in April 1916 when the stationing of the Royal Fusiliers in Edinburgh produced over 100 soldiers at the morning service. Sunday teas were provided for Soldiers during 1917, but these ended when the church was informed by the chaplain that there were now very few Methodists left in the regiment in the city.

After the Great War ,a feeling of despondency pervades the discussions of the Leaders Meeting. The Women's Meeting, which

until the end of the War had met weekly was struggling and experimented with monthly meetings. Class meetings were poorly attended and they were united in 1916 on Wednesday evenings with the understanding that if this was not successful they would be discontinued for the present time. The Leaders Meeting for 1st May 1918 notes that the Men's Meeting numbers are in decline. The Hall lets over the winter of 1915/16 were not worth maintaining and the Saturday Concerts had proved to be a failure. The Wesley Guild ceased to meet. However, one successful new venture was a kindergarten which was started in association with the City Council for 30 - 40 children and officially opened on the 14th April 1918. This was the first in a long succession of kindergartens and play schools to be held on the top floor of the Mission.

During the inter war years, many of the old organisations continued. These~~se~~ included the choir, the Sunday School, the Band of Hope, the Scouts, the Women's Sewing Meeting, the two libraries, the Chess Club, the Penny Savings Bank, "Catch My Pal", the Temperance Meetings and the Saturday Evening concerts. Some enjoyed more success and growth than did others. An After War Committee was established to look after the Roll of Honour, welcome those returning and to help the dependants of those who had died.

In the second Half of the 1920's there were some 24 organisations associated with the Mission meeting mid-week in

addition to the class meetings. The class meetings met at this time on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Many of the organisations were of a recreational or social nature and included an Orchestra, Girls Club, Boys Club, Young Lads Football club, Badminton Club, Rambling Club in addition in the 1930's a Tennis Club and Music and Drama Club, Girls and Boys P.E. Classes, Scouts and Cubs, Guides and Brownies. There was so much available that a teenager having left school could have a full week of social activities at the Hall. One such teenage girl told me "I was at Church on a Monday night helping with the Band of Hope, then we had a girl's Class following that. Tuesday night I was at church in the gym class, Wednesday I was at Guides, Thursday I was at choir practice. On Friday I was at the Wesley Guild, Saturday I had to myself. Sunday I taught in the Sunday School in the morning, went to the Bible Class in the afternoon and sometimes I didn't feel inclined to go back to church again at night."

The work of evangelism proved to be difficult. There were halting attempts at open air services over the years which were never popular with members of the congregation and at the Leaders' Meeting on 11th June 1930 an appeal was made for more support from members of the congregation. The Sunday afternoon men's Meeting which had been so strong in numbers before the War had so little support that it ceased to function after the end of 1918 and was replaced in 1920 with what was called a "Peoples Sunday Afternoon Service". By 1929 these, too, were waning in

popularity and some thought that this was due to too much political content in the meetings and not enough bright music. To try and remedy this it was decided that the minister would take the first meeting each month and speak on a topic of "important public questions which have been in the mind of the public." (34) This cannot have enjoyed much public support either because they were discontinued in 1931. In 1919 the weekly devotional meeting was discontinued, the Leaders Meeting resolving to concentrate on the Sunday morning prayer meeting.

In September 1920 the Wesley Guild was discontinued and were replaced in the spring of 1921 by a series of Workers Educational Association Lectures meeting on Monday evenings with classes in English Literature and Economics. The fee was 5/- per session. The Guild enjoyed several revivals over the next thirty years or so and met for the last time in 1959. Also in 1920 the Leaders Meeting met a deputation from "Catch My Pal" who complained of apathy on the part of church members. (35) By 1922 the choir was reported as "struggling" but this seems to have been a temporary phase because they continued to lead the worship and in 1939 the choir at the suggestion of the Trustees Meeting and with the agreement of the Leaders Meeting were permitted to wear gowns for the first time. There was only one vote against this in the Leaders Meeting.

The Hall, during this period, was used to house a wide variety of events. In 1922 Wilfred Grenfell gave an evening lecture and

in October of that year there was a series of Organ Recitals. By this time there was a Central Hall Orchestra and they put on concerts in 1922 and 1923 after which time they appear to have been disbanded. Nurses from the Edinburgh Hospitals rented the rooms in the Hall to rehearse their Pageant for the Silver Jubilee in 1927 and in 1927 the Tramway Choir practiced at the Hall. The Saturday Night Concerts were getting into difficulties by 1923; there was competition from the concerts in the Usher Hall and as one member of the Hall commented there was a new "craze for the picture palace". (36) They continued with mixed fortunes for several more years because it was felt that "souls have been saved through coming first to our concerts" (37) and then joining in with other activities at the Hall, including the Sunday services and that this was far more important than any "money return". There were suggestions that they should be changed to film shows and for a while the services of a paid agent to arrange the concerts was abandoned. The Saturday Night Concerts finally ended their long run in 1932.

The finances of the Mission were a constant problem. In an attempt to increase the weekly offering the envelope system was introduced after much discussion in 1920 and replaced a sort of unofficial "pew rent" system which the Hall had used since its opening to supplement the usual Sunday income. It would seem that whilst pews were not actually rented and thereby reserved in the accepted way, members of the Central Hall who were able

paid a contribution over and above their weekly offering and this was still known as a rent.

The funds of the Hall were supplemented by Jumble Sales, Sales of Work and the Anniversary Collection as well as numerous special events and concerts.

Up until 1928 help to the poor and needy from the "Poor Fund" had been by way of repayable loans. Sometimes these loans were only made against some form of security such as an insurance policy already held by the person in receipt of the loan and on at least one occasion when the loan was not repaid the policy was redeemed by the Leaders Meeting. In 1928 the loans outstanding amounted to £34-0-2 and in that year only £3 had been repaid. After the report of a special sub-Committee under the chairmanship of the Superintendent, Dr. H. Watkin-Jones, it was finally decided that in future grants would be made from the Poor Fund and that the practice of making loans would cease. On the whole these grants were made to people who had some connection with the Hall. In 1932 Sister Phoebe called attention to the fact that due to the worsening economic situation in the country and in the City in particular there were necessitous people outside the actual membership of the church who were applying for financial help and as a result of her appeal it was agreed that she should be the treasurer of a separate Benevolent Fund to assist such cases. (38)

It is probably no accident that this development took place during the superintendency of the Rev. Gordon James of whom Mr Charles Nightingale said, he had "an interest in social problems and (an) intense conviction that the Gospel is the only solution." (39) In The Report on Anniversary Arrangements 1933 Gordon James wrote an article entitled "The Tragedy of Unemployment" in which he highlighted the despair through which the unemployed went and the humiliation to which they were subjected by the means test -

*"For a time what is called the 'dole' keeps him and his family going. Then comes an application to the Public Assistance Committee. His private affairs are investigated, his self respect affronted. He can manage to get food -the bare minimum, shelter -of a kind - but there is no margin for clothes, or for any of those extra refinements to which he has become accustomed. He ceases to go to church, because he feels he cannot pay his way. He drifts." (40)*

In response to this situation Gordon James and the assistant minister Reginald Grose, together with ministers of other denominations in the Tollcross area had founded the Tollcross Unemployment Club which met at the Central Hall, the Central Hall being just across the road from the offices of the Ministry of Labour and hence a place to meet while waiting to claim unemployment allowances. The club offered a comfortable place to meet, clothing and recreation including a football team for which a trainer was eventually engaged. This club ran from 1932 until the middle of 1938.

Even during the years of the Depression the social activities of the Hall continued and the Report for 1933 lists the following activities:-

- Open Conferences for questions and discussion
- Bible Classes for young men and women on Sunday afternoons
- Sunday School at 11-30am., the scholars joining in the first part of the Morning Service
- Celebrity and other concerts on Saturday evenings
- Clubs for young men and girls
- Wesley Guild
- Rambles and Recreational Clubs
- Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Cubs and Brownies
- Ladies Sewing Meeting
- Play Centre and Roof Garden, daily for little children
- Bright Hour for Women, weekly
- Girls' League for Missionary and Social Efforts
- Band of Hope, weekly
- Temperance and Social Welfare Work
- Fellowship and Group Meetings.

The Rev. Eric Baker was appointed Superintendent of the Mission in September 1935. It was during his superintendency that the Central Hall was re-decorated and altered in 1938. These alterations included a reduction of several hundred seats. This was also a period of development in Youth and Recreational Activities at the Hall. Three of these organisations are worthy of note.

The first is the Drama Club which staged several full length productions, involving many members of the church as actors, scenery painters, stage hands and production staff. In "The Wandering Jew" so demanding was the title roll that no less than three separate actors were required to play the part, David Fender, Bob Smith and Joe Reid.



These years were also the beginnings of the "70 Club" which was formed from members of the Young People's Organisation in September 1938. This club took its title from the Biblical account of Christ sending out the 70 disciples. The aim of the club was to provide christian fellowship for the young people and also to be a focus for local missionary and social work. It achieved its first aim in quite a remarkable way but members of the club readily agree that very little missionary or social work was ever undertaken. The 70 Club was open to all at the Hall under 35 years of age and in order to belong to any of the other social activities at the Hall like the Drama Club or the Tennis Club membership of the 70 Club was obligatory. The members of the Club met on a regular basis at the Hall on Sunday afternoons for discussions and devotional activities, enjoyed tea together and then attended the evening service.

Thirdly, there was a rapid expansion of work at the Hall amongst teenagers. There were several clubs meeting weekly for boys and girls of different ages. These youth clubs were to be the foundation for a great expansion in youth work which took place shortly after the War.

The years of the Second World War were difficult years for some of the members of the Central Hall. Eric Baker was a pacifist and whilst he never preached a sermon of a pro-pacifist nature from the pulpit his views were clearly known. He was very unhappy when in September 1939 there was an attempt to

requisition part of the Hall, against his wishes, by the military for the medical examination of recruits. He was successful in his opposition and the Hall was never used for this purpose. His Men's Class which met at the Manse often discussed the pacifist position and became a source of strength and fellowship to the young men of the church who had taken such a stand. There followed some years of antagonism towards these men from other members of the congregation who held an opposing view often manifesting itself in not infrequent petty and unpleasant incidents such as the return of Christmas presents, refusal to give hymnbooks and hold doors open - the small change of voluntary organisations.

Towards the end of 1940 and at the instigation of the Mission staff a Canteen for Forces had been started at the Hall. The initial organising committee consisted of Rev. E. Baker, Rev. M.O. Williams, Sister Mary along with a number of lady workers, including Miss H. Sibbald, together with Mr Bratton as business manager and Mr Bunn as secretary. The Canteen was open, at first, on week days for hot meals, games and recreation. Eventually it was open also on Sundays from 3pm on the understanding that the games were withdrawn as far as possible.

Much of the life of the Hall continued as normal, or what passed for normal during those years. Most of the organisations continued to meet, some amalgamated, some moved their times of meeting to avoid the blackout. Some like the 70 Club expanded

with new sections for girls and boys. The girls section "taught useful subjects and religious instruction" (41) Anniversary Sundays came and went although in 1941 there was no birthday cake owing to the shortage of fruit. (42) The Sunday School Council discussed the question of children's addresses in the Morning service and recommended that the Leaders Meeting requested that these be included as part of the worship. Reluctantly the superintendent and the staff agreed reserving the right of freedom of action in special circumstances. There is no record in the minutes of the Leaders Meeting that the moral issues of war were ever discussed by them as an official body. They did discuss various practical items like the effects of the blackout, timings of services, air raid precautions. They organised parcels and letters for members of the congregation serving in the forces and financial and practical assistance for those in need especially in cases where families were in severe difficulties after the death on active service of a close relative.

In September 1943, Eric Baker was replaced as superintendent by the Rev. J. Morrison Neilson. But before he left he instigated a thorough review of the membership roll which had not been carefully examined for many years. He formed a committee to examine thoroughly the membership records as a result of which, after concentrated visitation, a large number were listed as "ceased to meet" after every effort had been made to bring them back had failed. When he first came the roll stood at 947

together with 22 on trial and 28 junior members. When he left the revised roll was 837 full members.

As the War came to an end plans were laid for the welcoming back of men and women who had been away. A Committee consisting of the Minister, Sister Mary, Miss Elsie Smith, Messrs Butcher, Hamilton, Hargroves, Hill, Strongman, Stuart and Brain. They considered that the church must take into account those who had maintained their christian faith throughout their period of absence, those whose attitude in the past had been somewhat nominal, but for whom the experience of war had deepened their faith and those whose faith had not stood the test. They recommended the visitation of the homes of all people returning from the services by members of the church. This visitation was carried out in the latter months of 1945 and every returning member of the forces was presented with a hymnbook.

Life slowly returned to normal after the War and under the guidance of Mr Neilson the work and witness of the Hall continued. The 70 Club was in existence until the mid 1950's when it ceased to operate. The Badminton Club closed in 1956. There was a Toddlers play group, a day nursery, and the following organisations were in existence by the time of the Church Anniversary in 1957:-

- Sunday School
- Thursday and Friday Classes
- Band of Hope
- Youth Club
- Tennis Club
- Women's Bright Hour

Young Wives Club  
Young Peoples Class.

1958 saw the start of a Football Club. But perhaps the most remarkable development in the life of the Central Hall during this period was the Youth Club which arose from the existing clubs for boys and girls at the Hall.

By the middle of 1945 the mid-week work with young people, started in the 1930's, was so extensive that a full time youth leader was appointed. The first was Miss Naomi Dickson, later she was followed by Mr J. Wood and then by Mr Nairn. Mr William Warwick was the assistant leader in charge of the Boys Sections and Miss Winnie Hardie, the girls. At first the Club met on the premises at Tollcross but before long it was clear that this was no longer big enough for their extensive programme. Premises belonging to the Education Committee of Edinburgh City Council became available. These had at one time been a school, a dinner school, and also been used by the North British Rubber Company.

By the end of 1945 the club had moved into its new premises at 183 Fountainbridge. Many church members were involved over the following years in helping to run the various sections of the club. In 1949 Club sections and numbers attending were:-

Monday	Junior Boys	30
Tuesday	Junior Girls	16
	Senior Girls	15
Wednesday	Senior Boys	25
Thursday	Junior Boys	30
Friday	Senior Boys	
	And Girls	40
Saturday	Senior Boys	
	And Girls	30

At its peak the Club had over 125 young people within the organisation.

The activities were many and varied and included Arts and Crafts, Drama, Indoor and outdoor sports, talks and discussions. They entered citywide competitions in sports and drama. The Youth Club won the Youth Club Drama Festival with the play "Ludgate Hill". The boys club at one time ran two football teams in the Lothian Amateur League and one of the boys played for Scotland in a series of Boys Club Internationals. They also put on two dramatic shows a year at the Hall in addition to the competitions.

Whilst moving to Fountainbridge relieved pressure of space at the Central Hall the distance meant that some contact with the other activities of the church was lost and on occasions concern was expressed that the ordinary church members were not showing much interest in the work of the Club. To help overcome this to some extent there were open nights and competitions with other Hall groups like the Badminton Club.

The club had to return to the Hall when the Education Committee eventually required the premises at Fountainbridge for their own purposes.

The years after the war were characterised by two concerns of the staff and members of the Hall.

One concern was that of trying to make an adequate response to the effects of the War at home and in Europe. In 1949 the minister attended the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Germany and there made links with his opposite number, the superintendent of the Bremen Methodist Central Hall. As a result of this encounter links were established between the two churches and in December of that year six parcels of food and eight parcels of clothing, all collected and donated by the members of the Central Hall, were sent to Bremen to help them with work amongst refugees in their city.

The second major area of concern, which in fact, was taken up much thought, time and effort over the next two decades was the "spiritual state of the society."

Mr Neilson was deeply concerned that attendances at worship were not as good in the autumn and winter of 1945 as they had been in 1944, the last winter of the War. The falling membership and decline in numbers attending Sunday worship were also the concern of Mr Neilson's successor, the Rev. Reginald Barrow.

Various attempts were made to enliven services with sermons on themes of current interest and Guest Services which included the Sine Nomine Singers and the James Gillespie's High School for Girls Choir were introduced in 1963. But still the numbers attending worship slowly declined.

A creche was started on Sunday mornings, meeting first in the ministers office and then later in a room previously also been used by the Stage School of Dancing run by Mr and Mrs Spurgeon.. A club for young mothers began. The choir was in good heart and in 1958 the Organ was completely rebuilt.

It was in the 1960's also that two experiments were tried under the guidance of the then minister Mr Ashplant who had succeeded the Rev. Levi Dawson. Mr Ashplant encouraged an experiment with buses to bring in members of the congregation on a Sunday evening. One bus ran from Drumbrae and the other from Sighthill. Buses were hired from the Corporation but it did not prove to be a success as there was little support from members of the congregation who lived along the route.

Much more successful was a Saturday morning Cinema in 1964. This regularly attracted an audience of between 200 and 300 children. In the first year Mr Warwick and the Society Stewards together with some students and other young people took responsibility for the mornings, Mr Ashplant choosing the films and organising and conducting quiz sessions. In the following year Mr McCann



was the projectionist and Miss Kathleen Wishart took responsibility for organising the stewarding. So successful was this venture in attracting people on to the premises that it was thought that it might be tried on occasional ~~S~~unday mornings also in the hope that some of the parents of the children would come along as well. Other counsel must have prevailed because this never took place.

Mr Ashplant together with the superintendent ministers of the Nicolson Square Circuit, Dr Downes and later Mr Corner, believed that the future of Edinburgh Methodism lay in one Edinburgh Circuit. It was Mr Ashplant's wish that the three circuits might become one by 1965. It may just be coincidence that Mr Ashplant went on an exchange to America in the summer of 1965 only to find that when he returned he had been stationed elsewhere. For the time being talk of an amalgamated circuit ended.

September 1965, therefore, saw a new Superintendent at Central Hall. He was the Rev. Alan Cliff. Now began a careful examination of the membership records to discover the true membership and to organise the church for the caring of its members, especially maintaining links with those who were too old or too ill to attend. He reorganised the classes and the District Visitors and during his time House Groups were established at Penicuik, Currie and Balerno, Corstophine, Tollcross, Newington, Joppa and other places.

The midweek activities at the Hall were busy and in the mid 70's the youth work alone included:-

- Sunday School
- Play Group
- Inters Club
- 1417 Club
- Young Adults Club
- Mother and Toddler Club
- Scouts and Cubs.

In addition the Leaders Meeting at this time regularly received reports concerning the work of The Bright Hour, Women's Fellowship, Women's Work, Christian Citizenship, Overseas Missions and "Crossfire". Crossfire was a group of young people under the leadership of Dan Paterson, later to be the Minister of Paisley Central Hall, which met on Saturday evenings to witness to other young people in a variety of ways.

In 1977 the Church embarked on a Stewardship Campaign which involved examining the role of the church and its resources in and for the future. One of the shops under the Hall, on a corner site, had become vacant and the idea was conceived of turning this into some kind of community resource. This became a reality in 1981 when the Crosswinds Community Centre was opened. The church received the help of an Architect who was a member at the Central Hall and funding from the Regional Council for the capital costs and assistance from Urban Aid. "Crosswinds" has a widely representative management committee drawn from the local council of churches, local government departments and the local community. The Centre, today, provides an Advice and Information Centre, Coffee Lounge, a day time Unemployed Youth Club, a

senior citizens lunch club, Club and Meeting Rooms, secretarial support for local organisations, together with local councillors and M.P.s surgeries. It is staffed by approximately nine full time employees funded through Urban Aid and a variety of different Job Creation programmes, and local volunteers. One of the problems over the years has been attracting sufficient volunteers and giving them effective training. There has not been complete support from all the congregation at the Hall for this project.

Today the work at the Central Hall is centred on the Sunday morning service where the emphasis is on preaching and music. There are difficulties in attracting and keeping young people within the church although recently a small youth club has been started on alternate Sunday afternoons. There are two women's groups, the Womens Fellowship and the Women's Meeting (formerly the Bright Hour) and a Tuesday Group for younger women (under 40's). The choir practice is an important spot during the week and there are currently three house groups.

There are numerous lettings to outside organisations of the rooms at the Hall including the National Association of Youth Orchestras who hold their festival at the Hall during the Edinburgh Festival. The seating capacity at the Hall is mid way between the Queen's Hall and the Usher Hall, the other two auditoria in the West End.

The membership of the Central Hall is 234 and the average morning congregation is 110 and the evening congregation 12.

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## CHAPTER 6

### THE CHURCHGOING LIFE STORIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

#### THE PARTICIPANTS

This chapter will allow the participants to speak for themselves and in so doing describe who they were and are as I explore with them phases in their church going experience throughout their life cycles. For all the limitations of my own study, which accepts that there was no follow up interview with the participants, it is an exploration which is relatively unusual in so far as most existing investigations are limited to either limited statements about churchgoing involvement in response to a questionnaire as was the case with the Life Style Survey or to the development of a snapshot of church going as it is at the present moment which was largely the situation in the Falkirk study.

Eighty three participants were interviewed over a period of eighteen months and this represents a sample of approximately 15% of those who attend on a regular basis one of the three churches which form this study.

The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds and situations. Some had spent all their church going years in one of the three churches which are focussed upon in this thesis. Some came from another Methodist church elsewhere in the United

Kingdom and some from Methodist Churches overseas. Others came into one of the three churches from another denomination. Some had been highly geographically mobile before arriving in Edinburgh and others had experienced several different denominations in the past.

In order to give this chapter some framework I will divide the life cycle experiences of the various participants into four phases: Childhood, Young Adult, Middle Age and Old Age. The phases are not intended to be tightly defined by, say, age, for example, and some of the participants have stayed in one phase longer than have others. The phases are simply a method of structuring into manageable sections the lifestories told by the participants.

## A. CHILDREN

### 1. CHILDHOOD

Of the 83 people who made up the sample:-

1. 50 spent their childhood within the Methodist Church and of those 50, 13 have had their lifetime association with one of the three churches of this study.
2. 19 spent their childhood in the Church of Scotland
3. 14 spent their childhood in other denominations or no denomination at all:-

Church Of England.....	3
Presbyterian Church of Ireland.....	2
Baptist.....	1
Congregationalist.....	1
United Presbyterian Church of Scotland..	1
English Presbyterian.....	1
Salvation Army.....	1
Welsh Methodist.....	1
Casual Church Connection.....	2
I.L.P. Sunday School.....	1

Some, therefore, have spent their entire church lives within one of the three churches. Some began within Methodist Churches other than these and another group commenced their cycle elsewhere.

#### a. THE FAMILY OF THE CHILD

The degree of parental, and in some cases ancestral, involvement vary from a high incidence of participation to nominal participation.

Some families were involved with a particular church building from its very beginnings.

*"When he was a young man (my father) had helped bring the stones from a quarry on the other side of the parish for the building of that Methodist Church and that was 1907/8" 70CH*



*"All the family were Methodists on my father's side. My grandparents founded the chapel, laid the foundation stone and everything and we always went"*79CH

*"My grandparents on my father's side laid the foundation stone of the new church and their name is on the wall."*33NS

Other families may not have been "founder members" of a local church, but nevertheless, there were strong parental associations and family involvement.

*"My father, father's father and great grandfather were all Methodists"*40NS

*"My father was just about everything in the church in sequence. I remember him being read out as a 'Poor Steward', which I thought had to do with his poverty. I thought that it was a shame that it had to be remarked upon."*29NS

*"My father was a a Chapel Steward and a Trustee....and my mother was involved in the women's organisations"*66CH

In one case a conscious decision was made by adult family members to transfer from another denomination to the Methodist Church during a participant's childhood:

"We came from Edinburgh to Dunbar. I'm the youngest of the family and there were six of us. Originally my father belonged to the Salvation Army and when we came to Dunbar he thought that the Methodist Church was nearest to the Salvation Army, so that<sup>is</sup> why my father joined. I was six so I went to the Sunday School." 6DB

For others the Methodist Association was the result of historical family circumstance:

"My paternal grandmother was a Methodist and so was my paternal grandfather. My mother became a Methodist on marriage. There was a major pastoral crisis which brought my father's father into the Methodist Church, namely that the children had some infectious disease and the Methodist Minister came and visited them and the Parish minister didn't. He said that he wouldn't darken the door of the Parish Church again." 22NS

Whilst for others a different kind of personality conflict was a decisive factor:

"I was about three....I don't know why I went to Central Hall. My father was originally Church of Scotland, but, my grandmother, in Fleet in Hampshire, objected to the views of one of the vicars they had, he was very snobbish, and they

*sent my mother to the Methodist church and when we lived in Brougham Street it (Central Hall) was very near."*76CH

Of these Methodist children 41 <sup>where</sup> were from families ~~were~~ both parents (or one if only one was living during during the participants childhood) attended church regularly. 5 were from families <sup>where</sup> ~~were~~ the mother only went regularly. There were no cases amongst my sample of father but not mother attending.

In those families <sup>where</sup> were at least one parent attended 23 of the Methodist children had a parent who held office in the church and in addition, four of those interviewed were the children of a parent or both parents who were what could be termed "professional Methodists". The mother and father of one were employed by the Methodist Missionary Society as a teacher and a doctor, respectively. Three (two male and one female) were the children of Methodist Ministers.

The remaining 4 had no regular family connection with the Methodist or any other church and were "sent".

*"We moved to an area in Plymouth which was two or three hundred yards from a Methodist Church.....so it was the natural place for me to be sent to Sunday School"*36NS

b. THE OLDER CHILDREN

The opportunities for personal choice begin to increase as the child grows older. The child is still under the decision making authority of the Adult. However what was once only adult decision-making becomes reinforced during later childhood by peer group influences.

Churchgoing was perceived in childhood by the participants as a normal thing to do. None of the interviewees admitted to feeling 'odd' or that it was an unusual activity to be associated as a Child with a Church or Sunday School:

*"It was the done thing in our district"*52CH

*"All the young people on the street would go to the Methodist Church"*37NS

And for many it was also enjoyable:

*"It was good fun"*83CH (cofs)

*"The activities we did were interesting"*82CH (cofs)

The importance of the Peer Group in reinforcing the pattern of church and Sunday School attendance is found in the following

example where the child did not find the activities at the Methodist Sunday School interesting or enjoyable in themselves:

*"I didn't care for Sunday School very much - the activities weren't challenging enough.....I wanted more to do and something to think about. I probably got more of that at home."*

*So why did you go?*

*"I used to meet my peer group"44NS*

And in a similar Methodist example, a male this time:

*"I don't know that I learned a great deal from my Sunday School but I must admit that the comradeship amongst the youngsters was quite good."16NS.*

Sometimes the peer group association was reinforced by the Adult decision makers in a reversal of the usual pattern . When this happens it is the peer group which is instrumental in establishing the church going habit and this is then reinforced by the Adult decision makers.

*"My elder sister went round all the churches in Edinburgh and she finally went to Central Hall and Benson was the*

*minister and she was taken with his dramatic style. Because she liked him she got mum and dad and the rest of us to go to the church and the sunday school" 72CH*

In one case the peer group of the child was the sole means of introduction to a particular church and Sunday school. In this particular situation the parents were casual attenders of the Church of Scotland:

*"I can remember being baptised. In the house. It was a Dr Harvey from Greenside Parish Church. He came to the house to Baptise me. I can remember being stood up on a chair. Then we went to a church in St. James.....from there we moved up to Marchmont and one of the girls on the next stair was a member of the Central Hall. She said would I like to come and I went." 48CH*

<sup>where</sup>  
In examples where parental involvement was casual, the peer group influence increases in significance in those cases where the Child already enjoys going to Sunday School. It may be, of course, that the Child likes going to Sunday School because that is where their friends are also to be found in the first place. Take for example two girls from Dunbar where the fathers never, or rarely attended church and <sup>where</sup> were the mother's attendance was also casual:

*"We all went to the Methodist Church, there was a block of six families and we all went to the Methodist Church" 12DB*

*"Most of them in the harbour area went to the Methodist. It was a good Sunday school" 8DB*

It is not surprising that where parental involvement is casual or non-existent, the activities for the child at church are not enjoyable and where the peer group is not to be naturally found in a church context that the Child finds activities which are not church related:

*"I went to Sunday School, but reluctantly, may be dodged it two or three times and came home and said I had been. I wasn't the only one."*

*"Do you know why you didn't like going?"*

*"Down at the foot of the village there was a lovely burn....and a big pond and we used to enjoy going down there in the summer and we had a raft and that more or less took us away from Sunday School. I was brought up in a mining village, it was football from morning to night, so that is what made me a footballer."11DB*

And yet if an enjoyable activity, like football, was found within a church context as it was for one Child in the Boys Brigade then church attendance becomes a choice option even though there was no family involvement and no peer group members who lived locally attended the church:

*"Did your mother and father go to church?"*

*"Well, they were connected, they were members but they really didn't go. That would have been an encouragement to me if I could have gone along with them, but I was sort of sent packing, not sent packing, but I went off myself.....The Sunday School was a fair bit a way from where I lived and that I felt was a disadvantage, some other support would have been reassuring to some degree with somebody to go with.....The Boys Brigade was very much part of the Church it always met at the Church. I was in the colour party so that was an attraction."*54CH

Another participant in the survey had an introduction, as a child, to Methodist Church life which was unlike any of the others. There were Adult decision makers but no initial enjoyment or peer group influences:

*"Well, we used to go to all sorts (of Sunday Schools). In those days your parents liked to get rid of you on a Sunday and so we were given our pennies for the collections which*



*we used to go and spend on sweets and then we used to go round to the Salvation Army. We went to the Catholic Church, my sister and I. We went out on our own. Our parents never went. We were just sent to get out of the way in those days"*

Eventually his mother left home and abandoned him and his sister who were eventually settled in the Methodist Church's National Children's Home and Orphanage at Frodsham.

*"...At first she was boarded out near Epping Forest, so I went to Frodsham on my own and then about six months later she came up as well."*

*"How did you feel as a ten year old, going to Frodsham?"*

*"Upto a point I was glad to go I was glad to go because my home, well my parents they never got on together..."*

*"Have you any idea why you went to the National Children's Home?"*

*"No I have no idea, I think it was through the influence of one of my aunts that brought it forward, when it was all discussed, but I enjoyed it....."*

Each Sunday all the children attended the Methodist Church which was part of the Home at Frodsham and the same was true when he later, at the age of 14, transferred to Harpenden.

*"Its a thing you are brought up in Methodism and naturally when you move to a place you go to the church that you have been used to."*27NS

## 2. YOUTH

### a. HABIT

The older a child becomes the more they begin to seek increasing scope for self determination and the possibilities of widening the areas of choice. But the experiences of the participants suggests that there is nothing uniform about this development and its progress varies from family to family and from child to child within the family.

The influence of the adult decision maker weakens as the child becomes more of a self determining person and there comes that point in the life cycle of church attendance ,when, as one interviewee expressed it:

*"Its difficult to know when habit stops and self determination begins"*15NS

Habit is one of the factors of maintaining early church affiliation:

*"Well there wasn't much else to do apart from go to church"15NS*

*"I think I went as a matter of absolute routine. It was part of our normal family life. that is what we had always done and one accepted it as at least as necessary as Sunday Lunch"18NS*

In the above example it was the habit of the family to go to church. In other instances it was not only the life style of the family but also of the community as a whole:

*"In Northern Ireland, it was very much a religious community. Everybody, regardless of who they were would go to church of some kind. There was a Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Church of Ireland, Baptist Church, Mission Halls all quite near. Plenty of them, plenty to choose from."28NS*

And if not the whole community then significant members of it:

*"Four families with eight and nine children all went. You wouldn't think of doing anything else in those days" But*

also admits, *"There were lots that didn't go. Five in the row of eight didn't go to church"*69CH

*"There were six or seven of us from the housing estate where we lived went regularly, and Girl's Brigade as well."* 53CH

When asked if there were any amongst his circle of friends who didn't go to church 16NS replied:-

*"Not amongst my immediate group. I think there was one lad who was Jewish and we never quite understood what he did. We regarded the R.C's as people who didn't go, well certainly not to the chapel, there was no hostility. No I think there were very few who didn't go."*

**b. ENJOYMENT AND PLEASURE**

What during this phase of the life cycle was considered by the participants to be a pleasant experience?

Peer group association is one of the elements:

*"It sounds silly to say it when we were so young but I think it was the community spirit."*44NS

The same sentiment was expressed by others:

*"I enjoyed the company"*82CH (cofs)

*"It was my pals who were in the same class at school"*82CH

*"I was in the Brownies, Guides, Youth Fellowship and choir"*83CH

*"All the young people on the street would go to the Methodist Church"*37NS

This was the time when one participant came into more than a casual contact with the church for the first time. The introduction was through his peer group and not through his parents :

*"I didn't belong to a church just a Sunday School (Presbyterian in Sunderland). I didn't get involved in the other things that went on at all.....I'd be 15 when the War broke out and most of the children were evacuated. We weren't and those who weren't met in homes because schools were closed and I met in a Methodist house. And that is how I became involved in the Methodist Church. The father was a local preacher....I became friendly with the son and went with him."*30NS

At this phase in the life cycle, for the participants, the church is the location where they met together and it is associated in the memory with "happiness" and "enjoyment".

*"I always remember the Sunday School being a happy place. You were always doing something. There was always plenty of activities.....I went to other churches for things like guildery parades - I was quite involved in that but I still came here an a sunday. So the Sunday School must have had quite a strong attraction for me - to keep me here, especially as a teenager."*66CH

*"Every night of the week I was at Central Hall. Band of Hope, tuesday. The Girls' League we had meetings and sales of work to get money for foreign missions. We had a wee dramatic group there, we did shows. Thursday was the Deaconess's class. Thursday was choir practice. Friday was the Wesley Guild"* 72CH

*"We lived in the church to my sorrow, because I missed a lot of exams going to the church. I never regretted it really. My life long friends - some of them still go to the church yet"*57CH

Contact with adults other than one's own family is also perceived as being an important element of what makes churchgoing an enjoyable and pleasant experience:

*"She was a very caring person. She always remembered if you hadn't been the week before...she didn't just know that you were 'so and so' who came on a Sunday. She knew a bit more about your family background and she worked hard to build up a Sunday School"*66CH

*"The children there had no shoes or socks and this suddenly hit me that I was a very privileged person. When I went back I never went back in my white hat or coat (boarding school uniform). .... I think I was at the age when I saw that people were more important than possessions and some of the people were enormously good to me.....the church was very attentive to me, even though I wasn't there. I supposed that influences me a lot.....".....so I think it was the characters and the way they paid special attention to me in amongst all the other general happiness"*15NS

The experience of one of the participants is unique amongst the others in this study. Her experience is closely bound up with the influence on her life of her mother. Her father died when she was 7 years old. When asked if she enjoyed going to Sunday School she replied:

"I was brought up by my mother to feel that (ie. like going to Sunday School). I was very impressionable as a child, anyway, and I believed what adults and certainly my mother told me, and my mother was a very strong lady from the character point of view. She tended to make things very clear to me that that was the way young people behaved. God was someone you must obey and if you wanted to be leading the right kind of life, satisfying life, then you must observe the right sort of rituals and that included going to church and going to Sunday School. So it never really entered my head not to like Sunday School."28NS

Her motives for going to church and Sunday School are a product of her childhood experiences.

"I always imagined that church going people, Christian people, were more caring people and I felt very vulnerable, having lost my father when I was 7. Having no brothers or sisters of my own I was always petrified that if anything happened to my mother I would be totally bereft of anybody and be "Little Orphan Annie" and put into a home and so I was always looking for caring people. I very rarely found any caring people but I was always looking for them. I thought the church was the place where you would find them"28NS



Throughout her life this participant continued to look for caring people to surround her.

## B. THE YOUNG ADULT

At this phase in the story the participants have not yet come together in any one of the three churches which are the basis of this study. I will organise their experiences under two broad headings:

1. Those who continue to live at home.
2. Those who leave home.

### 1. THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO LIVE AT HOME

From the information provided by the participants it would seem that the degree of involvement in church and church related activities varies more between individuals of the same generation than it does between the generations and for that reason I have not attempted to to analyse the material on an age basis. Take for example these two replies of women who left

school and started work, whilst still living at home. They are separated by nearly forty years in age:

EXAMPLE 1

"At twenty I became President of the Girls' Auxiliary.  
..... I was in the choir, there were seven of us  
(brothers and sisters) in the choir at different  
times....They also had a Women's Meeting and my mother was  
in it and when we came out of our teens we automatically  
went."

"(When working) most of my friends were in the  
church....five or six of us met, if we were all going down  
to the church we would all meet and come together

...Monday night was Girls Auxiliary night, tuesday was  
something else. A lot of time was taken up with practising  
with the choir for the 'Praise Service' when there was like  
a choir competition with other Presbyterian Choirs

...We went to the pictures the odd time.It would have to be  
something that didn't corrupt us; something which my mother  
approved of.

*...I don't know what we could have done. We never thought of doing anything else. There wasn't anything else to think of."*73CH

EXAMPLE 2.

*"I went into the Civil Service for a year, hated it, applied for Morfay House College, went there for three years and started teaching in 1967."*

*"Were you still involved at church?"*

*"Yes. Choir was one of the main things and Youth Fellowship ..... running the Youth Club, Dramatic Club a little bit."*

*"Where did most of your friends come from?"*

*"Made student friends, it was a bit Jekyll and Hyde. You had your friends at church and your friends at college ..... my main ones and the friends that I kept in touch with were mostly church friends"*82CH

If we now consider three women of the same generation from the same church:

Example 3

*"Our whole week was spent in church. Choir practice, youth clubs etc. and then if you had been to the Youth Club we went in a group to the dances."03DB*

Example 4.

*"Once you started work, what sort of things did you do in your free time?"*

*"Any money we made was always handed to my mother and as far as free time you see we worked at nights and often when we finished work at night we went around to the old bathing pool for a swim and that was more or less our entertainment. We used to have bikes and went for a cycle run"12DB*

Example 5.

*"Oh yes. We have always been church goers."*

*"What did you do in your freetime?"*

*"I used to go out on my bike, pictures."*

*"Where did most of your friends come from?"*

*"They were the friends I used to play with, but none that went to church I would think."*08DB

The two sets of examples (1 and 2) and (3,4 and 5) suggest that there is no consistent pattern in the degree of, what might be called, the intensity of church involvement. In the first set of examples there is something approaching 40 years between the age of the two participants in the survey and yet they spend a significant amount of their "free" time in church related social and other activities. The Church location is a meaningful context for them in which to meet and associate with their friends.

In the second set of examples we have recorded the impressions of three women of the same generation and with not more than ten years difference of age. In this case the church, as a base, for their leisure activities varies from one who recollects it as the place where she spent a substantial part of her teenage years and where she associated with her friends. In the second case the leisure time activities were found away from the church, although she continued to attend church on sundays and the third informant admits that not only was her freetime not spent within a church context but also her friends were not drawn from that source.

Common to all the above participants was that they continued to attended worship services on a regular basis at the church where they spent their childhood. In three of the cases the mother was a regular attender and in the other two cases both the mother and father were regular attenders. The latter situation appertains to the first two examples which, as we have noted, are 40 years apart.

Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to group the responses in this phase of the survey on the basis of age. I will describe the participants' responses instead on the basis of their attitude to church going and use three catagories:

- i Those who continue to attend
- ii Those who chose to change to another church
- iii Those who attend less frequently

i THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO ATTEND

A group of the informants experienced a gradual progression from life as children in the church where they had been brought up. It was "natural" that they would carry on attending. There was no thought of doing anything else:

*"I was just accepted as a member, seemingly. I never had any special classes that we attended. I would imagine that by the time I was 16 I was in something, taking up the collection or being a steward, since then I've had some*

office or part in the church upto the present time (70 years)"06DB

"It was during Dr. Bakers time that I became a member of the church....Jimmy Stewart had been secretary of the Sunday School and he wanted a change and he asked me if I would be willing to do this. So very quickly I got job after job. I became Treasurer of the Dramatic Society, then Poor Steward, Society Steward, Chapel Steward, Youth Club Leader"49CH

"I was in the Rangers, in the Sunday School, super in the Primary Department."

"How old were you then?"

"18 or 19. The men were all away at the war. It was a case of women ran everything. I was put on the Leaders Meeting as the young peoples' representative. Ran the Life Boys .78CH

For such informants the answer to the question:

*"What else was there for you to do apart from at the church?"*

was generally:

*"Nothing"*48CH

Going to work whilst still living at home had various effects. For some it brought new friendships completely outside the church circle:

And yet for another of the same generation, when asked if:

*"Did going to work widen your circle of friends?"*

Responded:

*"Very minimally. Not really a great deal. I suppose the people that I met in work weren't really church going types of people so I didn't find them there."*28NS

Starting work and meeting a different circle of people made no difference to the church/friend allegiance for some of the sample:



*"Did you still continue to go to church?"*

*"Oh yes! I was going to the U.P. in the morning and the Baptist in the evening, because it was at the Baptist Church that I had made friends."*

*"What sort of church activities were you involved in once you had started work?"*

*"Well, I was in the Guide Company and enjoyed guiding very much. Then went down to Brownies and eventually went on to a housing area to start up Brownies at Longston, taught in the Baptist Sunday School."*

*".....On Saturdays we went walking to find campsites.... and trying to get walks, plan our nature rambles and look for picnic places and then we would come in for "Youth for Christ" at night."19NS*

For others it opened up new possibilities and created tension between old loyalties and new opportunities:

*I was working in the Civil Service in Newcastle and I had friends at work and they are still the friends that I am closest to. ( As a group of friends they went Youth Hostelling, Rep in Newcastle and the Opera - On the area Committee for the YHA [where met husband] 78CH*

The participant quoted immediately above was very active in work amongst children in the church where she herself had been a child. She was a leader in the Life Boys and the leader of the Primary Department of the Sunday School. Starting work introduced her to a new circle of friends who were not connected with the local church and together they developed activities such as Youth Hostelling at weekends which made conflicting demands on her time. She resolved this by getting other church people to cover for her one weekend per month.

However, notwithstanding the variations that have been noted above there was still a significant contact with the peer group within the home church:

*"There was quite a gang of us went to the Tuesday Endeavour and all your friends went to that..."35NS*

*"Most of my friends are actually youth club and Girls Brigade friends and I have not kept up contact with anyone with whom I was at School. They are all youth club and church people."32NS*

*"No. We used to go about as a big gang. There was a gang of boys from the Methodist Church and we all just used to go"01DB*

11 THOSE WHO CHOSE TO CHANGE TO ANOTHER CHURCH

The example of female participant 59CH is unusual and runs against the expected trend which seems to have been established so far. The evidence of the participants, so far, would suggest that where there is a history of regular family attendance at and participation in a particular church together with strong peer group associations and reinforcement that a person in the phase which we are examining now would remain within the "family" church unless the family moved away from the area. However, in this case 59CH chose to change from the family Methodist Church where her grandfather had been a Local Preacher and her father and mother were actively involved to the Church of England. From an early age 59CH had a strong desire to be an actress and eventually, after a brief career as a teacher, became a leading stage, television and Radio actress. Her mother came from a Church of England background and joined the Methodist Church on marriage. 59CH's maternal grandparents came to live with the family when she was 15 years of age:

*"By the time my grandparents had come to live with us...I was getting more and more theatrically minded. I used to go to the nearest Church Of England with my grandmother and I was absolutely besotted with it because it was so very different from our church and it was like a play to me. I loved the stained glass, vestments and all.*

*When I was 16 I was confirmed into the church of England. My father was absolutely furious and wouldn't come to the Confirmation, my mother didn't either. But I was absolutely taken over by the atmosphere in the church, the regularity of the service; the formality of it. I was just that sort of child...."59CH*

This pattern in her life continued when she left school and went as a student to Cambridge. She worshipped at King's College Chapel, *"and that was just wonderful"*59CH

She removed herself to the church where she was "happy".

In an other example the change from Methodism to the Church of England was not a "happy" experience. In this example the widowed mother of a Northern Ireland Methodist took a job as a housekeeper in Guilford and the daughter who moved with her obtained work in a local laboratory. There was no Methodist church within easy reach of where they were living, the nearest church was the Church of England. She no longer continued to go regularly:

*"But I didn't continue going to church because it was all Church of England and I wasn't really fond of the CofE and the occasions that I went to it."*

*"What didn't you like about it?"*

*"It seemed to be terribly ritualistic and the singing I didn't like - not the Methodist singing that I was used to. And it was the sequence and I never knew whether to stand up and sit down or to kneel."*28NS

#### 111 THOSE WHO ATTEND LESS FREQUENTLY

Where parental attendance was no more than casual and the church going peer group insignificant then late teen age years was, in some cases, a time when church going ceased.

*"My father didn't go to church, my mother was a member of Tynecastle Parish Church. I didn't go to that Sunday School. I went to North Murchiston - it was the nearest one. Then I didn't go to church."*51CH

*"I gradually drifted away. I didn't go to church. Very few of the children went to church. Used to go occasionally."*02DB

Going to work offered the possibility of new peer group associations:

*"Most of your friends you would make at work?"*

*"Yes. There were a lot round about. It was still very much a country place and there were a lot of children round about that I kept in touch with, go to the pictures and that sort of thing."*74CH

One informant had drifted away from church because of mother's humiliation with the pew rent system. Later went to a local church with a friend where they had a Girls' Club (but she never attended that church on a Sunday). :-

*"As a young woman what sort of a social life did you have?"*

*"I didn't have a boy friend. I was in with my girl friend, who was a Catholic right enough, the Secondary School I went to used to have a former pupils' (club) and I carried on there. That was my biggest part of the thing.....We went dancing, it was a private club, quite a respectable place, there was no drinking"*64CH

It has been noted above, especially when considering the experiences of Youth, that one of the expectations in church attending is "happiness". When no "happiness" is to be found the effect is to weaken the links with the original church and to move to find it elsewhere:

*"It was very difficult because when I got to Bible Class I found the Bible Class very difficult and he wasn't very inspiring and very dull and I stopped going to the Hall for 2 or 3 years. I tried the Chalmers Church which my sister was going to....."*52CH

However, she was even less "happy" there. After a period of not attending church at all she went back to the original church, as she explains:

*" but I just didn't like it. I didn't fit in. I didn't feel I belonged. So I stopped going. When I was about 17 or 18 I just felt an inclination that I just wanted to go back to the church again and I went back to the Hall - it was as simple as that."*52CH

## 2. THOSE WHO LEFT HOME

44% of all the sample left home at the age of 18 or so and of this group 38% did so for reasons of work and 62% to go into higher or continuing education. I will group these experiences, then, under the headings of those who left home for:

- i. For Work
- ii. For further education

1. FOR WORK

The informant who spent his childhood in the National Children's Home and Orphanage went to the Home's Workshops at Harpenden to train to be a printer. At 21 he left to look for work and eventually through the assistance of the workshop found work in Aldershot. He made no attempt to locate a church of any denomination and *"never went to church at all"*27NS.

On the other hand 46CH who was born and brought up in Calabar in Eastern Nigeria and who had been involved with his extended family in the local Methodist Church there, when he left school went to live with his sister in Lagos:

*"I Went to Lagos to live with my sister and joined the ministry of Finance...I joined the choir there and apart from my immediate family, my friends were all in the choir.....I think partly out of loyalty....but I was more at home."*46CH

Of course there were those whose experience lay some\_where in between the above examples.

*"Did you continue to go to church?"*



*"I think I did on Sunday mornings.....An old chap and myself went to the Presbyterian church in Wick. It was a 70 hour week so sometimes we were working Sundays"75CH*

*"I left the BB because it became difficult getting back on Friday night but I still went to church (and played football as a semi-professional for Elgin.)54CH*

For some irregular hours made a regular church commitment impossible and yet Christian associations of a formal nature were, nevertheless, to be sought out. Take for example two nurses, a generation apart, who recalled similar experiences:

*"I went to the Beeches Nursing Home in Wolverhampton. I worked there for three and a half years. From there I thought I'd got the experience I needed to get my general (nurses training) so I said, 'Right!'. I thought I would have to get right away from the district and I went to Halifax. It was there I joined the Baptists in Halifax. Wherever I've been I've joined the Christian Nurses Association and all these things"01DB*

*"Well, there (Lancaster) I joined the Nurses Christian Movement. And there was a group of us there who got it going because it wasn't very active and we set up Ward services....."*

*"Did you have any church connections as well?"*

*"Not specifically. No. I went to odd services at various churches. Time off on Sundays was very difficult."*58CH

In one case the "Methodist Network" was instrumental in settling a mother and son into life and work in a new city. The son had got a job at Edinburgh University as a trainee laboratory technician and his mother, a widow, decided to move to Edinburgh to be with him:

*"My mum was charring to keep things going and was caretaker at the local primary school in Brough and one of the ladies who was also a local preacher was talking to her and my mum was saying how she dreaded going upto Edinburgh and what was she to do. And the other lady said, 'Well get in touch with the minister and get fixed up that way.' Our deaconess in Brough knew Sister Sylvia in Edinburgh who was at the Central Hall and they got in touch with her and, blow me, when we came to Edinburgh I think she met us in her car and took us up for a meal and 'phoned round from her place looking for 'B and B' spots."*44CH

#### 11. FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

I have undertaken a longer detailed examination of the responses of this group because we have here a selection of people that for a period of time we can isolate as a definable group. It is possible to draw an arbitrary line around them covering their undergraduate years at university. It is about the only group within the sample who are basically doing the same thing at the same time in their lives and they are all away from the influence of parents and former peer group.

There is an organisation within the national framework of the Methodist Church specifically charged to have pastoral oversight over students in higher education. Chaplains to students in higher education are appointed by the Youth and Education Division of the church at a Connexional level.

In most cases the chaplain to a place of higher Education will be the minister of the local Methodist Church part of whose responsibilities is the pastoral care of students. Occasionally full time or part time Chaplains are appointed to this work by the Division.

So far as this study is concerned there is no need to discuss the relative merits of the methods of appointing and deploying the various types of chaplains. It is sufficient to know that they exist.

There is an established procedure in Methodism for the minister of a student's home church to notify the appropriate chaplain of the arrival of a new student. This is usually done with the student's consent but there no set procedure and it is not uncommon for the information to be passed on without the student's knowledge. Local groups of students organise themselves in to MethSocs (Methodist Society) with the assistance and involvement of the appropriate chaplain. The MethSoc, in most cases, is affiliated to the Students' Union as one of the University clubs and associations.

All the respondents to the survey who had been "Methodist students" were aware before they entered higher education of the existence of "MethSoc".

*"I am so Methodist and I knew that it ought to be there when I arrived and it was certainly one of the societies that I joined in freshers week.23NS*

This was the experience of most of the sample. Some, however, had no initial intention of joining:

*"At 18 I came to Edinburgh University and I first I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go to church at all. When I got here there was a Societies Fair for freshers and I was going round that with some friends and they saw the MethSoc stand*

and she said, 'Well, you will have to join that.' and I really joined because I hadn't joined anything else."

"Why weren't you sure whether you wanted to join a church or not?"

"I didn't know whether I wanted to make a break and take time out and maybe explore other things."

"What sort of things?"

"Maybe explore some other denomination. But I joined the MethSoc, went along to the first meeting and from then on I was hooked."25NS

And in another similar case:

"Its funny because I left home saying, 'I'm not joining any political or religious societies.' But as fate would have it I was put into a double room with another Cornish girl who was very eager to go to MethSoc and she had done a certain amount of local preaching. After a couple of weeks of her coming back and saying what went on, I ventured to join her."37NS [The informant became the Secretary of the Society in her final year at the University.]

Once having attended a meeting of the MethSoc all the relevant participants in the sample, except two, remained as members for their time at University. Why?

*"I had no intention of going but I thought that I would sign in. Of course by the first Sunday it was a big place and I was getting kind of lonely."*24NS

*"It is what got me involved in the first place - everyone seemed so friendly."*25NS

The MethSoc provided a meeting place that was welcoming and friendly when the student was away from home for the first time. It provided an opportunity to associate with people of their own age who, to a significant extent, shared their religious experience and outlook.

It is worth noting that in the two cases where the participants left the Methsoc, one case was because the group was unable to be friendly and welcoming in a meaningful way and in the second case because the participant was uncomfortable with the theological ambience of the group.

One who stayed in the group, and yet at the outset was not convinced that this was the place for him, did so because once having joined the Society because he was away from home and

lonely discovered that the group was of his theological persuasion:

*"I went along and they seemed a decent bunch and they were heavily into the Peace Movement, very long hair and I thought, 'Well, may be Methodism isn't as bad as I thought it might be.'"*24NS

On the other hand when the fundamentalist theological outlook of the Society was not acceptable to one of the participants he left the group and the church where they held their meetings and joined another:

*"I..moved to Brunswick and found that very much nearer to my taste.....Brunswick just felt right and so I got involved with Brunswick. I was really very happy there."*23NS

### C. MIDDLE AGE

We turn now to the experiences of Middle Age. This is that part of the life cycle where the possibilities for choice are at a maximum and the influence of former adult decision makers is at its weakest. Many of the participants have themselves become adult decision makers.

It was during Middle Age that most of the participants who were not originally Methodists came into the Methodist Church. I will describe this part of the participants stories under seven broad headings:

- i. Those who have always been Methodists
- ii. Those who moved away from Methodism for a period
- iii. Those who have actively sought out a Methodist Church
- iv. Those who came into the Methodist Church on Marriage
- v. Those who left the Methodist Church through Marriage
- vi Those who came into the Methodist Church through contact with Methodists
- vii Other experiences

#### 1. THOSE WHO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN METHODISTS

In the Case of 69CH, a lady of over eighty years of age, the Methodist connection with the same church went back several generations.

*"My mother was Church of England, but my father was a Methodist, Primitive Methodist. All my father's people were, the whole lot, 13 of them, all went to Springvale Sunday School. We all went, it was a tradition. My Grandma went."* 69CH

As a girl, from the age of eight, she went to Springvale Methodist Church to the Sunday School which met in a morning and in the afternoon and then to the church service at night. She married a man who was also a Methodist. She was, at the time a parlour maid and he a ticket collector at the local Railway Station. As children they did not go to the same Methodist



Church and they met because occasionally she used to go with her paternal grandfather to another Methodist Church where her future husband was a member. She admits to having no interests other than church activities and together with her husband she was responsible for the Sunday School, both were church trustees:

*"Well, I had enough on with my church. I was poor steward, chapel steward, society steward, tea convener, all the flowers, that was my job for years and years....I enjoyed helping."*69CH

This is very similar to the case of a man aged 70 who always attended the Central Hall, Tollcross. His father, father's brother and paternal grandfather were all members of the Central Hall.

*"My father was operator of the cinematograph, they had a proper box built into the Hall for that purpose....My uncle David was the Sunday School Superintendent."*49CH

His non-working time was largely spent at the church.

*"I became treasurer of the Dramatic Society, then Poor Steward, Society Steward, Chapel Steward, Youth Club Leader"*49CH

We have already referred to the youth club at the Central Hall in the description of the activities of that church in an earlier chapter and know that it was open seven days a week when in its hey day. At one time this man was the leader of the mid week senior boys club, junior boys club and he was also responsible for the Saturday and Sunday activities. In addition he played tennis, partly for the church club and partly for another tennis club.

For them it was a way of life, into which they had been introduced by their family and then followed in the family tradition of maintaining membership and becoming involved in the life and activities of the church. They were satisfied with what they were associated with and with what they were doing and were not presented with more attractive alternatives.

#### ii. THOSE WHO MOVED AWAY FROM METHODISM FOR A PERIOD

Because the participants interviewed in the survey, were at the time of the survey, all regular attenders of one of three Methodist Churches in and around Edinburgh none of them left the denomination permanently. There was only one interview with a former Methodist who is a member at the present time of another denomination and that interview came about because she was present when her sister was interviewed and she became actively involved in the conversation.

In the case of a lady who left the Methodist Church when she married a man who was a member of the Church of Scotland, which has been mentioned above, on his death she returned to the church where she had grown up:

*"He died in 1963 and one of our church members told Dr. Downes about us having a long connection and he came out to see me and I said that I would like to come back to the Square. I said that I had never taken to the Church of Scotland. It seemed to be very cold, not as friendly as the Methodist Church."*41NS

a. ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE DENOMINATION

In some cases whilst there is a Methodist Church within reasonable travelling distance, a local Church of Scotland, could have other attractions, especially in terms of ease of access:

*"Well, I belong to two churches..... The local church (CofS) is very near and we could just walk down. .... I enjoyed both services, both have different strengths. I enjoy the two congregations which are really very different. .... I taught in Bonnyrigg (CofS) for seven years so I would say I really feel at home."*38NS

"Then we had to move here. I said to Betty, 'Well, I'm not trailing in and out to Central Hall.' There are so many churches round here, no Methodist church, of course. So I started going along to the old Parish church and then I went up to St. Anne's, which again is a big, big, cold, cold church and then I came to St. Ninian's and that<sup>is</sup> a great church, huge congregation, two services on a Sunday morning. I liked the service there, I liked the singing, good choir, good organist, The minister is a fine man, not such an outstanding preacher as we are accustomed to in Methodism. The singing is almost as good as the Methodist. Methodists are famous for their singing. Apart from that it was so convenient!"62CH

The sister continues to travel into Edinburgh every Sunday to the church that she has attended since birth and where their mother and father were amongst the founder members, the Central Hall.

b. NO METHODIST CHURCH AVAILABLE

A married couple who had Methodist associations from Childhood moved, because of the husband's job to Kilmarnock where there isn't a Methodist Church within easy travelling distance. The nearest church being at Paisley to the north or Girvan to the south. They looked for the most suitable alternative:

"Whilst we were in Kilmarnock we joined the Church of Scotland and went to St. M's."

"How did you find the Church of Scotland?"

"Very similar to the Methodist. But we had to look for it. There were an awful lot of variations and in one particular case we went into a church in Ayr and it was like seeing the Mafia - it was Communion Sunday and they were all lined up in their black suits. It was just like a group of Italians lined up to see the godfather. Then we went to a Baptist Church. Eventually we settled in the Church of Scotland, a different one. I think that what I was looking for was something similar to a Methodist Church and an informality and I think we found that in St. M's."80CH

Another participant who came into the Methodist Church on marriage and felt "very much at home", 73CH moved considerably around Great Britain because of her husband's job in the Civil Service. They tried to attend a Methodist Church if one was available. In wartime Liverpool, with difficulties crossing the river to what would have been their nearest church, they went to a local Church of England in New Brighton. In Worcester they attended the local parish church, in London the nearest Methodist Church. On a move to Prestwick, where there isn't a Methodist Church, they attended the Free Church of Scotland.

When they were finally transferred to Edinburgh they lived near to the Central Hall and attended there.

111. THOSE WHO HAVE ACTIVELY SOUGHT OUT A METHODIST CHURCH

A University career for one of the informants led to periods of residence in Cardiff, Birmingham and Edinburgh. On each move he, together with his family joined a local Methodist Church. On the move to Edinburgh they joined Nicolson Square. Why?

*"Brand loyalty! We came up I had been in Edinburgh, once before to a conference and had actually been in Nicolson Square at a service, back in 1958. we came up in the August and we went a couple of times to Nicolson Square, once to Central Hall. I think first of all Nicolson Square had the university connections which I felt were going to be important, but also I am not a tip-up seat man."*21NS

In another example a married couple had been actively involved with a local Methodist Church in London, when they were moved because of the husband's employment to Edinburgh they thought that they would go to a local church, regardless of denomination:

"Our first attraction would have been to go to one of the Holy Corner churches which are at the bottom of our garden and very much community churches, backed up in this community, but I think there were two factors (for going to Nicolson Square), first of all, K6s father came up here with us, to live within a hundred yards, but he was a staunch Methodist and I think he wouldn't have felt at home anywhere else. .... It was just an expectation of that was where we'd go and as you know, once you are there, you are hooked. .... Nicolson Square is the sort of church with the sort of service and the sort of things that go on there where we feel at home."17NS

iv. THOSE WHO CAME INTO THE METHODIST CHURCH ON MARRIAGE

One female participant, a Methodist, married a Baptist:

"After we were married we went to look for a church. There wasn't a Methodist or a Baptist in Cranbrook, it was at Hawkhurst, three miles down the road. The first sunday we decided to go to church, we went to Hawkhurst and the first church we came to was a Baptist church, we went in. We walked in and said good morning and the stewards said good morning. We came out and they said goodbye and that was that. we thought that we would try the Methodist Church next

time. We hadn't got out of the (Methodist) church after the service and we knew where everything was. They showed us the kitchen, the toilets, the Sunday School room and everything and they were such a friendly crowd that we were hooked. .... "

On their arrival in Edinburgh they went on the second Sunday to look for a church:

"We agreed before we came that we would look at all the local churches and see where we felt at home most. The first Sunday we went to the Baptist Church and the second to Central Hall. we didn't try any others after that. I think the children decided that they wanted to go to Central Hall as they found that the Sunday School was familiar. I was quite happy..... The feeling at the Baptist Church isn't the same somehow. Philip may be more at home there. There is a sort of different ethos."61CH

Another lady who had been a member of the Church of Scotland but had also been to the Methodist Church for Band of Hope meetings met her husband at the Methodist Church and then went with him after their marriage:

"I think it was the smallness of the church. I've never enjoyed being in a big church. In the old days you had your own pews, it was the same in the Methodist Church, but in



*the Parish Church you could only go into a seat where you were shown. Once I joined the Methodist Church I started to work for it."*07DB

Participant 31NS married a Methodist <sup>whose</sup> father and mother were also Methodists. After their marriage they attended his local Methodist Church in Cambridge. When work brought him to Edinburgh they went to live in Penicuik where there is no Methodist Church and went to the Parish Church. Moving to live in the city they attended a local Church of Scotland until their son was given organ lessons by the organist of Nicolson Square church. They became friendly with the organist who told them of the future develop plans for Nicolson Square which appealed to them and as the children were "*loosing interest in church.*" they thought that the time was right for a move to Nicolson Square.

#### v. THOSE WHO LEFT THE METHODIST CHURCH THROUGH MARRIAGE

Marriage was on occasions the time when some of the participants stopped going to church for a period of their lives. There does not appear to be any deliberate attempt by one partner to stop a former churchgoer from continuing to go to church. In several cases the pattern of their lives together did not include church going as an important activity.

~~Mention has already been made above of the lady who married an atheist and ceased to go, but in her case the pressure of her job as an actress may have been a more significant factor in her not going to church.~~

Some of those who ceased to go to church were people from long Methodist ancestries.

*"It was Mr Dixon who married us, and I said that I was afraid that I would have to leave the Square and go to the Church of Scotland. (My husband) looked on Methodism as some sort of backwater church." 41NS*

*"I didn't go to church in Newcastle, because my husband wasn't a member of the church and somehow or another we were just at the stage where you feel that you have got to learn to co-operate with each other and it was easier and we were in a strange place - just didn't go." 37NS*

And in another case:

*"We have always had church connections - apart from when we were in Leeds. I have no answer to that. There is no reason why we did not get involved in a church. We were absolutely staggered when we came to leave and looking back we hadn't had a stable connection with a church. We always go to church when we go away, when we go to see parents. We always go to church on holiday but we didn't in Leeds and I don't know why. I remember going to a few services in the hospital chapel."*

*"How long were you in Leeds?"*

*"Ten years."58CH*

vi    THOSE WHO CAME INTO THE METHODIST CHURCH THROUGH CONTACT WITH METHODISTS

There are two main effects here. One, is the introduction for the first time as an adult to the Methodist Church and the other is a re-introduction to a Methodist Church.

"....my mother-in-law through another friend of hers had been going to the Methodist Church for a long time but hadn't joined and then she decided that she was going to join and I felt that it's time I got myself involved and so I joined the Methodist Church with her. It was deeply rooted Methodist compunction, it was a case of joining at the same time."04DB

"The neighbour on that side of the road, she was a Catholic and I think that I asked her if there was a Methodist church and she said that a lot of people went to Nicolson Square. .... I met the Delamores (neighbours) , in fact I may well have been taken by them. ... she was such a warm and friendly person."37NS

The last example given above was of a lady who had not been to church since her marriage some years previously.

#### vii OTHER EXPERIENCES

ACCIDENT cannot be discounted as a reason for Methodist Church attendance in MIDDLE AGE:

"We were married in 1946. Trevor was born in 1948....and it was handy that there was a Methodist Church, we had been to

*one or two ... It was to take the children to Sunday School.  
We used to go week about with him.....Almost shortly after  
we started going somebody came round and invited me to one  
of the meetings.."*74CH 75CH

The man mentioned above became involved in the Central Hall and eventually held the senior lay office, that of Circuit Steward.

War time difficulties of public transport also added to Methodist newcomers. In some cases a Methodist Church was the nearest and to it one of our participants went and remained there ever since(34NS)

PAID EMPLOYMENT, for others has been an introduction to the Methodist Church. Take for example an organist and his wife who were both originally Church of Scotland.

*"People say that people who turn Methodist are more staunch Methodist than people who are born and bred and that is true from my point of view. I am a Methodist now. .... To me (the CofS) was more like a social club and there was not the worship and caring that I found at Central Hall."*83CH

And of course we should not forget what is perceived by some as Divine Guidance:

"Then when it came time for me to retire we wondered what we should do. We got down on our knees and we could not get any way from the Lord and finally one morning she said, 'We shall just have to get down and see what the word of God says.'..... We were told to come to the East....everything that we read in the scriptures was about the East....we found a very nice house in North Berwick but it was part of a terrace and there was a flat in the High Street.....And it was joined of course. And this particular day I said, 'Well I have come on a verse I don't mind reading before, it says woe to them that join house to house.' And this house is separated by the carport, so it must be this house. .... We used to come here on holiday and have six weeks in our caravan. We used to go to the Methodist Church on a Sunday. .... when we came and settled here we still attended."09DB  
10DB

#### CHOOSING ONE OF THE THREE CHURCHES WHICH MAKE UP THIS STUDY.

We cannot leave this section of the life cycle where choice is potentially at its greatest without considering some of the factors which have influenced those participants who have moved to Edinburgh and who have chosen to attend one of the churches which form the basis of this study.

In the case of those people who have moved to Dunbar the choice for non Roman Catholics has been between the Methodist Church and one of the two Churches of Scotland in the town.

*"When I first came over here (people) thought I would go to the Church of Scotland. But I said, 'Oh no, I'M<sup>^</sup> a Baptist at heart and the nearest here is the Methodist Church. It's the nearest there is."*01DB

However, in the case of the Nicolson Square and Central Hall churches there is a choice. Both churches are city centre churches, or rather they are just off city centre churches, and there is only about a mile between them. People moving into Edinburgh to live are not likely to come and live in near proximity to either of these churches but will have to travel in to one or the other of them.

Some of the participants have ended up attending one by accident:

*"Well, the first week I was here I headed off and Nicolson Square was the church I had heard of, I think I had seen it on the town map or something. So I went looking for Nicolson Square and I couldn't find it. I was on foot, and it came to 11 o'clock and there was a church so I went in, thought it was Church of Scotland, actually it was a Free Church of Scotland, which was quite an experience. But then I got to*

hear, I can't recall how, about where Central Hall was and the next Sunday I went there. I didn't look for Nicolson Square again. .... So that is where I went. I was very happy. A very warm welcome. I had no thought but that I would go there next Sunday and so on. Chance again. I might have been welcome at Nicolson Square if I had found it and gone in there and felt welcome, then that is where I would still be."60CH

In some cases the existence of a member of the family already at one of these churches was a deciding factor. In the case of one lady who was brought up a member of the Church of England and who married a man who was a member of the Church of Scotland, the fact that her husband's sister was a member at the Central Hall was the reason for them eventually going to that church:

"We went to Henderson Row Church of Scotland, but I found it awfully slow. Then we went to the Congregational church. .... All of a sudden there was a change of minister. The minister that came ... had us all talking in tongues ... but we didn't understand it. .... I often used to go to my relatives in Yorkshire for my holidays when I was younger and I always went to the Methodist Church there because they were Methodists. I used to enjoy it... and that is what drew me to the Methodist Church. Going to the Central Hall wasn't



any choice it was just the case that Daisy (husband's sister) was there"50CH

In some instances there was a formal introduction to the church:

*"When I first came here I consulted a close family friend who was a Methodist Minister who was quite high up in the church. I consulted him about which church I ought to go to when I came to Edinburgh and Henry said, "Oh Nicolson Square is the one you ought to go to." So I followed Henry's advice and he gave me a letter of introduction to the minister there and that is why I joined Nicolson Square."*28NS

Some times there was a decision not to go to one of them that led to a participant going to the other.

*"(It) struck me that I was almost bound to meet a lot of academics from the University and it didn't strike me as the sort of environment that I really wanted to attend on a Sunday. I meet a lot of academics in the week and I wanted to get back to basic Methodism rather than talking about it in an academic manner."*80CH

And of course there are practical issues to be taken into consideration:

*"Well as Methodists, the first thing you look for is a Methodist Church and it was a toss up whether it was Nicolson Square or Tollcross, and we decided it was because buses used to run there (Nicolson Square) at that time on a Sunday morning which made it easier"*27NS

Having then made the choice to attend one of these three churches what kept the participants there?

*"They were very kind and as soon as we walked in they welcomed you, shook your hand, especially some of the older ones. They used to invite us as new members out to their houses."*27NS

*"We were generally made to feel very welcome"*79CH

*"It is our church. I like the music at our church and I think that is a large part of it. But it is largely habit."*54CH

*"There was a very close fellowship there, well partly again because John was ill again and we had enormous support from that congregation, from all parts of it. .... I think I owed an enormous debt to the people of that church."*15NS

Not for all were first impressions favourable:

*"So I went to the Young Wives and it was a transformation. I met Maude R., Grace N. there was a whole pile, everybody was all friends, I couldn't understand it, I had never spoken to anybody at this horrible church, I had been there for 7 or 8 years and then like that, one night, because I met socially - a whole gang of friends, Mary S. the whole mob of us, Eileen T., and straight away I offered to have a Coffee Morning and we were all close friends immediately."*78CH

And of course once in the new church as we have already noted they became "hooked". There were jobs to be done and offices to be filled.

*"(I was a) Sunday School teacher and then I became Sunday school superintendent for a spell. I've been Circuit Steward, Property steward, I've been through the whole range. Now of course I'm in the choir."*60CH

#### D. OLD AGE

We turn now to the final part of the life cycle, that of old age when the possibilities for choice become restricted. Two of the most significant limiting factors, as perceived by the participants in this survey, are ill-health and transport. They are seen either as single limitations or acting in combination.

For example, an elderly person who does not drive, or is no longer able or no longer wishes to drive, may nevertheless, be physically capable of attending the church of their first choice but is prevented from doing so because of transport problems - there may be no suitable bus service (or Sunday services have been reduced in recent years) or there might not be another member of the same church living near enough to be able to provide regular transport to the church.

A third factor reported by the participants was the desire to move either into more suitable accommodation or to be near their relatives, especially their children.

Other factors reported by the sample included the desire to become part of a church in the local community and to be free from the responsibilities of the church life of the past.

Also with old age comes the awareness of outliving contemporaries in the church of first choosing and so losing one of the relevant reasons for being a member of that church in the first place.

The restrictions in later life have had or will have two effects as far as the three churches in this study and the participants are concerned. The personal restrictions can either cause people to leave and for the same reasons cause other people to come in

to them for the first time and mainly because of the physical limitations of either ill health or transport or both.

The account of one eighty year old at Dunbar illustrates the events which take place when declining health and distance come into play in the decision making process. It also illustrates the influences of the peer group.

*"The Abbey Church closed in 1966 because Mr Eggo was leaving and so was Dr. Lewis and they decided they couldn't replace two ministers so they joined together.[The ministers of the Abbey Church and the Old Parish Church retired at the same time and the Presbytery decided to close the Abbey Church and unite the congregations in the Old Parish Church.] I decided because Mrs McMartin and Mrs Watson who came to live at the top of the street went to Belhaven Church that I would go with them when the Abbey closed.*

*I was very, very happy there. I was in the choir but sometimes I would take this awful light headed feeling and I used to worry and we used to get a lift sometimes; and sometimes they forgot and I was too late. So, I thought, 'Why am I trailing when I could go to the Methodist Church (which is 50 yards away from her house). So I met Mary in the Library one day and I said, "I am going to join you." That was four years come September. I was welcomed with open arms and I've been very, very happy there."*05DB.

The above informant came into the Methodist Church when the choices for church attendance became restricted. For one participant it was a time for deciding to leave the Methodist Church which she had attended from childhood. This participant is single and lives with her sister who is also single. Both had been active in the life of the Church at Tollcross as had their father before them. They are both in their mid-seventies.

*".... (When) we had to move here I said to Betty, 'Well, I'm not trailing in and out to the Central Hall.' There are so many churches round about here....."*

*"Is there anything you have missed?"*

*"Not really. There's a great lot of similarity in the Church of Scotland service."*

*(To other sister)"Why did you decide to keep going back to the Hall?"*

*"I don't like change. I was quite happy there."62CH and 63CH*

The worry about the effects of difficulties of physically getting to church combined with the question of declining health was in the minds of several of the participants. Some had begun to make contingency plans.

"....As long as I've two legs to carry me I will manage along to the Hall. But if I hadn't got the car I possibly wouldn't find it easy with the buses.

"And if the Hall were to close?

"I think I would try to go to Nicolson Square, but it might be difficult getting there regularly and I might go to the Church of Scotland, not that I like the Church of Scotland....

"Why?

"Methodism has always appealed to me. There's something that the other churches haven't got.....they sing as if they mean it. You go to the Church of Scotland and they wail as if it's the bagpipes....we are not lumbered with the minister for 30 or 40 years. If you don't like them you know they are going to be transferred somewhere else."57CH

When an elderly person moves away from home to either live with or near another member of their family this inevitably leads to a restriction in the choice of which church to attend. The church of first choice is, because of the move away from home no longer available. A Church of the former denomination may not

be available either. Transport may be a problem as well.  
Consider the following account of a move in old age.

*"It was such an undertaking to sell my house and get myself up here all in a month. .... My daughter and her husband are Elders in the local church .... I'm nearer. I'm only ten minutes away in the car. I wouldn't go back to England. - she decided to go to the local Church of Scotland - I thought well I'll give it a try. It wasn't far. I went four Sundays and not a soul spoke to me. Only the minister when I came out. I thought well if that's it then I'm not going. - The following Sunday - "I got off that bus on the Sunday morning... found the door .... I got in that church and in ten minutes I had been introduced to 18 different people. .... I never missed once in 16 years. .... Evelyn Wilson, from church, fetches me and she takes me after church to my daughters for lunch."69CH*

It is to state the obvious that infirmity in old age can totally prevent any form of church attendance. This can give rise to great anguish and deep disappointment:

*"(Since) I've been handicapped I've only been there once and they carried me up the stair. And I've never had a visit from the Minister but it would be better if I did."77CH*



When a person reaches extreme old age they can outlive not only their own generation but also the one which was coming up behind them so that through no fault of the members of the church they become unknown and forgotten:

*"When I went back I think there were only two that remembered me. The one that welcomes you at the top of the stairs, he said, 'Oh, I haven't seen your face for a bit.' I said, 'That makes two of us.' They gave us a wee chair and I sat there before the service as I went in. I tried to stand for the hymns but I couldn't stand very long but my hearing<sup>is</sup> so bad, you see the mouth of the minister opening but I am not getting it."*77CH

Even those who are still able to attend the church find that they are outliving the memory of the congregation:

*"I've been there so long .... But I'm beginning to think I go in there sometimes and I wonder if I've come to the right place. You'd think I've never been a member sometimes."*50CH

On the other hand a lady in her ninety-ninth year still felt a sense of association with the church even though she had not been for over twenty years:

*"I've always felt a very strong link and I still do and I read all they send me out .... I appreciate that and it's very good of them."*13NS

Some times people are glad of the restrictions that old age brings not to continue attending church. It can be an end of years of responsibility. The only informant who has actually left the church in old age (as opposed to those who are thinking about leaving as a possibility when their present pattern of church attendance becomes too difficult), when asked if she had had any regrets about moving away from the church replied:

*"Not at all. I had done far too many things in the Hall. I was really quite relieved. I was sorry to give up the choir.....I've had no regrets. I never thought I could do that."*62CH

For those whom old age brings about the possibility of change to a local church, not only is there the chance to be free from past responsibilities but also the possibility of joining a church in their local community. The response of the majority of the participants when asked what they would do if the church of their first choosing was no longer ~~to be~~ there, replied that they would go to a local church and not to the nearest Methodist Church available. The reason for doing this was one of ease of access.

Religious broadcasts and Sunday Services on the radio and television were viewed and listened to by the majority of those

who were in or approaching their restricted years. None of the participants were of the opinion that watching or listening to these programmes was an adequate substitute for going to church. For some it was very much a second best activity:

*"Have you ever thought of just sitting at home and watching the service on the television?"*

*"In the very bad weather, but not as long as I've got legs."*57CH

When asked why it was not considered to be an adequate alternative to attending church the consensus of opinion was that:

*"Well you're in contact with people if you are actually at church"*65CH.

## CHAPTER 7

### LOOKING AT THE PROCESS OF CHURCHGOING

Churchgoing as a significant part of the life cycle experiences of the participants has been influenced by the degree to which locational mobility and inter-denominational mobility have been present within the individual life cycles. The life stories of the participants have told how some of them have moved away from the town where they were born, sometimes several times, whilst others have stayed in their home town or even their parents home. Some have moved out of and back into Methodism, some have moved into Methodism from another denomination and others have remained within the Methodist Church throughout their lives. There are, then "STAYERS" and "MOVERS" in a geographical location and "STAYERS" and "MOVERS" in denominational preference.

If we represent this in model form, (fig 1) then the result of the possible combinations which may arise from the two types of staying and moving indicates that there are four main categories of church goers within a particular congregation. There are "The Fixed", "The Faithful", "The Switchers" and "The Flexible".

"The FIXED" are those church goers who have both stayed in the home locality and stayed within the original church congregation. "The Faithful" have geographically moved away from the original congregation but have remained loyal to the particular denomination wherever they have lived next. Those who have moved from one denomination (or from another congregation of the same denomination) to another whilst not moving geographically become "The Switchers" and those who have moved both in locality and denomination have become "The Flexible".

		LOCALITY	
		STAYERS	MOVERS
D E N O M I N A T I O N	STAYERS	FIXED	FAITHFUL
	MOVERS	SWITCHERS	FLEXIBLE

(fig.1)

The questions to be explored , therefore, are why when and how do churchgoers become "Fixed", "Faithful", "Flexible" or "Switcher". The research approach adopted in this study permits such an investigation of these questions because firstly, it has

attempted to trace churchgoing as a significant part of the life style throughout the life cycle of each of the participants and secondly it has recorded what has taken place in respect of churchgoing when there have been various changes in life cycle and life style.

### IDENTIFYING THE PROCESS

The existence of a process of churchgoing within the life style has been examined in two studies published whilst I was engaged in researching this thesis.

A study by H.R.F. Ebaugh, "Leaving Catholic Convents: Toward a Theory of Disengagement." (1) described the process of exiting experienced by ex-nuns.

*"For ex-nuns, the process of leaving tended to be demarcated into a series of stages or sequential events characterised by social interactional variables that predominated at the point in the process" (2)*

She identified the first stage as that of the initial questioning of her commitment as a nun which was commonly associated with the introduction into a new reference group and so many nuns who went away from the convent to work in schools or hospitals (as nuns) became involved with laypeople involved in the same work:

*"Many nuns began to realise the high cost involved in being a celibate religious and giving up the prospect of family and children"*

*"Also, nuns away at school were relating to men on a day-to-day basis and becoming aware of sexual as well as friendship needs" (3)*

The initial stage of doubt was followed by a period of behaviour in which the nun sought out and evaluated alternative roles and actually <sup>sought</sup> seeking out viable alternatives.

Thirdly, as the nuns came closer and closer to making a decision to switch roles there tended to be a shift in the reference group.

*"They began to compare themselves not with other nuns, but with single laywomen in society .... they began to read fashion magazines, consult hairstylists, browse through department stores...." (4)*

The fourth stage was the making of the firm decision to leave, usually accompanied with some type of external expression or indication that a decision has been made. This public announcement has the function of finalising the decision made and making it irrevocable.

The final stage of the exit process is creating and adapting to an ex role once they had actually left the order.

In a second study, church going activity as a causal process model has been applied to disaffiliation from religious movements. Stuart Wright in a review of Disaffiliation from Alternative Religious Groups (5), describes how members of religious movements have undergone a stage process of deconversion. The stages he identifies are :

- (1) Crisis
- (2) Review and reflection
- (3) Disaffection
- (4) Withdrawal
- (5) Cognitive transition
- (6) Cognitive reorganisation

An area not fully explored by Wright is that of individual freedom and constraint in relation to decision making. There is a problem in describing a stage process of assuming that the decision maker is totally free at any given stage to make a decision and then is free to act upon it. In his study of Delinquency, David Matza questions the degree to which people are free to make and act upon decisions:

*"Some men are freer than others. Most men, including delinquents, are neither wholly free nor completely constrained but fall somewhere between. .... The image of the delinquent I wish to convey is one of drift; an actor neither compelled nor committed to deeds nor freely choosing*



*them. .... Drift stands midway between freedom and control. Its basis is an area of the social structure in which control has been loosened, coupled with the abortiveness of adolescent endeavour to organise an autonomous subculture, and thus an independent source of control, around illegal action." (6)*

The notion of Drift is a useful way of exploring the various phases along the continuum of the church going life style within the life cycle of the participants in this study. To what extent were they wholly free to make decisions? How far were they constrained when considering future possibilities for action?

My own study, based upon the mainstream church going life histories of the participants, seeks to describe and explore a possible process of appraising and reappraising the significance of churchgoing as a lifestyle activity within their life experiences. Those life experiences will reflect the degree to which they were free to act or constrained from acting.

## ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FROM THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

### THE CRUCIAL PHASES WITHIN THE PROCESS

From an analysis of the life histories of the participants in this study there emerge two crucial phases within their life cycles. The first is the encouragement-coercion phase and the second, the self perceived value phase.

#### I. ENCOURAGEMENT - COERCION

There are positive, negative and catalytic factors involved in the encouragement-coercion phase.

The positive factors are those which enable initial church attendance to take place. The negative factors are those which make non-attendance very difficult. The catalytic factors are events and physical factors which exist per se and which if present reinforce the positive factors and which if absent tend to make the positive factors more difficult to realise.

## A. THE POSITIVE FACTORS

### 1. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

The positive factors are those which enable church attendance and assist in the introduction of a person to the experience of church attendance.

For most of the participants introduction to churchgoing was initially instigated by an adult decision maker, usually the parents or a parent, who are already associated with a church. Whilst the adult decision maker will usually be connected with a church, this is not always a necessary pre-requisite. The adult decision maker may decide to send a child to a church based sunday school whilst they do not attend either that church or any church. The adult decision maker can also be an adult other than a parent as in the case of a non-family adult acting in loco parentis. In only isolated cases was the initial introduction by a sibling and in no cases was the initial introduction by a member of the peer group although a later re-introduction or an introduction to a church other than the original one chosen by the adult decision maker may be by a member of the child's peer group.

Initially the influence of the family is of the nature of coercion simply because the very young child is not able to make a decision whether to participate in this activity or to

withdraw. At this early stage the child is incapable of a separate physical independence from the activities and preferences of the parent. The child attends as part of the family unit. There gradually develops an interaction between encouragement and coercion and in the very early years of dependent childhood, the child, often being unable to distinguish between the two.

The participants recalled, from the earliest moment of memory, being in family contact and context. This initial experience had family significance. It was a normal thing to do. In all but a few very specific cases this was perceived as being a pleasant experience.

## 2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE PEER GROUP

From the recounted recollections, peer group influence assumes increasing significance as the child develops and moves away from total dependence on and influence of the relevant adult decision makers.

Usually the Peer Group influence will tend to be of an encouraging nature (positive) and not coercive (negative). However, it may be possible to understand it as coercive in those cases where the peer group becomes responsible for maintaining membership in those cases where parental involvement

is only nominal. In those cases where the adult decision maker's involvement was, itself, no more than casual, the peer group association replaces the original adult encouragement-coercion element. It becomes a crucial factor in maintaining the child participants' associations with a church. In most cases, however, it was found that peer group influences were an encouraging influence which reinforced the basic adult encouragement-coercion interaction.

### 3. THE INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT NON-FAMILY ADULTS

The church was a place to associate with non-family adults who enhanced the child's experience, took a personal and friendly interest in them and helped to make it a place with an ambience with which they wanted to be associated.

As an observer of the three congregations associated with this study it was immediately obvious that they were made up largely of late middle aged to elderly women and this was reflected in the sample of participants provided by the ministers of those churches. The childhood memories of the participants recalls the association that they had with women in the churches at this stage in their lives. Women Sunday school teachers, women leaders of organisations like the Band of Hope, Bible Classes and Youth Clubs. Women in positions of activity and leadership that were immediately obvious and who the children related to.

The men who lead the affairs of the church through the Leaders Meeting, The Trustees and the Circuit Meeting were unknown to them as were their functions. The ~~W~~omen were highly visible and unavoidable to a child, mother's church going women friends were met on church premises. An area for further research which is beyond the scope and competence of this thesis is to what extent is the church as an organisation associated in the mind of a child as being largely a female world and how far is this perception carried through into adult life? If this is so, and the church is thought of as being a normal activity for women to participate in does it by implication become an activity for which it is not normal for men to be involved in?

I have shared this observation with various groups in the three churches and whilst the initial response has been to confirm the dominant nature of association with women by children in the church from an early age the question has always been asked, "But what of the role of the minister?" None of the three churches has had a women minister upto the present time. The minister is a man and the deaconesses at the Central Hall have been under the direction of men ministers. However, some of the functions of a minister involve caring, loving, consoling and so forth which might be interpreted as female qualities by both other males and females. Maybe the minister is not seen as a man's man. This is certainly a matter for further psychosociological investigation. What I will attempt to explore

later, is why do the men who remain churchgoers do so when it is women who are so much in evidence in the three churches.

## B. THE NEGATIVE FACTORS

### 1. MORAL POLICING AND SANCTIONS

Social control was both more obvious and more significant in the lives of past generations than it was for the present group of participants.

*"In one sense the Reformation can be described as the biggest reinforcement the feudal system in Scotland ever had, for in the ministers and elders of the Reformed Church the land owning classes were provided with a police force and a civil service"(7)*

The Kirk sessions of the 17th and 18th century were controllers of crime and lesser misdemeanours. Non-attendance at public worship would be investigated by the Kirk session. During the 17th one of the concerns of the Minister and Session of the parish of Spott in East Lothian was as the Rev. Archibald Buchan expressed it, the peoples "dishaunting the church", and the session regularly appointed one of their members to "go through the town every Sabbath, to go to change houses, and walk through

the fields, to see that no person absent themselves from church."(8)

In addition to controlling morality and Sabbath observance the Kirk session also controlled mobility;

*"Not only was it essential for tenant farmers to accept behavioural control, it was an offence for them to take strangers under their roof without permission, and they could not themselves move their domicile and settle elsewhere without a certificate of good conduct from the session to take with them to their new parish."*(9)

## 2. "SPIRITUAL" CONTROL

Until the middle of the 19th Century there was nothing more certain in the calvinistic protestant churches than heaven and hell. Even little children and helpless infants may go there. Only the elect would avoid its terrors. *"It was hard to accept it and remain sane without deciding that was oneself already numbered among the elect....If so it was clear that one would try to live a good life....and be a devoted church-goer."*(10)

E.P. Thompson, often hostile to Methodism because he believes that it was instrumental in slowing the development of working class consciousness , suggests that Wesley's promotion of the



doctrine of the universality of grace was nothing more than the doctrine of the elect entering by the back door. (11)

*"As the eighteenth century wore on the doctrine of justification by faith hardened - perhaps because it was so evident that multitudes of those 'saved' in the revivalist campaigns slid back to their old ways after years or only months. Thus it became doctrine that forgiveness of sins lasted only so long as the penitent went and sinned no more. The brotherhood and sisterhood who were 'saved' were in a state of conditional, provisory election." (12)*

How then was the Methodist to remain in a state of grace?

Thompson says that three means of doing this were available:

*"First, through the service of the Church itself, as a class leader, local preacher, or in more humble capacities, Second through the cultivation of one's own soul.....Third, through a methodical discipline in every aspect of life."(13)*

But Thompson cannot be allowed to simply elide Calvinistic predestination and Arminian Methodism in this way. The growth and development of Wesleyanism in the eighteenth century led to a revival of the seventeenth century disputes between Calvinists and Arminians and a confrontation with Antinomianism. This confrontation has been discussed by Bernard Semmel in his book,

"The Methodist Revolution" where he notes that it was a complicated situation in so far as the Calvinistic Methodists who followed George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon seem to have achieved results very similar to Wesley's. (14)

Methodism was not elitist and Wesley's High Church Arminianism developed from the time of his sermon on Free Grace into an evangelical Arminianism which stressed along with his appeal to justification by faith, Christ's offer of salvation to all.

No doubt, some Methodists continued to go to church through the pressure of spiritual sanctions and others would be more than encouraged to attend by employers aware of the benefits of a sober and industrious workforce. This is not the whole story for church going was also a positive communal activity. Even Thompson speaks of the security of the chapel in the midst of industrial change and church going cannot be treated simply in terms of social control.

*"But it remains both true and important that Methodism, with its open chapel doors, did offer to the uprooted and abandoned people of the Industrial Revolution some kind of community to replace the older community-patterns which were being displaced. As an unestablished (although undemocratic) Church, there was a sense in which working people could make it their own; and the more closely knit the community in which Methodism took root (the mining, fishing or weaving*

village) the more this was so."(15)

Wesley may well have called the poor from riot to the New Testament politics of divine right and passive obedience but evangelical Arminianism saw the possibility of Christian Perfection on earth and an incentive to good works and self improvement.

*"Wesley foresaw the probability that Christian habits would make for an improvement in social station..... Would not a growing liberal and commercial England require the disciplined energies of previously untapped sections of its population to manage its commerce and industry and the increasing complexities of its local and national politics? Certainly in the Arminian religion of universal redemption ... there can also be found a source of antislavery sentiments and missionary activity, and of the Wesleyan interest in the education of the working classes. In carrying the banner of free will, Wesley was making himself the spokesman of the creed which underlay both the humanism of the Enlightenment and the liberalism of the nineteenth century, even as other men were preparing to carry forward the Augustinian and Calvinian proclamations of man's helplessness against the great forces of history." (16)*

The conversations with my participants revealed nothing of a sense of either social control in the sense of moral policing and sanctions or of the fear of divine retribution. But it is nevertheless possible that these were real issues for their forbears and what had once been imperatives for maintaining church attendance had in later generations become habit. A habit in which their own parents participated and sought to perpetuated when they introduced their children, the present participants to church going.

### 3. OTHER CONTROLS

If the social controls which we have just discussed only existed as some kind of unconscious residuary influence, other controls were also in place and more so for the older group of participants. Some of them related how continuous sunday school attendance was demanded as a prerequisite to participation in the annual outing or 'treat'. One participant was brought up in the Methodist Church's National Children's Home and Orphanage where church and sunday school attendance was obligatory.

Then there was a case of self imposed sanction applied to herself by a girl who had the morbid fear of being left an orphan and who decided that if she maintained church associations somebody from the church would care for her. This fear did not leave her until well into middle age.

There was another kind of subtle sanction which applied not only to children but also to adults as well. If the church is the place where the majority of your friends are, then it is sometimes difficult to maintain these friendships and leave the institution which is the location of that friendship.

### C. THE CATALYTIC FACTORS

#### 1. AVAILABILITY

The third group of factors within this crucial event are the catalytic ones. These include such obvious elements such as the ease of the physical availability of a place of worship. For the participants in this study, in the early formative years the availability of a place of worship of their preference was not a problem. All the childhood participants went somewhere and therefore there was somewhere for them to go.

#### 2. COMPETING ALTERNATIVE ATTRACTIONS

We have seen in an earlier chapter Professor Smout's comments (17) that when there were alternative attractions church going declines within the population and that this was especially so when the new theology coincided with new pastimes. During the lifetime of most of the participants in this survey there has

been an increase in the opportunity to associate with other people away from the church context. The virtual local monopoly which the Central Hall at Tollcross had as a place of recreation was diminished with the building of the King's Theatre and the Usher Hall. Leisure and sports facilities are now much more widely available away from the church than they were during the early decades of this century and they are provided to a standard which the church could never meet.

### 3. NORMALITY

All the participants expressed the feeling that going to church has, for them, always been a normal thing to do. It was taken for granted. Not to have gone would have taken a greater strength of will for not to have gone would have been to stand out against the usual pattern of family and peer group life and social activity.

Whilst it was not explicitly expressed by any of these participants during the recorded interview, observation and informal conversation suggested that there was sometimes a pride in being part of a "respectable" normal churchgoing family. This was the case of the Methodist families observed in the Durham mining communities by Robert Moore.

*"One way in which we can gauge the temper of Methodist respectability is by taking the opinions of non-Methodists or outsiders to the villages. No non-Methodists deny that Methodists were 'somebody' in the village and that they commanded respect"(18)*

*"We can list most obvious...features of the Methodist home. The house was well furnished....the family would have Sunday best clothes....the children would have new clothes for the Sunday School anniversary...." (19)*

For the participants in this present study going to church was a normal thing to do. It was taken for granted, although there is a decrease in the intensity of the "taken for grantedness" from the older to the younger generations as social controls weaken and there are more alternative activities available to them.

## II. THE VALUE CHOICE PHASE

There comes a point in the life cycle when the encouragement-coercion phase, dependant upon external factors becomes replaced with a second crucial phase. This is the Value-Choice phase.

At some stage the external factors and forces which are instrumental in introducing church going as an accepted activity are replaced by the increasing significance of the internalising of these factors when the activities associated with church attendance assume the nature of self perceived value.

When this happens in the life experience there takes place a process of evaluation. This is an evaluation for future action which is based upon past and present experiences, present opportunities and constraints and future possibilities. I have called the stage at which this happens a "REAPPRAISAL POINT". There are several of these points in the church going life time.

The evidence available from the study indicates that the first Reappraisal Point comes anytime after the child is able to be independent of the the associated Adult decision makers' activities and/or wishes. This would normally be at that time in life when the child is capable of being left out of the adults activities. Either the child can be left at home whilst other family members attend church or alternatively the child is able to go to church with others who are not the family adult decision makers.

Before we go any further, let us look at what takes place at a Reappraisal Point.



A Reappraisal Point can be most easily understood as a balancing mechanism. It is a matter of balancing the self perceived "values" derived from church associations with the competing "constraints" of the other aspects and areas available at that point in time.

Taken as a whole, the participants included the following as sources of "value" within the church going context:

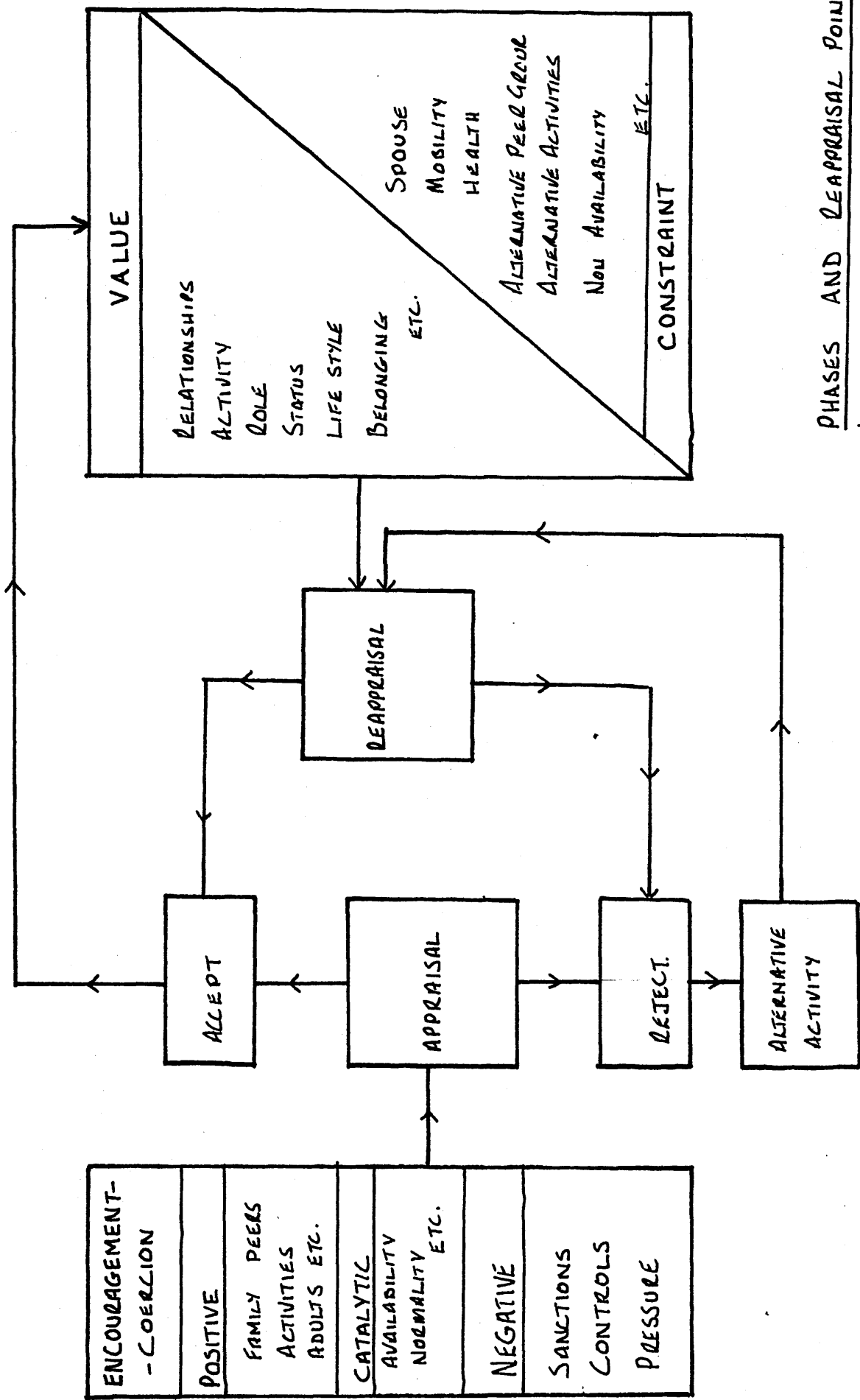
- Relationships
- Role/Status
- Belonging
- Life Style
- Church Based Activities

Not all of these were present at every Reappraisal Point and not all were present in the experience of every participant.

These had to be balanced against the reported competing constraints of:

- Non-availability
- Occupation
- Education
- Alternative Peer Group Influences
- Spouse/Marriage
- Alternative Activities
- Health
- Mobility

As long as the value is derived from a church context then church attendance is likely to remain a significant activity in both life cycle and life style. (fig 2)



(FIG 2)

PHASES AND REAPPRAISAL POINTS  
IN THE CHURCH GOING PROCESS.

Reappraisal Points occur at points of change during the life cycle. The most significant ones identified from amongst the group of participants were:

- Independent Childhood
- Commencing work for the first time
- Entering further education
- Marriage
- Geographical Mobility
- Declining Health

They also occur during what is a settled period in the life cycle when there is a change in the relativities between the perceived values and the experienced restrictions. For example - when a role comes to an end, a relationship ceases, life style changes, there is a change in the sense of belonging. Or on the other side of the equation when, say, health deteriorates or the spouse dies.

I will describe how the process operates and examine these values and constraints at six points of reappraisal and demonstrate how they are significant in determining whether a church goer remains "Fixed" or becomes "Faithful", "Flexible" or a "Switcher" by taking examples from the life histories of the participants.

## THE PROCESS IN OPERATION

### 1. INDEPENDENT CHILDHOOD

As young, dependant, children, introduction into the church was initially by an adult decision maker and <sup>then</sup> reinforced by peer group associations and influences. The possibility of exercising choice increases as the child becomes able to make decisions and begins to move away from total dependence upon the adult decision makers.

The initial attractions of church based activities and peer group and non-family adult associations, factors which create the notion of church attendance as being a pleasant and desirable activity, develop into values of life which the maturing teenager and young adult perceive as being significant for their life style.

In the early years there were few restrictions to outweigh the attraction of church attendance. The church is readily available, there are no problems associated with deteriorating health or difficulties of mobility, and, of course, for those who continue to attend church, there are no competing attractions or peer group influences of sufficient magnitude to remove or diminish significantly the pattern of church attendance. If there had been these conflicting influences then the child would have ceased church attendance and would not be

among the participants in the study who had continued in the activity of church attendance throughout the totality of their adult life.

The first "Reappraisal Point" occurs when there are competing peer group influences or alternative activities available other than those which are church based. On one side of the 'balance point' there are the perceived values of "relationships" and "activities". These are in competition with "Alternative peer group pressures and influences" and "other non-church based activities". Obviously, if there are no competing factors then the mechanism doesn't come into the reckoning at all. When it does operate, for those who continued to attend church, the participants had to resolve the competing values derived from church attendance and the factors which would modify those values or cause them to be re-assessed.

If, for example, we take the case of participant 66CH (female, married, aged 40 at the date of interview) we have an illustration of what takes place within such a "Reappraisal Point". The parents of 66CH were both regular church attenders. Her mother was involved in women's organisations within the church, Central Hall, Tollcross, and her father was a chapel steward and a trustee. The family lived within walking distance of the church and opposite the minister's manse. Most of the neighbouring children went to the local Church of Scotland Sunday School. At the Methodist church she was involved in the

Sunday School, which she recalls as being enjoyable and stated that she was attracted by the Sunday school teachers who showed an interest in her as an individual person and not just as one amongst many others. She was a member of the Girl Guides at the Hall and eventually became a helper in the Guides. The local Church of Scotland had a Youth Club which met on a Saturday night and had associated weeknight activities which she also attended. However, these competing activities were not sufficiently significant to cause her to change her established pattern of church attendance.

So if we tabulate these in terms of the Reappraisal Point mechanism we can see the relativities between the competing factors of "value" and "constraint" and the resultant response of continued church attendance.

VALUE

Parental Influence  
Shared Family Activities  
  
Relationships  
Church Based Activities  
Church Peer Group

CONSTRAINT

Competing Peer Group  
Competing Non-Church  
Activities

The availability of the Methodist Church is not a problem. The competing peer group activities are not sufficiently attractive to outweigh the value derived from continued family associations, Methodist peer group associations, relationships with other non-family adults, and Methodist church based activities.

In the terms of the MOVER/STAYER matrix she stays in the same locality and stays in the same church congregation and therefore, for the time being becomes "Fixed".

However, in the case of participant 52CH (married, female, aged 59 at date of interview) the balance between the values and the constraints at the same point in the life cycle as 66CH above were different.

52CH was involved in the sunday school and guides and their related activities at the Central Hall, together with simultaneous membership of the Band of Hope in a nearby, non-Methodist church. In this case there was only nominal parental church attendance of both mother and father. The participant admitted to a feeling of decreased satisfaction with the content and purpose of the Bible Class, Also, she had, what for her, was no meaningful associations with other adults with whom she came into contact with at the Methodist Church.

If we tabulate her experience we get:

VALUE

Peer Group Associations  
Activities

CONSTRAINTS

No Parental Encouragement  
No Non-parental Adult  
Association  
Competing Activities  
Lack of personal satisfaction

The balance of the Reappraisal Point mechanism tips away from the values so far derived from the present church associations.

At this point she moved away from the Methodist Church to a local Church Of Scotland which her elder sister was already attending. However, within a few years she moved back to the Methodist Church that she had formerly attended. Why?

The main reason was that she found no sense of belonging in the second church either. "Belonging" becomes a value. She felt that she did have a sense of belonging at the Central Hall - although this was only appreciated after she had severed her links with that church. In her case when this factor is added to those which are to be weighed at the Reappraisal Point then the mechanism swings away from the effect of the constraints to the values to be derived from original church associations and she returned.

It is important to note that she had not investigated or discovered any competing activities within a non-church setting which might have moved her away from church attendance as a significant activity at this point in her life.

In terms of the MOVER/STAYER matrix this participant has become a 'Switcher'.



## 2. LEAVING SCHOOL AND STARTING WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME

On leaving school and starting work there are two and possibly three additional factors which have to be taken into account in the elements which make up the values and more especially the constraints on those values within the reappraisal point mechanism. For the first time in the life cycle we have to take account of a significant widening in the peer group associations and influences and the increased possibilities of alternative activities made possible because of the improved financial and available leisure time of the participant together with the further weakening ~~of the~~ of the adult decision makers' influence on the participants' life style. The last factor may be an independent factor or it may be a consequence of the first two - hence the coming into play of two and possibly three new elements.

Consider two cases. In one the values derived from church attendance continue to be dominant. In the second the increased opportunity to participate in other and competing activities with a new peer group increase the role of the restrictions in deriving value from church attendance.

49CH (male, married aged 70+ at the date of interview) had strong parental links with the Methodist Church and close peer group linkage. He had derived pleasure from church going as a child and in helping his parents and uncles in their church

based responsibilities. By the time he started work he was the secretary of the Sunday School. His leisure time activities were mainly church based including the Dramatic Society and the Church Tennis Club. His only non-church based leisure time activity was playing tennis in another club. He worked in his uncle's Printing business and his uncle was involved in the same church.

If we tabulate his activities we get:

VALUE

Relationships  
Peer group activities  
Family Activity  
Leisure activity  
Role  
Responsibility

CONSTRAINTS

No competing peer group  
Few competing activities  
No problems of availability

There was sufficient value to be derived from church attendance and no significant constraints and so church attendance continues to be a valid life activity.

If we compare this with 12DB (female, married, aged 55+ at date of the interview). She attended Dunbar Methodist Church which had no on going week night activities when she left school during World War II. Her mother was an irregular church attender and her father seldom attended church. She reportedly enjoyed church attendance as a child and most of her childhood peer group were connected to the same church.

On starting work in one of the hotels in the town and then in the local Cinema as an usherette at night, her peer group associations shift from the church related group to a non-church group. The new peer group associations were drawn from friends made at work and related to leisure based activities.

To tabulate her experience:

VALUE

Ease of availability  
Small peer group

CONSTRAINTS

Non church peer group  
Competing leisure activities  
No church activities  
No parental involvement

The constraints are dominant and the previous pattern of church attendance rapidly declines although does not cease altogether. In the case of this participant the pattern of church attendance declined further on marriage as we will see later.

The result of leaving school and starting work in the first case made no significant difference in the church going life style whilst in the second it diminished. However, both remain 'Fixed' in terms of the MOVER/STAYER matrix.

For some of the participants leaving school also meant moving away from home to start work. 47CH moved to Edinburgh and brought his widowed mother with him. Moving away from home obviously forces a Reappraisal Point to take place. The majority of the factors which were perceived as forming a source of "value" in relation to church attendance are automatically and

simultaneously removed from the frame of the Reappraisal mechanism.

The obvious sources of "value" which are removed at this point in these particular life cycles are:

- Availability
- Peer Group and related Peer Group activities
- Role and Status within the church context
- Family Church going patterns

Before 47CH and his mother moved away from home to start a new life in Edinburgh, links were made in advance of the move through the deaconess at the home church and the deaconess at Central Hall. The deaconess at the home church being a personal friend of the one at Central Hall. They were met on arrival in Edinburgh helped to find accommodation and introduced into the new Methodist Church. In this case the participant replaced one set of sources of value for another, identical set, the only difference being the individuals who were the source of those values.

In terms of the MOVER/STAYER matrix there is a move from locality and a staying within the denomination and the result is that the participant remains 'faithful'.

### 3. EDUCATION

Fifteen of the participants left home after completing secondary education to go to University. (15NS 17NS 22NS 23NS 24NS 25NS 26NS 32NS 33NS 37NS 38NS 44NS 60CH 79CH 80CH)

A compulsory change in locality will trigger the operation of the Reappraisal Mechanism. The mechanism has to be adjusted because some of the former value factors of family associations, peer group associations and activities, non-family adult associations, perception of belonging have been removed or have had to be suspended.

The accounts provided do not suggest that there is any significant difference in the experiences of the participants on an age or sex basis.

In fourteen out of the fifteen cases the result of moving away from home was to shift the former 'Fixed' in to 'Faithful' because the move in locality did not accompany a move in denomination.

37NS went to University and on her own admission was determined not to join any political or religious society on the grounds that they tended to be argumentative and disruptive and she wanted a quiet life at University. Her room mate by chance was also a Methodist and went to the Methsoc. Initially 37NS did not

go with her but "after a couple of weeks of her coming back and saying what went on I ventured to join her". She later became the secretary of the group and "it was very active and we went to (church) members houses in the evenings after services and it was a delightful time. Her account would suggest a desire to be with a Methodist centred peer group within the University context. She did not join in social activities to the same extent with other students with whom she came into contact and it is of particular significance as far as this study is concerned that she did not have close social contact with members of University Sports teams even though her main subject was physical education and she played regularly in University teams. Her experience would indicate a desire to maintain some kind of regular peer group contact and shared peer group activity and that even though her introduction was by chance, nevertheless, this activity was based upon a known Methodist group which was a substitute for the one that she had experienced in her home church.

However if we take the case of 44NS it illustrates how a move in locality can cause a move in denomination so that a former 'Fixed' becomes not 'Faithful' but 'Flexible'. We found that within the 'Faithful' cluster the factors perceived as giving value to church attendance was peer group associations and activities within the church context. It becomes impossible to derive value, obviously, from this source once a person leaves the "home" church. Peer group associations are at this stage in

the life cycle most likely to be perceived by the participants as being more important sources of value than family traditions and expectations. On leaving home the former peer group bondings are severed or at least substantially weakened. New peer group associations are formed. In a new experience in the life cycle when so many things are new the participants in this survey chose initially to form new associations within as familiar context as possible. They looked for new peer group associations within a Methodist context. This of itself must indicate something of the importance placed on the Methodist Church, by the participants, as a source of value within life's activities.

But value can only continue to be derived from the peer group associations and activities if real and meaningful relationships can be formed. The common ground of Methodism as a context for such relationships may not of itself be sufficient. Where it is not sufficient then, as in the case of 44NS, the process of reappraisal will lead to the decreasing significance of Methodist Church attendance and commitment within the life cycle. The relationships derived from peer group associations are probably at their most crucial as factors from which value and consequently satisfaction are derived within this cluster because unlike those within the life cluster value is not derived from factors like role and responsibility within a continuing church connection. For the cluster which we are considering at the moment peer group associations assume an exaggerated importance. They would appear to be of greater

significance within the hierarchy of significance than any intellectual satisfaction which may be derived from church attendance. This, of itself, is highly significant when we remember that this cluster of participants are University students and might be expected to place and derive a high degree of value on and from intellectual satisfaction.

44NS, having joined the MethSoc left shortly afterwards, did so because she felt unable to relate to the group in a personal and meaningful way. This informant was looking for more than superficial association. In her case the peer group association to be meaningful had to enable her to have a sense of belonging:

*"I went looking for MethSoc. Maybe I had read about it in the Recorder or maybe there was a notice. Certainly I had the initiative to go...the MethSoc was flourishing in those days (1948). The Methsocs were booming and the London MethSoc was huge. So I went three times and and in three times didn't see the same people. We weren't put into small groups. It was a tea meeting and there were two talks and we had this lecture, one was by Charles Coulson, one was by Herbert Butterfield - which was pretty rarified. So having gone three times and never seeing the same people - it wasn't my idea of a Methodist Chapel. I had another friend from school who was a Congregationalist, the MethSoc met in Hind Street but there would be 200 or so people. It was*



large enough to get lost in. Well this friend of mine went to Battersea College and said she had been to the CongSoc and that it was very nice and there were some nice fellows there and so I went with her to the CongSoc which met in Paddington Congregational Chapel and it was an evening meeting and it was after the evening service in the vestry and there were about a dozen and I went there the next week and people said "Hello R.....", and I think that is very important and I just kept going with a cluster of people that I already knew, not this vast number, and so I stayed with them. I suppose I found Congregationalism OK."44NS

This participant explained in the interview that she was the latest addition to a long line of Methodists and that in childhood and youth she found the content of Sunday School teaching intellectually undemanding and wanted to be stretched. The only value she found from church attendance during this part of the life cycle was the association with her peer group.

It might be expected that she would derive both peer group associations and intellectual satisfaction, the two most important sources of value for her from the Methsoc. However she does not and primarily moves from that environment because it is not one in which she feels that she can be recognised as an

individual. She only has a sense of impersonal welcome and belonging. The value derived from what is perceived by her as meaningful relationships is of paramount significance and at this reappraisal point she moves away from the original denomination until she finds something which is more personally satisfying. Having found a source of value, she remains within a group where she is made to feel welcome and is known and recognised as an individual.

#### 4. MARRIAGE

Participant 71CH is an example of a 'Switcher', who had had a nominal Church of Scotland childhood but left Sunday school when he was 15.

*"I stopped going to church, I don't really know why. I suppose it was because my pals stopped. We went cycling weekends to the Youth Hostels and that."*

The value derived from the alternative peer group and their associated activities, as we have noted earlier, displaces the value derived from ~~and~~ church based peer group and activities. He met his wife, a committed Methodist during the War and they returned to Edinburgh. She went to church and he did not. He continues his story:

*"I didn't start going to church until John (son) had been going to the Sunday school in the Central Hall and she was expecting David. She said, 'Take John up to the Sunday School, you can go for a walk in the Meadows'. ( public park near to the church). And I said, 'If I'm going up there I am going into the service.' So I started going into the service. It was Mr Neilson then. He soon found out who I was. Most of the older men spoke to me. And that's when I started going fairly regular. But I never had a great commitment to the church then at all. It was more or less done as a duty."*

71CH Gradually he became friendly with participant 75CH a man in a similar situation who went to church to take his son to the Sunday school. They became friends. Eventually the participant was asked to give out hymnbooks at the door of the church, later he was to become Poor Steward, Society Steward and a Trustee. This was a pattern also followed by participant 75CH., who in addition became a Circuit Steward. Participant 71CH did not at that time have any close friendship or peer group links with people at his place of work or with neighbours.

In terms of the Reappraisal Mechanism then, value in church attendance is derived, once the initial contact has been made (through the activities and associations of the wife), from recognition as an individual within the church context, peer

group associations based on the church, and a role within the lifestyle of church going.

If by way of contrast we take the example of 11DB we also see the significance of the married peer group associations and activities which form an alternative to those based on the church. The spouse of 11DB by the time of their marriage was a nominal church attender. The participant was a professional footballer and marriage took her away from the place of her birth to another part of Scotland. She only attended church once until they returned to Dunbar later in life and remains a nominal attender. Their peer group associations in early married life <sup>were</sup> ~~where~~ with others connected with football and at the present time with members of the Dunbar Bowling Club. Neither of them attend church on a regular basis, the participant only attending church at the Christmas Carol service. Once again the role of the peer group is a dominant factor in determining the value or non-value derived during the life cycle from church attendance.

In some instances marriage appears to make no difference to a church going life style. 03DB married a man who was a casual attender of the Church of Scotland but in fact had not attended that church since childhood. He now occasionally attends the Methodist Church with his wife and encourages his wife's attendance and association. He also does repair and maintenance jobs at the church where his wife attends. 03DB's mother is a

regular church attender, her father died when she was a young child. During her married life she was a Sunday School teacher for over twenty years and is a church steward. Her peer group are mainly church related and her only leisure time activity which is not church or family connected is sequence dancing, an activity which is also shared with other women who attend the same church.

In general the marriage Reappraisal Point can be represented as follows:

VALUE

CONSTRAINTS

Relationships

Alternative Peer Group

Activities

Church Activities

Wishes of Spouse

Role/Status

Activities of Spouse

Church Peer Group

The main constraints relevant here are the wishes of the spouse and the spouses' activities together with any new peer group activities. Where these outweigh former church based relationships and activities then the participant is likely <sup>to</sup> perceive church attendance as a less significant life style activity.

What happens when the spouse who was responsible for introducing the partner into the Methodist Church dies and thus the original reason for switching or becoming flexible is removed?

07DB Continued to attend the Methodist Church after her husband's death. She was actively involved in the official structure of the church and a significant number of her peer group were church based as were her activities which she shared with that group. Her husband's death made no difference.

However, in the case of three of these participants there was a noticeable decrease in church attendance. It was most marked in the case of participant 13NS. We have already referred to this example in another context. The husband of participant 13NS was of German extraction and as a family they suffered from harassment during the First World War. She did not feel that the church was supportive of their situation. Her husband's main interest in the church was the Band of Hope which he established and led. He died in 1938. Since that time she has never been to the church but remains connected with it through the churches visitor network and the pastoral visits of the minister. She is now 100 years of age. Age and infirmity do not prevent her from going to church however. She does not attend any other church and still considers herself a member of the Methodist Church. She and her husband did not, probably as a result of their Wartime experiences establish close peer group links with other members of the church.

Not quite so sharply drawn are the remaining two cases 39NS and 19NS. 39NS was from a Church of Scotland background and married into an old established Nicolson Square family. Her husband held

several offices in the church including that of the Senior Society Steward and Trustee.

*"What keeps me going is just the fact that there are so many memories there. .... Apart from that I really don't think I would miss anything, I really don't."*

There is also a growing feeling of isolation and a sense of neglect and being forgotten.

*".....people don't really mix. One or two talk together and they don't speak (to others who are not part of their circle) I have stood on my own. I also think somebody, perhaps an official of the church should be keeping an eye on something like that. For people who are on their own .... once my husband died, they seemed to think I had died too! Little did they know that I used to do all the work."*

Participant 19NS's experience is somewhat similar,

*"...I have found it quite a difficult church. I have been very, very lonely since my husband died."19NS .*

## 5. GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

In some cases there has only been one move away from home and in other cases there have been a series of moves.

53CH and 54CH are married to each other and after marriage they moved to another town where he was already working to where he had been commuting until this point. He did not go to church in the new town - by now he had established peer group relationships with others based around a common interest in football. 53CH played football as a semi-professional player and trained three nights a week. He was regularly away at week ends at away matches. 54CH went along to the only Methodist church in the town and was disappointed that no one spoke to her and that she was not made to feel welcome. However, on visits to <sup>their</sup> there former town they always went to the church where they had grown up as children. As far as 54CH was concerned the constraints perceived at the new church prevented the derivation of any value from church attendance. She did not feel personally wanted, *"Only one woman in the church came up to speak to me, and that was because she thought I was the visiting minister's wife."* As a consequence church based peer groups and activities became impossible. The recalled ambience of the former church could not be recaptured. 53CH had already established an alternative peer group and did not attend the church and so there was no mutual support either.



A year later they moved to Edinburgh and because no Methodist church was situated close to where they lived they attended a local Church of Scotland on a regular basis. They did not establish any close friendship links. Through the relative of a former friend from their home town who was attending the Central Hall in Edinburgh, they were introduced to that church. They found the Central Hall unlike any church they had been in before and as far as they were concerned it did not have the appearance of a church with its banks of tip up seats. On the first visit the friend introduced them to several people in the church. Within a year they had both taken on jobs within the life of the congregation. He was still playing football at semi-professional level. When asked in the interview if they would not rather go to a local church within the community in which they lived 54CH responded, *"But, we have got to know so many people at Central Hall."*

The last example is a case of attempted 'Flexibility' within the MOVER/STAYER matrix which reverted to a 'Faithful' position. Their experience would suggest that on first moving there is a residual "Brand Loyalty" but that of itself may not be sufficient as a source of derived value. It acts as an initial introduction. Once the initial contact has been made "brand loyalty" may not sustain attendance at that particular church if other factors which are a source of value like personal relationships and peer group activities are not present. If this is found to be the case the constraints outweigh the values and

a reappraisal takes place which might lead to attending another church or not attending a church at all. Once relationships have been formed and roles within church life assumed it becomes more difficult to leave a church even though considerations about distance and local community would indicate otherwise. The children of this couple which we have just been considering attend uniformed organisations at the local parish church and this involves them and their parents in parade services but this is not a sufficient constraint to outweigh the other sources of value derived from the Central Hall.

Participants 17NS and 18NS are married to each other and are an example of the 'Faithful' throughout geographical mobility. They had lived in various parts of England and Wales before being moved by his employer to Edinburgh. They always attended a Methodist Church and were active in holding church offices both at local and connexional level. When they moved to Edinburgh they discovered that there wasn't a Methodist church within their local community and thought that they would attend one of the local churches of which there were four. However the wife's elderly father also moved with them to live in a house nearby. He was a life long Methodist and *"would not have felt at home anywhere else"*. and secondly the minister of the church which they had attended in England immediately prior to coming to Edinburgh had been the minister at Nicolson Square.

They reported that *"It was just the expectation that we would go to there (Nicolson Square)".* From their former minister they had been told that Nicolson Square *"represented Methodism in the east".* They are both able musicians and singers and Nicolson Square has a reputation for choral music and so *"it was the sort of church with the sort of service and the sort of things that go on where we feel at home."* It is noteworthy that *"When we go to some of the smaller Methodist churches out in the country we really wonder whether we could worship and be part of the Methodist community, as we conceive it, in that sort of setting."* In other words *"We like the people there (Nicolson Square) and the things they do."*

#### 6. DECLINING HEALTH

Facing up to the possibility of no longer being able to attend the church which they have attended for a considerable time due to declining health and lack of mobility caused by old age is a reality for some of the participants and various value and constraint considerations come into the frame of the Reappraisal Point mechanism.

In the main these will be the values derived from established relationships, status and role that come from long associations with the same peer group and younger generations. Memory also comes into the reckoning, especially when there are memories associated with a spouse or close friends now dead. The

restrictions which are or will be imposed on these participants are failing health and mobility which causes the non-availability of the church of their first choice.

The factors relevant to this reappraisal point are most likely to be:

VALUE

Relationships  
Status  
Role  
Memory  
Peer Group  
Activities  
Ambience

CONSTRAINT

Health  
Problems of mobility

The crucial factors which prevent the attainment of the values are health and mobility. There is an absence in this particular reappraisal point of the restrictions of competing peer group and competing activities.

So how do the Fixed hope to resolve these particular competing influences? The relevant participants within the cluster for whom this is likely to be a real issue are 41NS, 48CH, 49CH, 55CH, 56CH, 57CH, 62CH, 63CH.

The first choice of action for 48CH, 49CH and 56CH was to consider moving to another Methodist Church where they knew people already and to which travelling would be easier, especially if it involved only one bus. They would remain 'Faithful'.

63CH and 41NS thought that they would not go anywhere else but be housebound members of the church and the church would then have to come to them. They would thus remain 'Fixed'.

55CH and 57CH would become 'Switchers' and reluctantly move to a local Church of Scotland. 62CH had already done so, having sampled all the local ones and found the one which she believed was nearest in character to a Methodist Church, which in her terms meant: friendly, had good hymn singing and acceptable preaching. In other words she was trying to maximise the values of relationship and ambience.

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## CHAPTER 8

### EXPLORING APPLICATIONS OF THE PROCESS OF CHURCHGOING.

#### THE PROCESS AS AN INVESTIGATIVE TOOL

This process method of approaching church going is a useful tool to help understand not only what are some of the reasons why some people go to church but it is also of use in indicating firstly, those places within the life cycle when there is most likely to be a reappraisal of such a life style and secondly those "values" which church going people expect to be able to realise through this activity. In addition, being historically aware of both the churchgoer and the church to which they go is important in matching the church goer to a church in which those "values" are most likely to be achieved with the minimum of "constraints".

#### INVESTIGATING THE CHURCH

Participants 17NS and 18NS were given a referral to Nicolson Square by the minister of their church in England who had been the minister at Nicolson Square earlier in his ministry. He believed that this was a church that would 'suit' them.

However, let us suppose that the minister had previously been the minister of the Central Hall and had recommended that church instead, would the participants still have remained 'Faithful' to Methodism or would they have become 'Flexible' in their denominational allegiance as they sought to maximise the values which they wished to derive from a church going life style? The indications from these particular participants is that they would not have remained as attenders at the Central Hall. They might have discovered Nicolson Square for themselves or if it had not existed then they would probably have attended one of the local churches of another denomination.

I did ask them if there were any reasons other than the recommendation of the minister why they had not 'sampled' the Central Hall before making a final decision:

*"Oh, I'm sure the Central Hall people are very much like the Nicolson Square people.....Its just that they meet in a very different set of premises....with tip up seats.....Then of course the other aspect of Nicolson Square apart from the worship is what they traditionally call the fellowship. I like, we like, the people there and we like the things they do. We like doing what we do with them."*

By implication, then, the things that the people do at the Central Hall are not the things that these participants like



doing quite so much and neither are they the people with which, given the choice, they prefer to do things.

The same may be true for the people who go to the Central Hall. There they find the activities in which they like to participate and people that they enjoy sharing such activities with. The aim of investigating the historical development of the churches in this study was to attempt to discover something of their ambience and the way in which it has developed during the twentieth century. The documentary evidence was virtually complete for the Central Hall revealing in some detail the character of the place. This was not the case with the other two churches where large parts of the written record have been lost and what parts remain only give the barest indication of what life in the past was like.

The impression which the written accounts of the Central Hall convey and which were confirmed by some of the participants who have lived through most of its history is of a place which until the mid 1950's was the centre of much mid-week activity. The range and intensity of these activities has been described in a previous chapter. The impression of Nicolson Square, again confirmed by the older participants from that church, is not one of such intensive activity, rather it is one of committee centred activity with its range of committees for fund raising for worthy causes in the city and wider Methodism, committees for investigating what the church should be about in its

contemporary setting and so on. These committees were well served by men and women of the congregation who were in commercial business and professions in the city. By contrast, the story of Dunbar Methodist Church is the story of a small family church made up of people from a fairly closely knit community where there was ample opportunity to meet one another in every day life without the need for church based activities. Indeed the story told of the difficulties which various ministers of the church had in trying to initiate mid-week groups and of the apathy with which these proposals were sometimes received.

If we can discover something of the character of a church as it is reflected in the ongoing activities which are centred upon and around the place and if those activities are an expression of the things which enable people to derive "value" from church based associations with other people, then we will begin to have some idea about why people have gone to that church, why they continue to go or cease to attend and whether a new comer into the locality will be able to maximise "value" and lessen "constraint" in one particular church as opposed to another.

The preservation of the records of the Central Hall in Leaders Meeting, Trustees, Club and Society Minute books, annual reports, brochures and leaflets has permitted the drawing of a picture both of the range of church based activities and their duration. The diagram shows these activities between the World

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
				ORGANISATIONS AND	ACTIVITIES	AT THE	CENTRAL HALL			
SUNDAY SCHOOL										
CHOIR										
BAND OF HOPE										
SCOUTS										
KINDERGARTEN										
WESLEY GUILD				WEA. CLASSES					WESLEY GUILD	
TEMPERANCE SOCIETY										
SEWING SOCIETY										
GIRL GUIDES										
SATURDAY CONCERT										
		OPEN AIR SERVICE		OPEN AIR SERVICE		OPEN AIR SERVICE			OPEN AIR SERVICE	
GIRLS CLUB										
WOMEN'S MEETING										
LIBRARY										
Penny Savings Bank				PEOPLE'S SUNDAY AFTERNOON SERVICE						
"CATCH MY PAIL"			RAMBLYNGLAND CLUB		ORCHESTRA				GIRLS LEAGUE	
						YOUNG MEN'S CLUB				
						SUNDAY SCHOOL LIBRARY			SOCIAL HOUR	
									BADMINTON CLUB	
						CINE SHOWS				

	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
SUNDAY SCHOOL										
CHOIR										
BAND OF HOPE										
SCOUTS										
KINDERGARTEN										
WESLEY GUILD										
TEMPERANCE SOCIETY										
GIRL GUIDES										
SATURDAY CONCERTS										
			OPEN AIR SERVICES							
GIRLS CLUB										
WOMENS BRIGHT HOUR (FORMER WOMENS MEETINGS + SUNDAY MEETING)										
LIBRARY										
PEOPLES SUNDAY AFTERNOON SERVICE										
PENNY SAVINGS BANK										
GIRLS LEAGUE										
"CATCH MY PAL"										
YOUNGS MENS CLUB										
SUNDAY SCHOOL LIBRARY										
SOCIAL HOUR										
DORMITORY CLUB										
LADS FOOTBALL CLUB					TENNIS CLUB MUSIC & DRAMA CLUB Y.O. CHOIR	BIBLE SCHOOL UNEMPLOYED CLUB			BOYS & GIRLS P.E. CLASSES.	

	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940
SUNDAY SCHOOL					
CHOIR					
BAND OF HOPE					
SCOUTS					
KINDERGARTEN					
'70' CLUB					
GIRLS CLUB				CANTEEN	
GIRLS GUIDES					
WOMEN'S BRIGHT HOUR					
LIBRARY					
GIRLS LEAGUE					
LATCH MY PAC!					
YOUNG MEN'S CLUB					
SUNDAY SCHOOL LIBRARY					
SOCIAL HOUR					
UNEMPLOYED CLUB					

Wars. There were activities for both sexes, separately and together, for different ages spread throughout the week and in the history of the Central Hall the example was given how one teenage girl was able to take part in one activity or another on every day of the week.

The variety of activity is noteworthy. There was the 'formal' church activities of the worship service, choir, Sunday school and open air services with the attendant committees such as the Trustees and Leaders Meeting, Overseas and Home Mission Committees, Sunday School Committees and all the others that were indicated in a previous chapter on the organisation of the Methodist Church. There were the mid-week fellowship meetings for men and women. Then there were activities of a training nature such as the various uniformed organisations and the girls' and young men's clubs. There were organisations for self help and self improvement, including the Savings Bank, Library, Band of Hope and Temperance Societies. (The Catch My Pal was a Temperance organisation). There were clubs and opportunities for recreation like the Saturday Night Concerts, Cinematograph shows, the Drama Group, the Wesley Guild and various sports clubs.

Now, not only did they provide opportunity for church based peer group associations, they also provided a large and wide range of jobs to be filled. There were Club Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers, leaders and instructors, stewards, committee members

and tea makers. They provided both activity and the possibility of role fulfilment and the means of status for many people who might not have had the opportunity in other, non-church spheres of life. So that for one of the participants who left school and started work in a printing firm there was from an early age the opportunity to assume a position of leadership.

*"Jimmy Stewart, who had been the Secretary of the Sunday School wanted a change and he asked me if I would be willing to do this. So very quickly I got job after job. I became treasurer of the Dramatic Society, then Poor Steward, Society Steward, Chapel Steward, Youth Club Leader."*(49CH)

The Central Hall provided a place where someone could at the same time do something and be somebody.

By understanding something of the history of a church and its current character it might be possible to decide whether it offers the kind of things that you want to do in an ambience in which you want to do them.

There is however a danger that a church going community needs to be aware of and that is that its organisation should continually provide opportunities for entry into the range of activities.

One of the participants had moved to Edinburgh from the North East of England. In her home church she had been a leader in the

sunday school and the Boys Brigade and served on the Leaders Meeting and Circuit Quarterly Meeting. Her husband, a non-church goer, was transferred to Edinburgh. Her minister at home had told her that the Central Hall was very much like the church which she had attended since being a child. Her initial reaction to the Central Hall was one of disappointment:

*"When we got married I left everything, family, friends, everything. I was going to Central Hall in an evening but nobody ever spoke. I walked in on the sunday evening, nobody spoke and I walked out.....It was the most unfriendly place.....I could have run committees, I could have run Boys Brigade, I could have run all sorts of things for them to help them..... I would have joined things, youth club, sunday school....with all my years of experience. But they didn't want me there at all."*(78CH)

This participant had derived "value" from the activities, associations and roles in her previous church. She was looking for the same source of "value" in the new one which was why she initially remained 'faithful' when she moved geographically. She was constrained from achieving value because she was unable to form the peer group links which would enable her to become involved in the activities of the church.



## INVESTIGATING THE CHURCH GOER

Understanding church going as a process helps to identify the places within the life cycle when reappraisals of church going in terms of the "value" and "constraint" may take place.

If we take the example of one of the female participants (59CH), who, at the time of her marriage to a man who was not a church goer, had already moved away from regular Methodist Church going because her career involved regular Sunday working and she had become attracted by the ceremonial worship style of high Anglicanism.

The balance of "value" and "constraint" prior to marriage may be represented as follows:

### VALUE

Family Association

### CONSTRAINT

Work based peer group  
Work based activities  
Sunday working  
Dissatisfaction with worship  
style

At this time she attends worship only when visiting her parents who are life long Methodists.

After marriage:

VALUE

CONSTRAINT

Family Association(Weaker)

Work Based Peers  
Work based activities  
Sunday Working  
Dissatisfaction with worship style  
Spouse non-church goer

The additional constraint of a non-church going spouse was sufficient to override any value derived from church going which after marriage ceased altogether.

The marriage ended in divorce 15 years later and she gradually returned to church going. After trying several churches she eventually settled in a Methodist Church:

VALUE

CONSTRAINT

Residual memories

Wish to widen peer group  
and activities

work based peer group  
and activities

emotional support

Sunday working

friendship

welcome

The participant stated in the interview that she whilst she was still a romantic, the theatrical and ceremonial aspect of high Anglican worship no longer had the same appeal to her. About her husband's influence on her church going she said:

*"I've given up so much that's interested me, that's meant a lot to me.....So I went back and joined the Methodists."*

In the case of a second participant (58CH) the effect of marriage is much less well drawn and much more difficult to clearly express in terms of "value" and "constraint". The participant was the daughter of Methodist Church going parents. Work in hospital made regular church going impossible. She married a doctor, an Anglican who preferred the Methodist Ambiance. His career development meant several moves within the country and two years in the United States. In the interview she states at various points:

*"Outside the church I like walking....my family and my home are very important to me"*

*"We are not great social party goers...."*

*"My son stopped going to Sunday School when he was about 7 but he would go to church with us. Then when we went up to Leeds he announced that he wasn't going to go."*

It was whilst they were in Leeds that the family never went to church on a regular basis for 10 years. "There is no reason why but we didn't get involved with a church. We were absolutely staggered when we came to leave and looking back that we hadn't had a stable connection with a church. We

*always go to church when we go away, when we go to see parents. We always go to church when we go on holiday, but we didn't in Leeds and I don't know why!"*

Perhaps the reason 'why' can be explained in terms of the nature of the constraints on deriving value from church going. From the informants statements the following table of constraints can be listed:

Competing family associations and activities  
Conflict with the wishes of the son  
Time constraints of husbands career ( which may explain why they went to church on holiday)  
No need for church-based or any other peer group associations and activities.

By the time that they moved to Edinburgh some of these constraints had disappeared from the reckoning. The son was old enough to be left at home by himself, the husbands career was more settled and a friend from 15 years previously was a church attender at the Central Hall. By this time her family had all left home and she took an interest in the church based community project and served in the canteen. So at the same time that some of the constraints disappeared new sources of value appeared and the balance swung in favour of church attendance as a meaningful life activity.

A process of reappraisal of "value" and "constraint" can be used to explain why church attendance can continue as a

meaningful activity when the original "values" derived from church going disappear.

83CH and 82CH (husband and wife) became attenders at the Central Hall when 83CH was appointed the organist and choirmaster which is a post with a small stipend. Their peer group associations were not strong in their local church having broken up when that group dispersed to go to University and other forms of higher education. The original reason for going to the Central Hall was the organist's post, however, that has been replaced by the value derived from associations which have been developed with people at the church:

*"People say that people who turn Methodist are more staunch Methodist than the people who are born and bred ..... I am a Methodist now, I can go to CofS and worship happily, but from the point of a caring church, I've always found the Central Hall so. .... if anybody is ill there are people 'phoning and visiting ..... I had never experienced anything like it. .... I've been extremely happy"*82CH

*"I would miss a lot of the people there, more than any other place that we have been in. There have been other jobs in Edinburgh I could have applied for ..... I wouldn't go because I know some of the people, and know that we value too much the relationships that we have in the church and the Central Hall is our church, and its not just because I'm*

the organist, I'm a member of the congregation in full part."83CH

#### THE PROCESS AND LIFE STYLE REAPPRAISAL.

Psychologists working in the field of decision making and reappraisal of decisions have identified two major phases in decision making - the period before the announcement and the period following the announcement. However, within these two major phases are several stages. Such stages involve a series of progressive changes in the decision makers process of balancing the values and the constraints arising from the need to make a decision. Such a reappraisal involves changes in their responsiveness to new information about alternative courses of action.

Janis (1) identifies five stages at arriving at a stable decision:

1. Appraising the Challenge
2. Surveying the alternatives
3. Weighing the alternatives
4. Deliberation and commitment
5. Adhering despite negative feedback

However, having listened to the life cycle stories of the participants in my own study I am of the opinion that they did

not consciously operate in such an analytical way as Janis suggests. They did not clinically appraise, survey, weigh and deliberate, rather they reacted to situations after events in the life style and life cycle had taken place. I have no evidence to support the notion that there was any forward planning as far as their church going patterns were concerned, rather the pattern of church going resulted from a series of activities and situations which had already taken place.

If we take just one example, marriage, then the evidence of the participants does not lead me to suppose that any of them weighed and assessed the consequences of their marriage on their church going life style but that they adjusted that life style once they were in the new situation. Marriage introduced new elements into the balance of "value" and "constraint", including the obvious one of considering the wishes, interests and inclinations of the spouse, together with an introduction to an extended peer group (even to a totally different peer group), possible new ranges of spouse and spouse associated peer group activities which might compete with those which the participant had upto this reappraisal point derived solely from church going.

Cohen (2) examined the possibility that actions which take place in the life styles and cycles of individuals are also located in the events in the social system and structure. There is an interaction between life style and social structure.

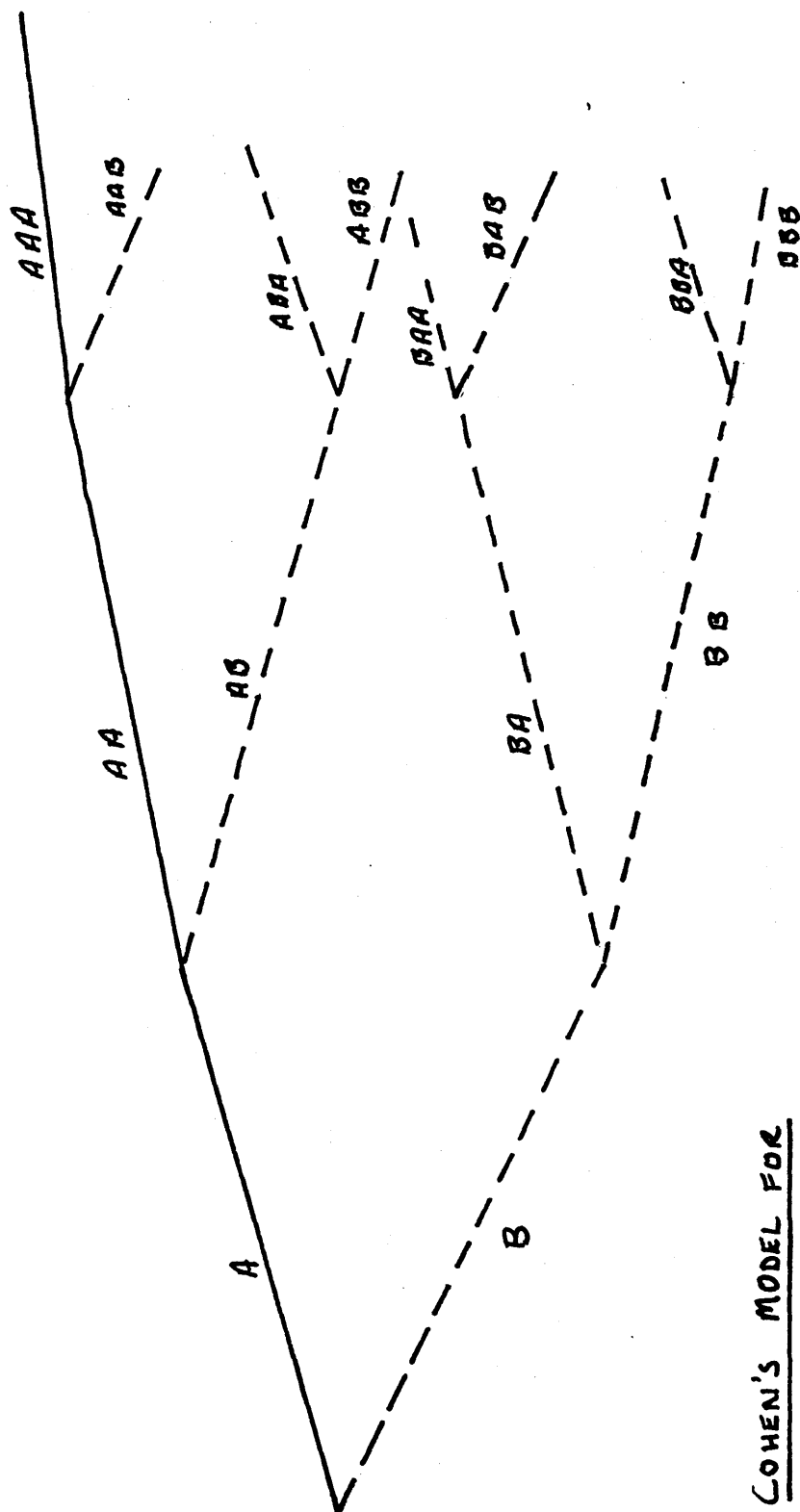
In interaction process theories a course of action develops over time through a series of stages. Some individual in the pursuit of some interest or goal, and taking account of the situation, makes a move. The next move ~~is~~ <sup>the</sup> continuation of the course of action is not fully determined by the state of affairs at the beginning. He may choose two or more possible directions. Which it will be, will depend upon ~~will depend upon~~ the state of the individual and situation at that time. Certain moves are now foreclosed and others, scarcely anticipated at the outset, are now inviting or may even be inescapable. Such a theory is the conception of an act as a tentative, groping, feeling out process, never fully determined by the past alone but always capable of changing its course in response to changes in the current scene.

The theoretical model can be represented by a tree. Each line represents <sup>a</sup> course of action. The course of action A, AA, AAA - is the course of action that would lead to church going as a normal activity within the life cycle. The other pathways represented by the broken lines are the other courses of action that could be taken.

Cohen applies the Interaction process model to an investigation of deviant behaviour.

The completed pathway A - AA - AAA - AAAA represents a course of action which will result in deviance. The other pathways in the





COHEN'S MODEL FOR  
INTERACTION PROCESS AND DEVIANT OUTCOME.

model represent other courses of action which could have been taken. The pathways followed are not predictable at the outset from the original situation. The pathways depend upon the choices, opportunities/restrictions available at each point where a choice of action is possible.

Cohen stresses the point that the Interaction process model comes closest to making provision for the full range of considerations available to a participant. However, precisely because they do come closest to the full range of complex considerations they are very difficult to formulate in theoretical form. Every person is different to some degree from any other person in terms of individual psychology or individual situation or context. Similar choice options or possible alternative courses of action may not be available in a similar sequence for different individuals. As a method of recording the history of choice patterns and alternative courses of action the model can become overloaded by the very complexity of information, desired hierarchy of objectives and possible alternatives that it is able to assimilate. However, I would suggest that a simple form of the interaction model using major events and reasonably available resultant alternative courses of action can be a useful tool for plotting the cumulative build up of actions, options, preferences and restrictions within life style and life cycle. It may also be a useful model for predicting future patterns of choice and courses of action which are likely to result from given future events and possibilities.

Cohen was concerned with explaining and predicting moves towards deviance in behaviour. Part of Cohen's thesis is the notion that certain kinds of people are more prone than others to deviant behaviour. The evidence of the participants in my study, as far as churchgoing activity is concerned is that certain kinds of people are not so much prone to be religious but are people who are prone to be attached to or become detached from a churchgoing process and this may be an explanation why the participants significantly failed to talk about religious experiences when asked about the reasons why they went to church. When a review of the first six interviews was undertaken it became apparent that the participants never spoke about their personal religious experiences and a question was added to all subsequent interviews specifically to ask whether they had "had a religious experience". The definition of a "religious experience" was left for the participant to determine. The conclusion which was drawn from this omission was that in the minds of the participants the reasons which understood as being important as far as they were concerned in determining church going activity were associated with the kind of things which keep people in organisations such as the activities, opportunity for role fulfilment, peer group associations and so on. Therefore, the explanation of why they were there was not dominated by who they were and are, that is religious, neither was it dominated simply by the nature of the organisation but it was a result of the dynamic of the process.

I propose to show how this interaction process model may be useful in explaining those events and reappraisals within the life style and life cycle which tend towards maintaining church going as a significant activity for the individual and also to investigate whether the model can be used as a method of identifying clusters of church going patterns.

#### THE APPLICATION OF THE INTERACTION PROCESS MODEL TO CHURCHGOING.

For each participant I made a simple interaction process model. The model is based on a diamond grid of intersecting pathways. The choice points at the intersections were based, where applicable, on nine events in the life histories. This is a necessary selection but it serves to demonstrate the application of the model to churchgoing. The nine points are:

1. Parental involvement
2. Peer group associations and activities
3. Starting work
4. Adult peer group associations and activities
5. Marriage
6. Derived Status
7. Role availability
8. Change of Domicile
9. Old Age/declining health

Not all of these events are present in the histories of every participant and in some cases where identical events were present the sequence of <sup>their</sup> ~~there~~ occurrence was not always the same.

As far as the construction of the model is concerned and because I am interested in its application to plotting and predicting the propensity towards Methodist Churchgoing as a significant activity the pathway A - AA - AAA - AAA - AAAA etc. represents a choice for remaining within the Methodist Church and likewise pathway B - BB - BBB - BBBB etc. would represent a choice to move away from the Methodist church. At each choice event I allowed a third pathway if the choice was not a definite move towards or a move away from Methodist Church going as would be the case for a participant who attended a church of another denomination at some point in the life cycle or in those cases where the value derived from peer group associations and activities was roughly equally based on churchgoing and non-churchgoing associations of this nature.

#### The Assumptions made in Constructing the Model

Methodist parents would move the participant initially in pathway A. Non-churchgoing parents would move the participant along pathway B and the churchgoing parents of a participant which were non-Methodist would result in a pathway between A and B. In order not to overload the model I have included those families where only one parent was a church goer as either A or A/B as appropriate without making any further differentiation.

The second intersection of pathways was the significance of the childhood peer group and their associated shared church based or non-church based activities. This was treated as a simple choice between A or B. I have, in all cases ignored the case of split peer group influences where, say, the participant was engaged with one group of peers in church based activities such as Sunday School, Boys Brigade, Band of Hope etc. and with another group of peers in non-church based activities such as sport and music etc. unless it was clear from the information that there had been a significant dominance of one which led eventually to a diminution of the other. In these cases it was treated simply as a movement in the direction of the dominant activity and no allowance was made in the model for the secondary activity. Similarly adult church based and non-church based activities were indicated allowing only for the dominant activity and in those cases where there was a an increase in non-church based activities, they were ignored for the purposes of exploring the model provided that they did not significantly diminish the existing church based activities.

The model has been made as simple as possible. For instance in the case of one of the informants who was involved in a range of church based activities but who was also involved in voluntary work in a local hospice, an activity which was not shared by any of his church based peer group, the hospice activity was treated as an extension of his church based activities and not as an alternative activity. In a similar way participation in a sports

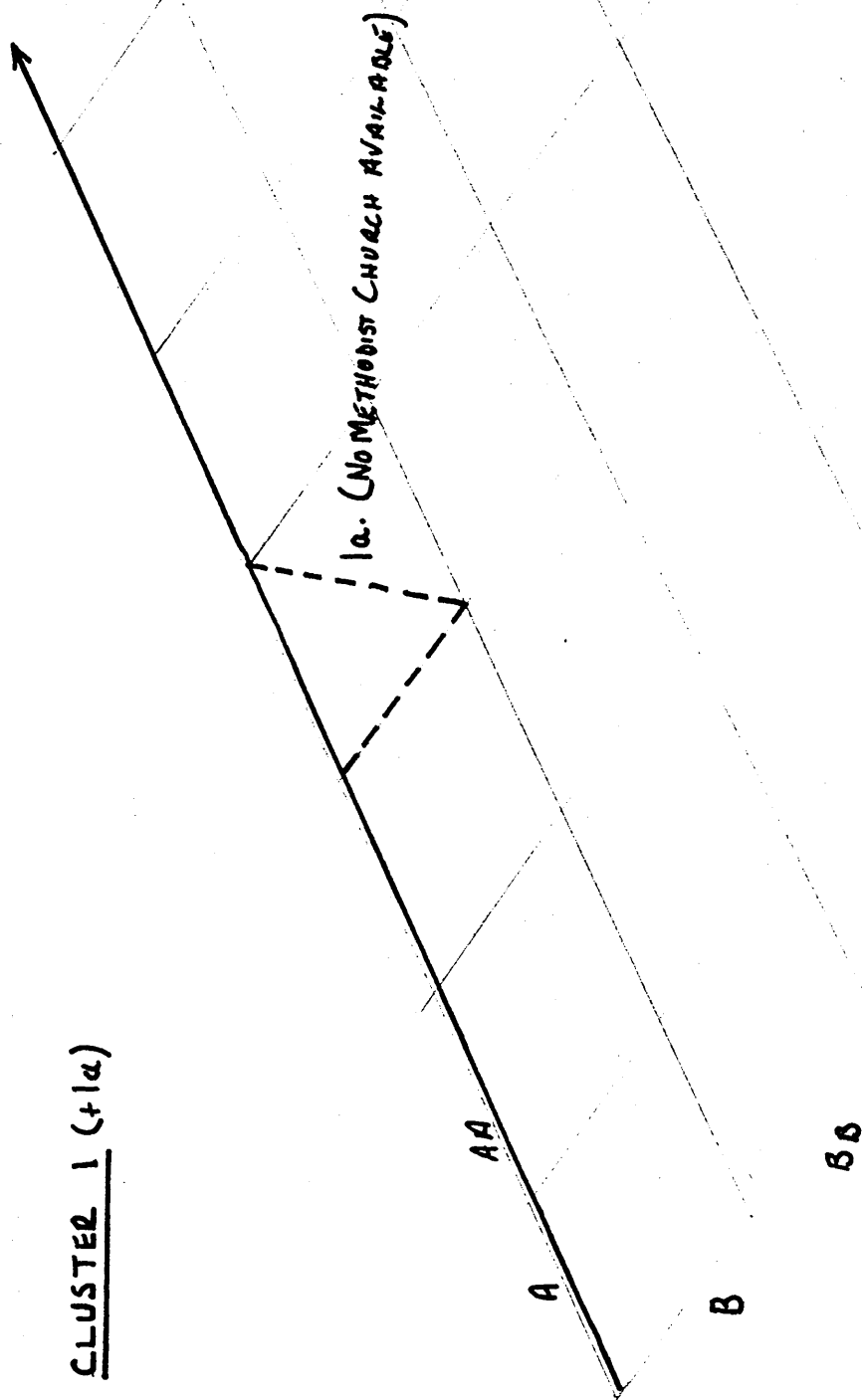
club, unless it led to a diminution in church based activities, including attendance at public worship was also ignored. If there was a resultant diminution in previous church based activities it was treated as a dominant activity which led to a deviance from the values and benefits derived from church going.

### The Model

The plotted pathway for each participant produced a profile diagram of pathways. The participants were group together according to the shape of the profile. The result was seven clusters of similar profiles. The first cluster was that which followed the closest pathway to A - AA - AAA - AAA - AAAA etc. the seventh cluster was that which tended towards B - BB - BBB - BBBB etc. . The remaining five were clustered according to how closely they represented a tendency towards A - AA - AAA - AAA - AAAA etc., cluster seven being closest to B - BB - BBB - BBBB etc..

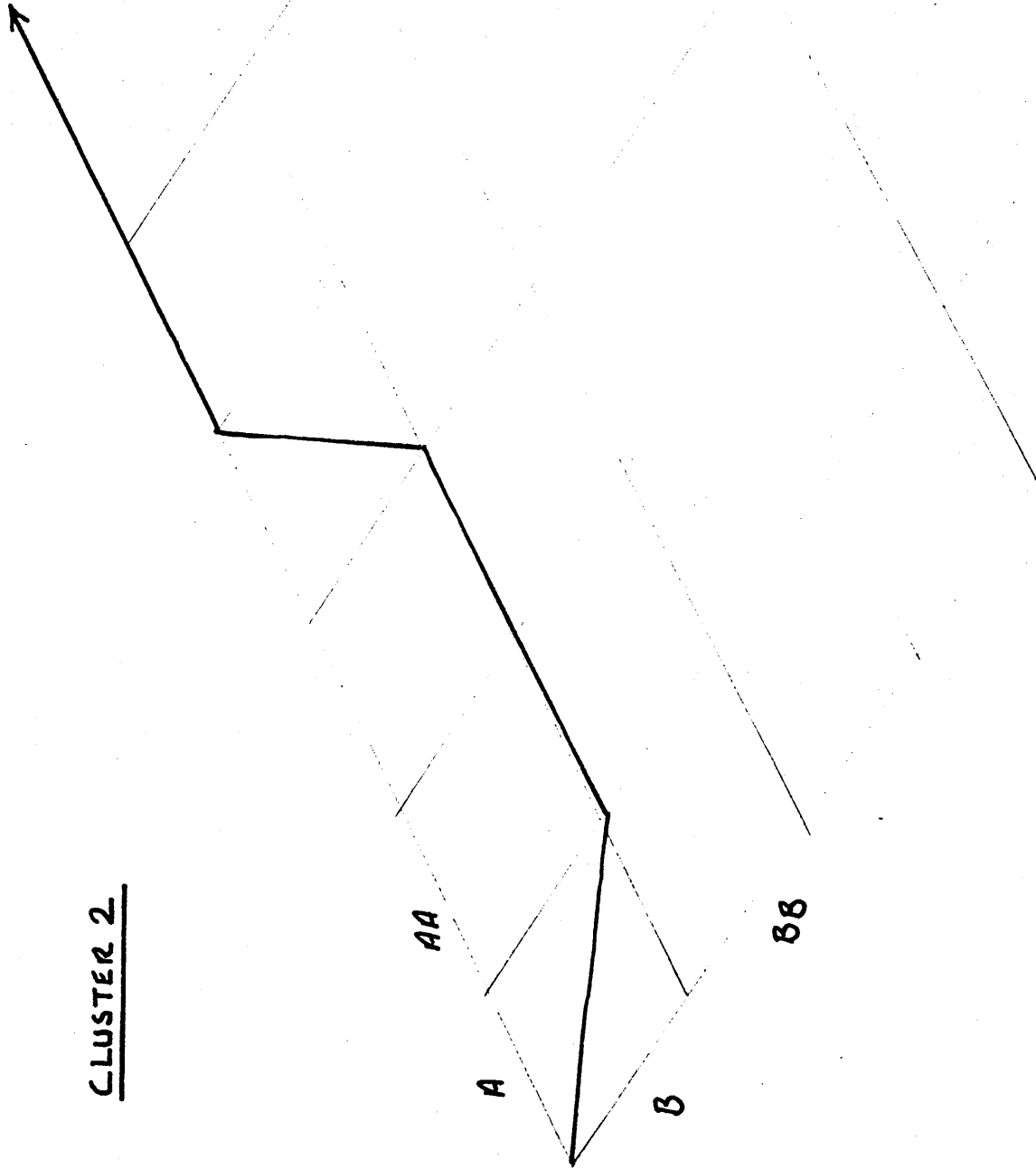
The clusters are based upon the broad similarities in the shape of the individual profile plots. They represent the interaction choices for 83 individuals. Each profile is individual and unique because the histories of the participants are different and the mix of interactive situations, options, preferences and restrictions is peculiar to each person.

CLUSTER 1 (+1a)

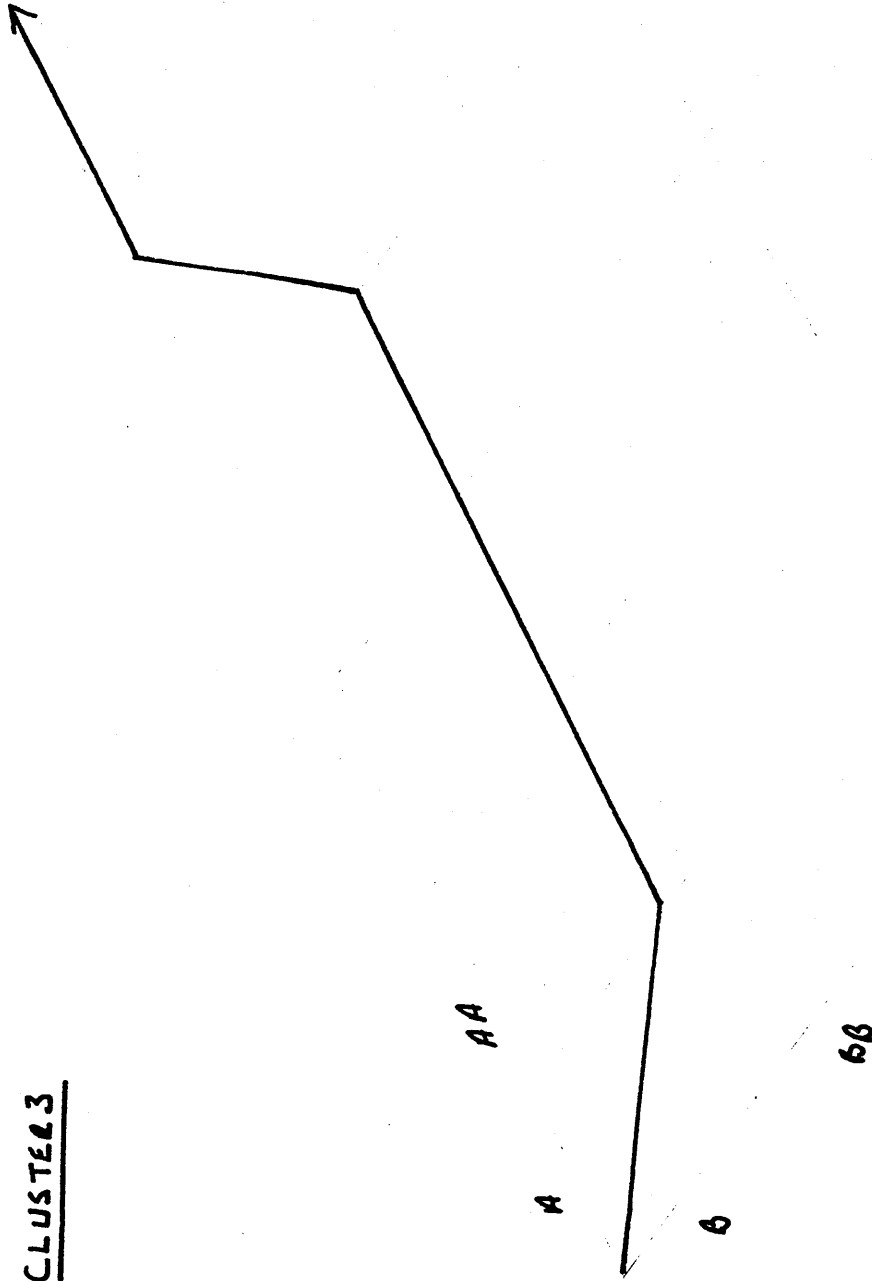




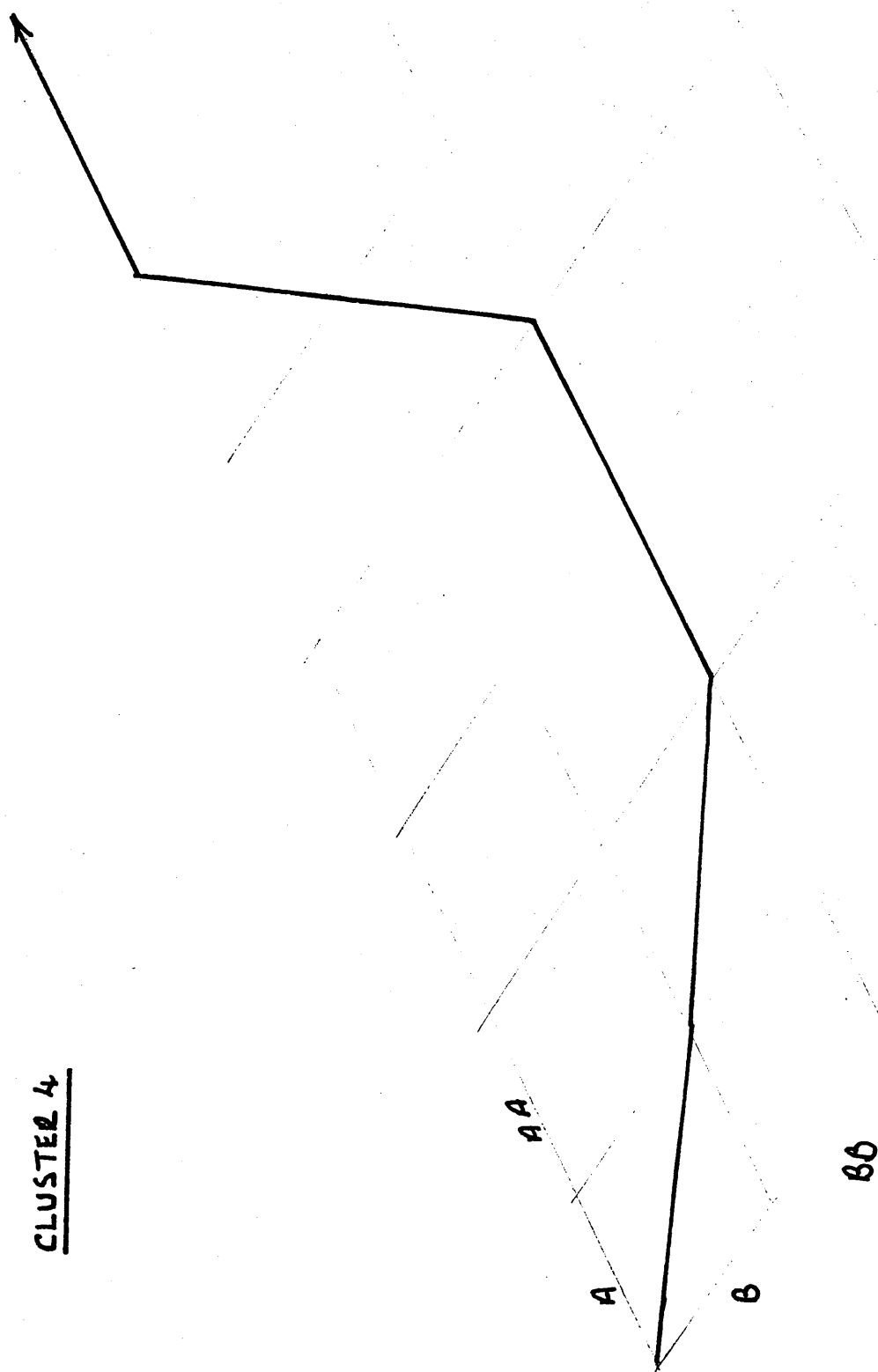
CLUSTER 2



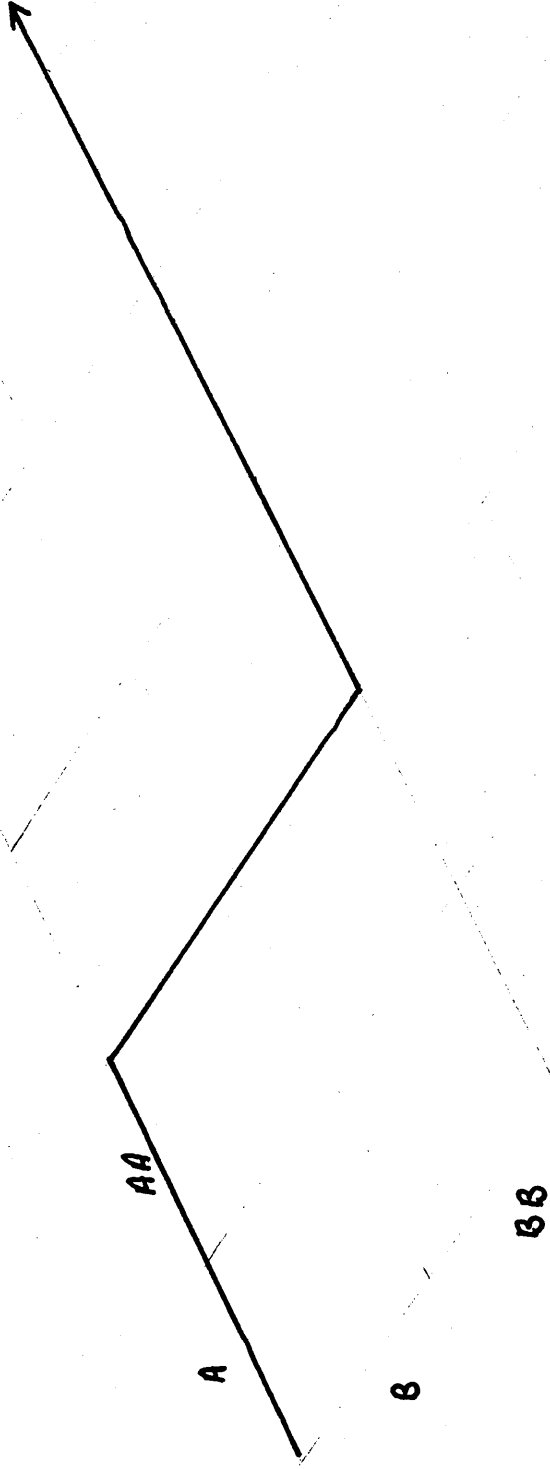
CLUSTER 3



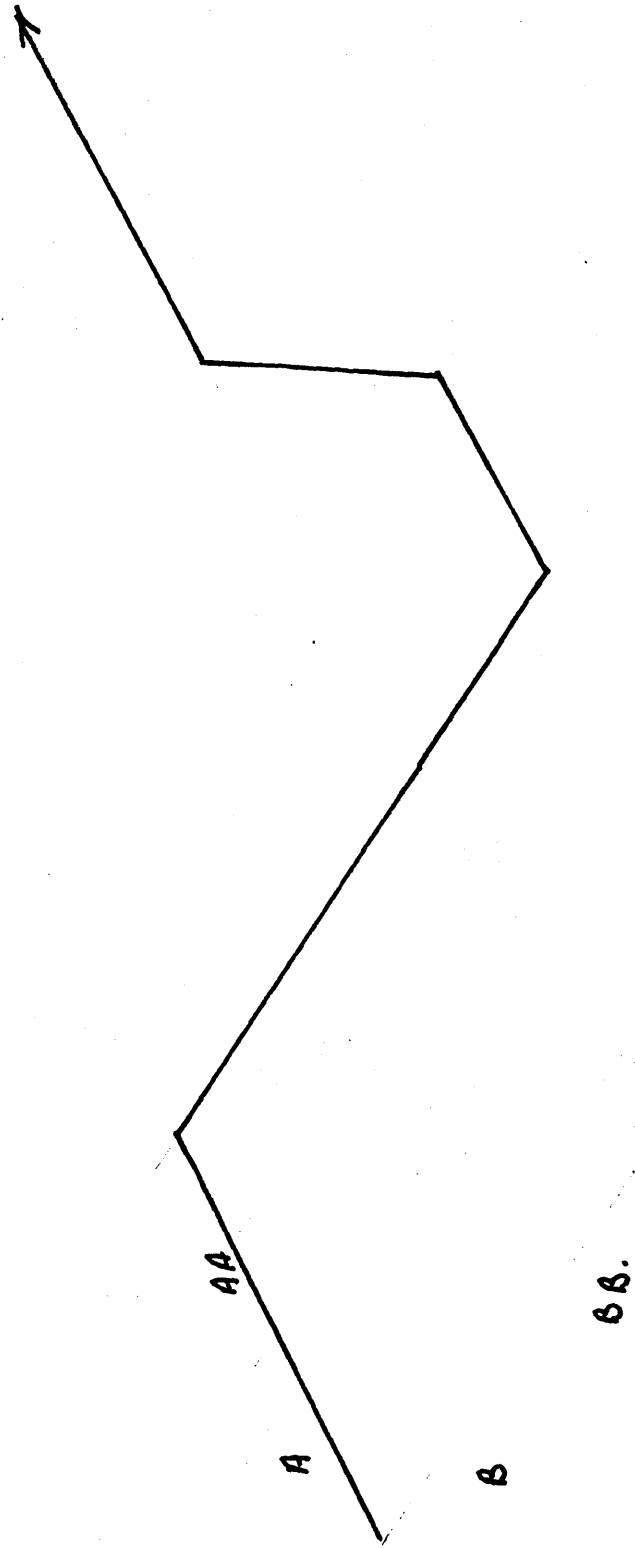
CLUSTER 4



CLUSTER 5



CLUSTER 6



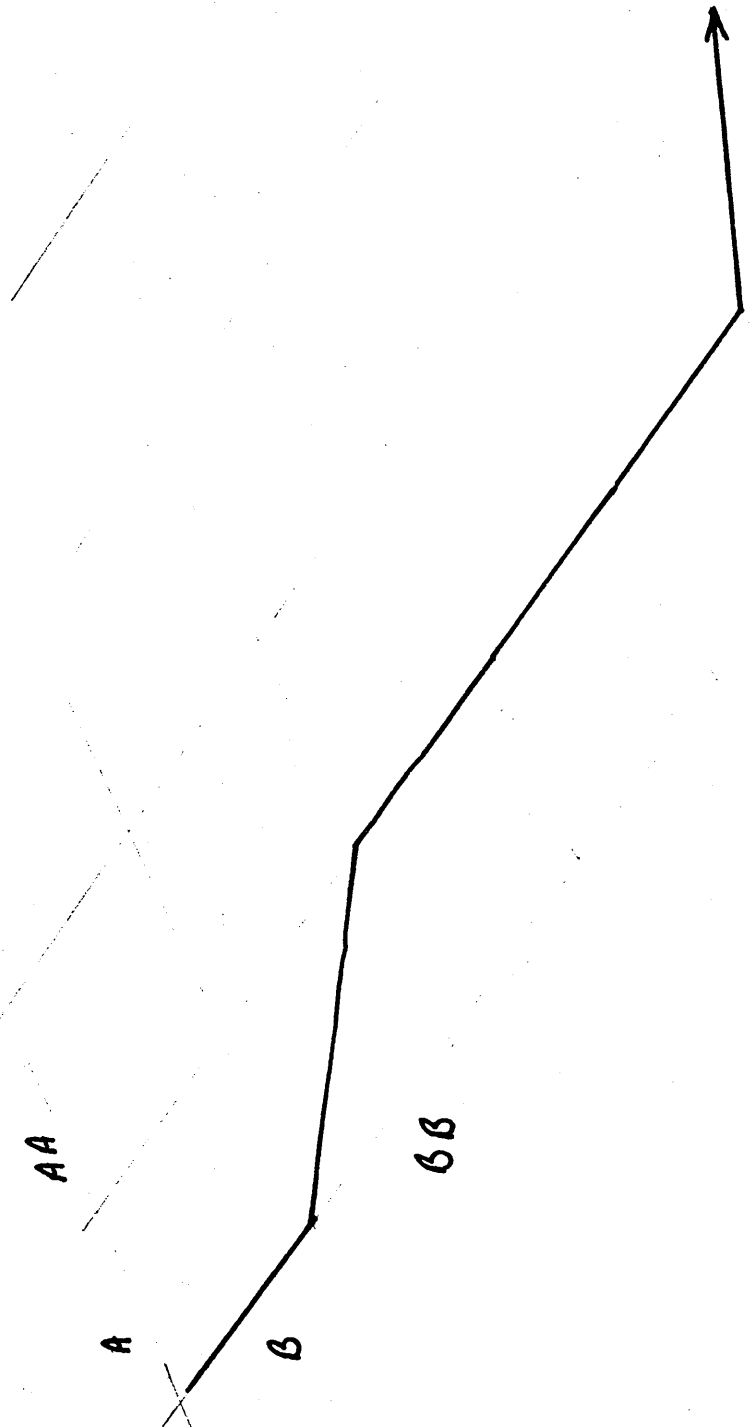
AA

A

B

BB

CLUSTER 7.



The composite cluster profiles are of significance when read as an overview of the history of those people who comprise the cluster and it would be an overworking of my application of the interaction model process to use it in more than an interpretation of the general cumulative nature of actions, choices, situations in so far as church going is an important life style activity.

Cluster 1.

15NS 16NS 17NS 18NS 21NS 22NS 23NS 24NS 25NS 26NS 28NS 29NS 33NS  
35NS 36NS 42NS 43NS 44NS 46CH 47CH 48CH 49CH 55CH 56CH 57CH 60CH  
61CH 63CH 66CH 69CH 70CH 77CH [32]

This illustrates the cumulative effect of the Life Long Methodists, born to Methodist churchgoing parents, participating in church based activities with their childhood peers. For this group starting work provided no significant alternative peer group activities or associations, marriage involved no conflicting spouse demands and there was sufficient provision for role fulfilment and status opportunities together with adult peer group associations and activities which were able to compete with any conflicting sources of value and benefit in the life style from non-church based sources.

There may be a case for establishing a cluster 1a.. This would represent those cases where there was a temporary diversion to

the straight A-AA-AAA etc progression caused by the unavailability of a Methodist Church at some point in the life cycle. This usually occurred when there was a compulsory change of domicile for reasons of promotion or a change of work and the participant chose the next best alternative which was as close as possible to the Methodist ambiance.

#### Cluster 2.

04DB 05DB 06DB 07DB 14NS 20NS 23NS 30NS 31NS 32NS 37NS 51CH 52CH  
64CH 65CH 67CH 68CH 74CH 78CH 79CH 80CH 81CH 82CH 83CH [24]

This is a representation of that group who started life in another denomination, but, who, early on in the life cycle came into the Methodist church, usually through peer group influences or marriage to an existing Methodist. They then followed a similar pattern of decision making as cluster 1 deriving benefit and value from Methodist church associations and not perceiving or having access to similar values and benefits from a non-Methodist or non-church source.

#### Cluster 3.

01DB 09DB 10DB 19NS 73CH [5]



This group comprises those participants who were initially children of church going parents who were not Methodists who shared childhood peer group activities which were church based. Work did not provide them with alternative significant peer group associations and activities so as to create a competing influence. Adult peer group activities, values and benefits were attained within the non-Methodist Church. There was only one intersection (5) where there was a change towards course A-AA etc. For three of them it was the non availability of a church of the first choice when they retired and moved to a new place of domicile and for one it was marriage, late in life, to a Methodist and for the fourth it was the closure of their former place of worship. All five participants replaced their former type of church activity with a similar activity within the Methodist church and formed significant peer group associations and shared activities in the new church.

#### Cluster 4.

27NS 34NS 50CH 53CH 54CH 58CH 59CH 71CH 75CH [9]

The profile for cluster 4 is drawn by the non-methodist church goers who had shared church and peer group activities and associations in childhood and also when starting work had significant non-church based activities and associational peer

groupings which carried on in to adult life style. For this group to move back to the standard progression A-AA etc required a succession of reinforcing moves and choices. There was an initial interactive decision at (5) such as a move to a new place where there was no church of their first choosing together with an association with a Methodist who introduced them to the Methodist Church. The progression was then reinforced by significant Methodist church based associations and activities (6) which was further sustained by status and role fulfilment.

#### Cluster 5.

08DB 39NS 40NS 41NS 72CH [5]

The profile plot for this cluster represents five of the participants who were the children of church going Methodists and who shared in church based peer group activities and associations. This state continued until they started work when a nonchurch based peer group and its common activities became dominant, the non church based activities provided for role fulfilment and possibilities for status satisfaction. Marriage made no significant change in the status quo. Frequent moves of home due to the spouses occupation reduced the church based peer group linkages. There came a point where there was a reintroduction to a Methodist Church (5) and peer group associations increased in significance but not dominance (6).

There was no significant increase in church based peer groupings and the associated activities (7) neither was the church the focus of role fulfilment or status possibilities (8).

#### Cluster 6.

13NS 38NS 62CH 76CH [4]

This cluster is a close relative of cluster 5. Methodist church origins continue in childhood and adult peer group activities. Marriages/ enlarges the peer group by the addition of activities and associations introduced into the life style by the spouse and leads to a diminution of the significance of church based linkages and activities together with associated role fulfilment and status possibilities. The death of the spouse leads to a diminution of some of the spouse introduced factors but they are not replaced with increased church based activities and associations.

#### Cluster 7.

02DB 11DB 12DB 45CH [4]

Cluster 7 is a plot of that group of participants who come closest to deviance from church associations. These participants had parents who were not church goers, the childhood peer group was not significantly church based and as they enter into adulthood their peer group becomes increasingly non-church based and they do not participate in church based activities. Marriage to a non-church related spouse further widens the non-church peer group and its activities. Role and status are found in non-church related activities. Unlike cluster 6, hardly any benefit or value derived from church based activities in later life.

#### MAKING USE OF THE INTERACTIVE MODEL

The model indicates firstly the nature of the cumulative effect of changes in the life style at various points in the life cycle which can lead to church going being a dominant activity or a less significant one. None of the models produced from this study show an abrupt change, but a series of changes over time. An investigation based upon a group of people who have no present church going activities might show a more abrupt change of life style activity and this area is worthy of further study.

Secondly the model suggests that where there is a reintroduction into church going or an increase in the significance of church going within the life style, that this too is a gradual process of change which requires various stages of reinforcement. After

an introduction (or reintroduction) there is an increase in the significance of the church based peer group and the value derived from church based activities and church based associations, these are enhanced in perceived self value by the possibility of role fulfilment and status opportunities within the church structure which further strengthen and widen the church based peer group associations and activities and at the same time diminish values derived from non-church based activities.

An approach to church going in the way in which I have proposed, that is reviewing the ~~the~~ life style within the life cycle and charting the interactive process, indicates firstly, that church going is more than just a "sacred" activity and secondly, that commitment, as the clusters 1 to 7 indicate, can vary within life styles and/or at significant points within the life cycle. It is more than a "sacred" activity and more than a commitment to the "sacred" because a whole range of interactive sociological reasons and motives are in play as we have seen in the life histories of the participants.

In an essay on personal encounters, E. Goffman argues that:

*"An individual becomes committed to something when, because of the fixed and independent character of many institutional*

*arrangements, his doing or being this something irrevocably conditions other important possibilities in his life, forcing him to take courses of action, causing other persons to build up their activity on the basis of his continuing in his current undertakings, and rendering him vulnerable to unanticipated consequences of these undertakings. He thus becomes locked into a position and coerced into living upto the promises and sacrifices built into it. Typically, a person will become deeply committed only to a role he regularly performs....." (3)*

The method of approach which I have adopted can be used to illustrate Goffman's statement on commitment if it is applied to commitment to church going.

In the chapter on the structure and organisation of the Methodist Church I have described how the Methodist Church is of a fixed and independent character, governed by the standing orders of the Conference and which are ratified by the lower courts of the church, and to which the individual has to adapt because he or she is unable to change them to their own particular proclivities. There is something, then, within the structure of the organisation which enables them, in Goffman's words, to do or be; and this doing and being conditions other areas of life and future life decisions. There is, as we have seen, a whole range of activities within the local church and

the official church structure which allow for the possibility of holding office and being somebody. Furthermore the life histories have illustrated how commitment to a particular church or to a particular church ambiance have impinged on other areas of the life style, so that families have chosen to attend a church outside of the local community where they live, men and women have chosen marriage partners from within their own church community, the choice made by one partner in a marriage has affected the friendships formed and the activities participated in by the other because of a church chosen by one of them. Peer group activities have been significantly church based and elderly people make difficult and sometimes physically painful journeys to a church where they have always attended rather than go to a new church near at hand.

Goffman makes the point that a person will become deeply committed to a role he or she regularly performs. This may also be illustrated in the church going context by reference to the interactive application of the process model. In the example of clusters six and seven the propensity to move towards a deviant line B-BB-BBB-BBBBetc is often determined by an accumulation of alternative life style values which are derived from non-churched based sources. It might start with an extended peer group and associated activities which may become available on leaving school and starting work, it may be from the non-church peer group that a spouse is found who in turn introduces a wider peer group and range of alternative activities all of which

create an alternative pool of sources of value to those provided by the church and at the same time become constraints to deriving former levels of value from church based associations and activities. However, on the other hand, for those participants in the clusters which showed a less deviant tendency from the line A-AA-AAA-AAAAetc., church going and participation in church based associations and activities took place on a more regular basis than it was in the cases of clusters six and seven and there were more points during the life cycle where the original commitment was reinforced say, by marriage, peer group associations and opportunities for role fulfilment within the structure and organisation of the church.

#### MEN, WOMEN AND THE CHURCH GOING PROCESS

In the previous chapter, when discussing the positive factors involved in the encouragement-coercion phase of the introduction to church going I speculated under the heading of non-family adult associations that the presence of women, especially in the life of a child, might form the connection in the mind of a child and be carried into adulthood that the church was basically a woman's world. This is obviously an oversimplification of the situation, but, nevertheless, would benefit from further research. However, empirical observation confirms that in the three churches which formed the basis of



this study, the sunday congregations were overwhelmingly made up of women and these women were predominantly over 45 years of age. The regular congregation at Dunbar which averages twenty contains only two men who are both in their mid eighties and the Church Council at this church is solely composed of women. The process model approach to understanding church going may be able to help us understand why there may be more women in a congregation than men and why there may be more older women than younger women.

Simply expressed, my process theory is based upon the notion of the balance between derived value and constraints which are reappraised at various significant stages in the life cycle. If there is little derived value or if the constraints against deriving value are sufficient then church going will cease to be a meaningful life style activity within the life cycle.

In 1905 the Men's Sunday Afternoon Meeting at the Central Hall and which had been started by George Jackson at the Synod Hall could still draw an average attendance of 1500 men. (4) By 1918 the numbers had declined so rapidly that the Leaders Meeting was concerned about its future existence. (5) By 1920 it had ceased to function as a men only meeting but was widened in scope to include women and became "The People's Sunday Afternoon Service". Obviously the Great War had taken its toll but the War Memorial lists only some seventy men associated with the church who had died, the War alone cannot account for the loss of well

over a thousand men from the Sunday afternoon meeting. But the Great War clearly broke the pattern and habit of church going for many men who went away to fight and that on their return to Tollcross they simply found other things, possibly for the first time, from which they could derive "value", may be it was the football, cycling, rambling and improved public transport of which other ministers were complaining of at the time which took the men away.

Certainly the alternative attraction of the newly opened Usher Hall for public concerts had an effect on drastically reducing the popularity of the Central Hall's Saturday Concerts which had both provided a source of entertainment that up and till the opening of the Usher Hall and later the Kings Theatre could only be derived from the Central Hall. For the first time there was a competing source of value and a competing place of association for the men (and women) who were accustomed to going to the Central Hall. There were alternative places to meet friends and future spouses. New friends and widened spouse based peer groups and their associated activities competed with the traditional church based sources.

The review of the history of the three churches, earlier in this thesis, tells of the decline in church based organisations and activities especially after the Second World War. I do not know which came first, the decline of the number of church based activities which provided less opportunities for church based

peer group association or whether it was the fact that people were less and less inclined to participate in them that led to their decline. Logic suggests that organisations continue to exist as long as sufficient numbers of people want to participate in them so the indication is that people were no longer deriving the same degree of "value" from the old church based activities and associations and possibly they were finding it elsewhere. Whatever the reason for the decline one of its results was that there was no longer the same frequency of opportunity for people to meet together on church premises or to derive satisfaction from holding office in these associational organisations. In Goffman's term there was not the same opportunity to perform a role on a regular basis.

There seems to be an interaction between the declining availability for opportunity to meet on church premises and the possibility of alternative meeting places which were not church based and which because they were not church based admitted the introduction into an alternative peer group and sources of "value". There are other people who church goers like doing things with.

But, this, by itself, does not account for why there are significantly more women than men remaining in the three churches. For that we may have to consider other elements in the value-constraint equation. Empirical observation of the three churches reveals that the main mid week activities which still

exist are either for women only (Women's Meetings, Young Wives, Sisterhood) or predominantly attended by women (The Choirs at Nicolson Square and Central Hall, the Dunbar Lunch Club, The Epworth Club). Why should this be so? Why have the women not followed the men into non-church based social organisations in similar numbers? Why do women, particularly older women still derive a source of "value" from meeting one another at church. Part of the answer may lie in the fact that these older women are meeting older women and not older men. There is no sexual overtone or connotation in a church based meeting. They will not be accused of looking for a husband, lover or boy friend and again observation indicated the preponderance of widows in these organisations - the "value" which they derive is not thereby constrained by these associations as it may be in a pub or at bingo or at the sequence dancing. Also the lack of men in the churches provides additional opportunities for women to hold formal office within the structures of the church, which might be denied them in other associations such as the Dunbar Bowling Club which only has a women's section attached to the main club or to any of the East Lothian Golf Clubs where women members can only play at certain times when the course is not busy - Women are barred from playing on the Gullane Golf Club on Saturday mornings, for example. Women, especially older women, in the three churches of this study today have a greater chance of being and doing. For them the church remains as a place where they can derive a range of values with minimum constraint.

These considerations do not apply in the same degree to the young. They may well be looking for relationships which will one day have a sexual implication. The variety of alternative sources of "value" for the younger potential churchgoer is so much wider than it was for their parents and their grandparents so much so that the church and its related activities and associations are of diminished significance at an earlier part of the life cycle. I attempted to interview teenagers as part of this study but found that I was incapable of holding a meaningful conversation with them so it remains an area to be investigated by others.

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## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

#### THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

This thesis began as a response to practical questions that I was asking about the membership of two churches in Glasgow for which I, as a Methodist Minister, had responsibility. They were questions about "Why?". Why were people of different backgrounds, abilities, likes and dislikes able to feel part of one congregation? Why did they choose that particular church and not another when they first came to the city and had no obvious previous connections? Why were some of the newcomers unable to feel part of the congregation? Why did some of the established members leave and go to another church of another denomination after years of continued membership?

Then came other questions "Why?" . Why do some people go to church in a society when most people seem never to go? Why do some people cling to sacred activity in the face of the process of secularization?

When I moved from Glasgow to Edinburgh in September 1985 I had the opportunity to ask some of the questions "Why?" of the people who went to church themselves. This thesis has been their story. As far as I am aware this is the first time, certainly in Scotland, that

the churchgoing life history, from earliest recollections to the present day, of members of a main stream Christian denomination has been investigated. Previous studies with which I was acquainted have concentrated on what seem to me to be the "why?" of the moment - Why are you going to this church - and have not necessarily understood that this is part of an ongoing event. I hope that by sharing with the 83 participants in my own research their life experiences that I have been able to investigate not only why they made the present choice about going to church at all and about going to the specific church building which they go to now, but also why they started to go initially, what has happened at significant points in their life cycles and why they continue to go after the original reasons for going have ceased.

In spite of some of the restrictions which were placed upon my research proposal and which were discussed when I set out my approach to the problem, I had a natural access to the participants. I was accepted as one of them. I was not a total outsider. I was a fellow Methodist.

I am not aware of any previous sociological study of Methodists in Scotland. There are numerous examples of such studies involving Methodists in England, but England is not Scotland. Further I am unaware of any study in this area of the sociology of mainstream religion which has used as its base the life histories of a group of participants and which has attempted to analyse that data in terms of a process model.

This has been a study of a main stream denomination. Robert Towler (1) moved away from popular contemporary studies of the sociology of religion which had concentrated on the study of sects to mainstream, conventional religious consciousness when he and a team of researchers analysed the letters received by John Robinson in response to Honest to God. (2) The point of his study was to delineate different ways of being religious. I hope that in my own study I have moved a little further in this direction by using as a base for the investigation of mainstream religion not just recorded comments but the actual people. Robert Towler was concerned with what people believe. I have used the life histories of the participants in order to try and understand why they go to church.

Towler's view is that the people who are representative of the types of conventional religious experience which he identified might be found in the same church next sunday. I have no wish to dispute that. What I hope that I have shown in this thesis is why people of different conventional religious experience might be present in the same church next and subsequent sundays. We have seen in the course of this study that the participants did not readily refer to matters of religious experience when they explained why they went to church. Indeed specific questions had to be included in the interview schedule to inquire of them about such experiences. The immediate response of why did or do you go to church was one of personal contact with other people and not one of personal relationship with the Divine. It is my belief that the relationship with the Divine for most people in main stream



churches is worked out in the midst of their continuing contact with other church goers. Before we can begin to understand what and why people believe we have to identify why they are in a context where matters of belief are relevant to their life styles. I hope that I have been able to demonstrate that an understanding of why people are there at all is of fundamental importance.

### THE MAIN FINDINGS

The examination of the eighty three life histories in this thesis has indicated that churchgoing can be understood in terms of an identifiable process activity. In its initial phase it is related to coercion and encouragement by significant others in the lives of the participants and then moves to a second phase of value-choice. The evidence which I have collected leads me to conclude that throughout the life cycle there are definite places where there is a reappraisal of the values which are derived from church going based upon continued derivation of value and constraints upon church going as a basis of those values. In addition, changes in life style may also bring about changes in hierarchies of value and which may not be directly be related to life cycle alone. The assumption of new values from sources which compete with church based sources will cause a reappraisal of a church going life style as a source of significant values.

It is my interpretation of the material provided by the participants that value from churchgoing is obtained from the

church being a place where they associate with other people who may or may not share the same conventional religious consciousness. The association with people with whom they feel "comfortable", "happy" or "at home" and the dynamic relationship between people and the structure of organised religion are amongst the most important of considerations. This dynamic relationship is often the decisive factor in deciding whether a churchgoer remains "Fixed" or "Faithful", or becomes "Flexible" and "Switching" in terms of the denomination and place where they go to church.

#### WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ALL THIS ?

Firstly, this thesis is a contribution to the debate about the meaning and understanding of membership of the Church. The process model which I have proposed can be used as a tool in investigating why a particular individual is located in a particular church context at the present time. The notion of a process model can be used to predict the likely outcome if there is a change in that individual's life style and when that individual arrives at future stages of change in the life cycle.

Secondly, the process model may also be used to identify what might happen to members of a church if there is a change in the ambience of a particular congregation due to, say, a movement away from the church of some of its members through urban redevelopment, an influx of significant numbers of new members or even a change in

its pattern of worship whereby there is less opportunity for people simply to meet together in informal social gathering.

Simply, an appreciation of the existence of issues of value and constraint and the process of appraising and reappraising them may help the leaders of the church when thinking about their elderly less mobile members to make an informed judgement about whether to suggest a change of church to one which is physically more convenient or whether attempts should be made to provide transport and other support facilities.

Fourthly, within the organisation of the Methodist Church the transfer of membership to another Methodist church in a new area might be more informed if there is some knowledge both about the transferring member and the churches to which they might be transferred. To do this it is important to know the member and to be historically informed about the church.

#### WHAT ARE THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS ?

As far as the theoretical questions are concerned the contribution of this thesis has been to probe the adequacy of certain received notions. It demonstrates how an empirically grounded study, even though it is relatively small in scale, can contribute to wider theoretical discussion. The debate about secularization is a case in point. The contribution is twofold.

Firstly, by being informed about those things which provide sources of value for an individual within the churchgoing context, which as we have seen have been identified by the participants as including church based peer group and associated activities, shared activities with the spouse, the possibility of being and doing, and so on, then we are able to give some definite weight and substance to Bryan Wilson's admittedly uninvestigated remark that:

*" ..... there may be other non-religious constraints which operate to hold men (sic) to religious institutions or persuade them to go through the motions of religious rituals"(3)*

And secondly, an appreciation of the process model and the way in which the hierarchy of values derived from church going change throughout the life cycle and at specific places in the life style, is a further direct challenge to those participants in the debate, like Luckmann, who adopt the position that church orientated religion is on the periphery of modern society.

The evidence of the participants indicates that this statement can no longer be taken simply at face value. In Chapter Two I have discussed the inadequacy of the use of spatial language in relation to the placing of the significance of church based religious orientations within the hierarchy of other significant concerns and influences. The empirical evidence suggests that the relative significance of church based religion is not located at the same place within the hierarchy of significance for each individual who

goes to church nor does it always maintain the same significance for that individual at different stages within their life cycle and life style. I have noted, for example, how marriage can effect the relative values and constraints that can be derived from church going when the church goer, because of marriage is introduced into a wider peer group association and the related new shared activities.

The church going life style of the participants in this thesis has revealed that there is a reappraisal of the value derived from continued church attendance and that this is most likely to take place at definite points within the life cycle of which independent childhood, leaving school, starting work, marriage, geographical mobility, old age and declining health are the most critical.

From the collected life histories provided by conversation with the participants I have come to the conclusion that it is possible to describe and interpret church going as a process activity. A process model of church going can be constructed and it can be validated by the experiences of those who participate in this social activity. It is a process model based upon the appraisal and reappraisal of a hierarchy of desired benefits and values which can be derived from participation in such activity. I hope that I have been able to demonstrate in this thesis that at indentifiable stages within the life cycle there will be a reassessment of the value to life style of church going activity. One question which

this thesis has not addressed because access to the participants was given only on the understanding that I would not probe issues of personal religious belief is to what extent religious belief as opposed to religious practice is similarly reassessed. However this thesis has established that religious belief is not the dependant variable in the process of church going.

If my thesis is correct and a process model can be fruitfully constructed then it is possible to examine church going in terms of other processes which on the surface seem to be different substantive forms of behaviour such as delinquency and labour market studies and these parallels in social process may provide a useful basis for reflecting on the substantive area of religious reality.

In this thesis I have tried to explain mainstream religion in terms of one process amongst many in society. I have attempted to move on from some of the recent work in the sociology of religion with its concentration on new religious movements and the secular age. The main thrust of my argument is that we need to understand conventional church going from the point of view of those who go to church and to listen to what they are saying to us through their lived experiences. If we do this we can be more discerning in our account of why they are where they are now. It would also provide a

more informed basis upon which to construct present and future church pastoral priorities.

#### REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1

### THE PARTICIPANTS

<u>IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>MOVER/STAYER</u>
01DB	F	57	flexible
02DB	M	55	switcher
03DB	F	52	fixed
04DB	F	55+	flexible
05DB	F	78	switcher
06BD	M	83	fixed
07DB	F	83	switcher
08DB	F	55+	fixed
09DB	F	80	flexible
10DB	F	79	flexible
11DB	M	65+	flexible
12DB	F	55+	fixed
13NS	F	98	flexible
14NS	F	60+	fixed
15NS	F	60+	faithful
16NS	M	65+	faithful
17NS	M	70+	faithful
18NS	F	60+	faithful
19NS	F	55+	switcher
20NS	F	58	flexible
21NS	M	62	faithful
22NS	M	70+	faithful
23NS	M	42	faithful
24NS	M	30+	faithful
25NS	F	25	faithful
26NS	M	26	faithful
27NS	M	70+	faithful
28NS	F	45+	faithful
29NS	F	60+	faithful
30NS	M	66	faithful
31NS	F	50+	switcher
32NS	F	42	faithful
33NS	F	41	faithful
34NS	F	72	switcher
35NS	F	60+	faithful
36NS	M	60+	faithful
37NS	F	55+	faithful
38NS	F	55+	switcher
39NS	F	70+	fixed
40NS	F	80+	switcher
41NS	F	70+	switcher
42NS	F	60+	faithful
43NS	M	60+	faithful
44NS	F	50+	faithful



45CH	F	41	switcher
46CH	M	44	faithful
47CH	M	30+	faithful
48CH	F	70+	switcher
49CH	M	70+	fixed
50CH	F	77	switcher
51CH	M	61	switcher
52CH	F	59	switcher
53CH	F	45	flexible
54CH	M	47	faithful
55CH	F	75+	fixed
56CH	F	75+	fixed
57CH	F	70+	fixed
58CH	F	49	faithful
59CH	F	53	flexible
60CH	M	45+	faithful
61CH	F	38	faithful
62CH	F	69	switcher
63CH	F	70+	fixed
64CH	F	70+	switcher
65CH	F	71	flexible
66CH	F	40	fixed
67CH	F	75+	flexible
68CH	F	75+	faithful
69CH	F	75+	faithful
70CH	F	70+	faithful
71CH	M	70+	switcher
72CH	F	70+	fixed
73CH	F	76	flexible
74CH	F	67	flexible
75CH	M	69	faithful
76CH	F	63	fixed
77CH	M	93	faithful
78CH	F	60+	faithful
79CH	F	37	flexible
80CH	M	38	flexible
81CH	F	73	switcher
82CH	F	38	switcher
83CH	M	37	switcher

## APPENDIX 2

### The Transcript of a Conversation with a lady aged 85+

Q What are your earliest recollections of being in a church?

A One very distinct memory, I must have been quite small, not school age, and I was in the church, I think it was a Sunday night, I was with my parents, standing beside them and a great big man, with a black face, came over and grabbed me - I yelled the place down, which shows something about the times. I can see him as though it were yesterday, and it was just because I had never been close to a black man. He was being nice to me.

Q That was at Tollcross?

A Yes

Q When did your mother and father move from Nicolson Square to Tollcross?

A I'll go back just a little, both our families went to Nicolson Square, one had 12 and the other had 14 children and when Jackson came he took some of the young people including my mother and father to start a choir. That was their first connection with the Central Hall and they weren't married then. They got married near the end of the century. They lived in Buccleuch Place near Nicolson Square. Eventually they moved to Morningside and eventually decided to change to Central Hall as it was easier. We have been there ever since, I won't tell you how long, mind.

Q What can you remember about Sunday School?

A Sunday School? Well to go back to that black man, that night or the next day I took ill with pneumonia, may be that's why I yelled as much as anything else and I remember when I was better a friend of my sister's, Marjory MacDonald - a great Methodist Family at the Hall - used to take me by the hand between them to the Central Hall to the Sunday School - and I hated it. I think it was because of all this trailing me. I don't remember much about the early days. My first teacher was a Miss Rodger, a very nice person, unfortunately I only had her for one year, two at the very most and then I had Miss Fulton - terrible to say but she put me off. I had her right until I was well into my teens.

Q What put you off?

A Her so called religion! She wasn't really a normal person. She was quite tall and I suppose beautiful, beautifully dressed and her father had been in the charge of the Light Brigade. She lived down Morningside with her father, I met him once or twice. She used to get the class together and take them out to tea which I did not enjoy. The brother had a Hatters business.

Q What did you dislike about Miss Fulton?

A She was too good to live! I don't call that living.

Q So you went unwillingly to Sunday School?

A Yes.

Q Did you ever get the chance not to go?

A No. After all the family went and should not I go and persevere and I was still in her class when I joined the church at 16.

Q Can you remember making a decision to join?

A Well, through the Sunday School, there was a day in the year - Decision Day or something. Which made me very uncomfortable. I suppose other people were too but you don't know that. Well, I wanted to be there and well, I suppose I had learned quite a lot but then I had a good family.

Q When you were a girl did most other children seem to go to church?

A Tollcross was a very busy place. I can't remember numbers or anything like that but I'm sure it was a big Sunday School. A lot would not be members children - local.

Q What else were you involved in as a girl at the Hall?

A Nothing. I wasn't even in the club. The Girls' Club.

Q Were you involved in anything outside church?

A Yes, I don't know why, it must have been my chums, up at Holy Corner there was a Congregational Church and two or three of us went there on a Saturday afternoon and we made things, could sew, do lots of things. They always put on, now I don't know whether it was a weekday or a Sunday, a singing thing. I used to be in that and I enjoyed that. But I hadn't anything deeper at that church. It was very nice.

Q And what happened to you when you came to leave school?

A I was 18. I was a secretary in Insurance. Which was alright. I should have sat my Highers you see but I just went home one day and said, "I'm leaving the school", which I did. My sister by this time had become an Art Teacher and I was to follow and be a teacher. I just got it into my head that it was not for me. That was that.

Q Did you make friends at work?

A Little, but by this time I had friends in the Hall, of course.

Q Who were they?

A There was a family of Muir, Jean Muir was my age.

Q Were your main friends at the Hall, then?

A School.

Q They didn't go to the Hall?

A No.

Q As a young woman where did most of your friends come from?

A There was a Tennis Club at the church, I spent most of my time there when that was there. Its where I met my husband too.

Q Tell me about him.

A He didn't go to the Hall then, he just wanted to play tennis. He was a Scout Master at a Church in Dalry.

Q Was he ever involved with the Scouts at the Hall?

A No, but he was with the Boys' Club. He did a lot of work there. By that time Graham would be born and I wasn't out so much. Alfred Paske and he started a Club in Granton Square, right down at the docks. I can't remember much about it.

Q So your husband didn't have any real church connections when you met him?

A Not Methodist - he was CofS.

Q So when you married why didn't you go with him to his church?

A Because I didn't want to!

Q And he was quite happy to come with you?

A Yes, but it took him a wee while. It took him a long time before he really took root.

Q What made him take root?

A I really think it was because I was there. Cathy, his aunt, was there.

Q What sort of things did you do at the Hall, then?

A That was when Winifred Baker made me go to the Sewing Meeting. I don't think she was keen at all and I certainly wasn't. But we were a bit.

Q Did you prefer to be at home?

A I don't have a lot of friends.

Q What did your husband do?

A He was in the City Chambers - Engineers.

Q How old was he when he became society steward?

A I don't know, Graham was quite a big boy.

Q Who was the minister then?

A Joe Neilson.

Q What did you get involved with in the church?

A Well, then Women's Work. And of course, during the War there was the Canteen. That was my one outing in the week.

Q I understand that Dr. Baker was not at all keen on the Canteen being started?

A Well, he started the Methodist Peace Fellowship. Joe and I were the first members - which gives a sort of a look to our lives. Joe was in Court when he was called up.

Q Did you have a difficult time of it?

A Yes.

Q How did people at the church react?

A Some terribly and some, well, alright.

Q What sort of things happened?

A I can't remember. I think because you want to forget these things that you forget them. It was uncomfortable, there's no doubt about it.

Q What made you make that decision?

A His family lived in Cowdenbeath. His mother died during World War I and his father got compassionate leave, he went back and was killed two weeks later. That had an effect on my husband being the oldest boy. We talked about it long before the War. I thought the same, not from his point of view, but I thought it was not the right way. When Eric (Baker) came up with this we were very friendly with him and said, "Here we are."

Q Can you remember whether Eric Baker would preach on pacifist issues on a Sunday?

A He might verge on it but I don't think he would dare.

Q He wouldn't try to lead the church in this way?

A I don't think so.

Q Would it come up in other places like the Class Meeting?

A Eric had his men's class at the Manse, well I really don't know. But if it had been like that I'm sure Joe would have told me.

Q So you didn't find a clash of conscience with your pacifist views and helping at the Canteen?

A No. No, Deep down its not the best thing to be doing. But how can you avoid that? During the War my husband and my sister both went to the YMCA on a friday night, working with the soldiers and folk coming in. But if you take a very severe attitude thats wrong to be doing that. But you see we have gone on since then, our ideas have changed a bit since then. The thing is that you were helping the man not the soldier. In fact he often used to bring people home to stay. Many people landed up in our home.

Q Did you enjoy working in the canteen?

A Yes I enjoyed it because it was the one night out I got. It was always noisy. I met one or two quite nice soldiers that came out for a meal.

Q Have you ever held office in the church?

A Yes, late in the day. I'm on the Communion Committee. I'm treasurer for the Women's Work, but then that finished a few years ago.

Q What office did your husband hold in the church?

A Society Steward in Neilson's time.

Q Now was he Society Steward in Mr Dawson's time?

A Yes

Q For that period the minute book appears to be missing.

A I'm not surprised!!

Q Now, I noticed your husband's name in the Hall Dramatic Society.

A Yes he did a lot before he died. I helped as a dresser.

Q What else were you involved in at this time?

A I don't remember much else.

Q During the difficult time (Mr Dawson's ministry) did you ever think of leaving the church?

A NO\*\*\*!!!, NEVER. For one thing it was a passing thing. I felt it was my second home really.

Q What sort of things were you involved in outside the church?

A He golfes, I golfed a little and the tennis club was still on of course. I can't remember anything else particularly. I do far more things now than I have ever done in may life.

Q What?

A Well I go to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, I go to the Literary Society, so called, in the village.

Q Have you ever thought of going to a local church?

A There isn't one. Oh, you mean a different one? No.

Q Why not?

A I just like where I am. My daughter married a Catholic and he comes to our church and she goes to his.

Q Does your son still have church connections?

A No. They are an excellent couple and the church is missing something when people like that are not interested.

Q Have you any idea why people like them are not interested?

A I couldn't say why he finds it irrelevant. They must think they don't need it. I think they do.

Q Why do you think people ought to go to church?

A Well, this goes back to our (House) group the other night. We were each asked this. I said something about being filled with the Holy Spirit, you can have that anytime, but with people like minded. Its good to be with them. I find that when I can't get its a different week somehow.

Q How often do you get?

A Every sunday.

Q Do you ever watch services on T.V.?

A Not really.

Q Is there anything different about a Methodist Service?

A I think that there is an aura that comes from them.

Q Aura?

A They give the impression of being sincere and happy. They mean what they say.

Q If you couldn't go to the Central Hall any more what would you do?

A Well, if it closed something else might take its place. They might come to Corstophine. That would be fine. But, on the other hand, if I was stuck I can get a bus at the foot of the road to Abbeyhill (Methodist Church).

Q You would still go looking for a Methodist Church?

A I think so. That is what I feel like just now.

Q Have you ever been to one of the local churches?

A When we came here we went round them all. We didn't have a car and we thought that the day may come when we are not wanting to go all that distance. And the one we picked on was the old one. But my mother and father had their membership in Abbeyhill, they lived down there, my sister was christened there.

Q So if you could not longer get to Central Hall, what would you miss most?

A I think taken over all the ministers are very good.

Q You don't think you'd find the same in the Church of Scotland?

A Its really an English Church and we get English ministers although I must admit the Church of Scotland seems to have come ahead and there are good men there too but you get used to the different voice. But I've been to some Church of Scotland's that were a drag.

Q If you had to pick out one thing about the Central Hall that you enjoyed most, what would it be?

A Thats very difficult because I've been there all my life. It becomes like your home. It becomes part of you. Maybe its not a good thing. Maybe I should have had more variety. I don't know.

Q What do you find most frustrating about it?

A I'm not a very outgoing person and it takes me a long time to make friends, even so I like to go, just to be there, regardless of who is in the pulpit.

Q Has being a Methodist shaped your political outlook at all?

A No.

Q Not one way or the other?

A No I don't think so. Methodists are supposed to be Liberal.

Q You don't feel the church has given you any guidance in these matters?

A I've taken the Methodist Recorder all my days, my mother had it first. It was a great big paper at first and now a days its a political paper and I find it very interesting.

Q Have you ever had a religious experience?

A Not a turn again thing.



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