

THE PSYCHO-DYNAMICS OF LIFE AND WORSHIP

**PAPER by
Bruce D Reed**

**The GRUBB
INSTITUTE**

The Grubb Institute © 1996
Cloudesley Street, London N1 0HU
Tel: +44 (0)20 7278 8061 Fax: +44 (0)20 7278 0728 Email: info@grubb.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

I wish to introduce the theme of this Consultation - *Members One of Another* - by referring to three happenings which have come as disclosures to me in succession over the years.

Dynamics of Life

The first occurred when I was a young student of architecture at the University of Melbourne. It was an exciting and creative period in opening up doors into many civilisations and their manners of life as expressed through their artforms, buildings and the ways they planned their cities, towns and villages. In the course of our studies we attended a lecture by a Jewish Rabbi. I had never heard a Jew speak about his faith before, and as someone who considered himself a Christian I was interested in what he had to say about his religion. His introductory words gave me a shock, the waves of which have reverberated in me ever since. He said “the Hebrews had no word for **religion**, they spoke of **life**.” For them God, people and the world were all one, and any one aspect could not be addressed without all the others. My idea that as a Christian, I had to learn about my faith, then learn to apply it, was shaken to the core - **what my life was, was my faith** - there was not one phase of being a Christian to be followed by how to apply it in the world during the other aspects of my life.

If life is given by God, then to understand life involves understanding its relation to God at all points. To think on this basis ‘**religiously**’ is to relate God only to a part of life, leaving it open as to how far this relationship penetrates or expands into the remainder. A person who sees themselves as religious becomes one who is associated with God in a way which implies that he or she is subtracting themselves from a full life, not necessarily adding something to the whole.

What I want to discuss this evening is **life**. Looking back I see how easy it is to trip up. I called my book on this topic not ‘*The Dynamics of Life*’ but ‘*The Dynamics of Religion*’!¹

Regression to Dependence

The second encounter was some years later in London. I was closely involved with the Tavistock Institute in studying human behaviour in groups and institutions. In carrying out my research I was fortunate enough to arrange a series of discussions with Dr D W Winnicott, an authority on child psychotherapy. Winnicott described how the bad experiences of life, particularly those of childhood, can remain as it were ‘frozen’ inside us, leading in severe cases to what is regarded as mental illness². He suggested that for most of us, these undigested disasters are reached and unfrozen by the various phenomena of ordinary life, namely friendships, poetry, music and nursing during physical illness *etc*. He summed it up, and I quote our conversation:

People who are ill (and we are all ill to some extent) have a drive to cure themselves. Nothing is more important than to do that. This means they experience a great need to feel real, and they only come to feel real by doing something like **regression to childhood dependence**, to something which can hold them. This may be realised, for example in the church or in music.

Since Winnicott extends the idea of illness to cover everybody, he meant that regression to childhood dependence is a feature of **normal** life.

During these discussions many half formed ideas began to fall into place, and I became aware that I could describe my own experience of having periods of feeling autonomous and self-reliant, and periods when I needed to engage in different activities where I relied on other people and on other resources.

¹ Bruce D Reed *The Dynamics of Religion* London: DLT (1978) This lecture is a revision of the oscillation theory using different terms to describe it.

² D W Winnicott *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* London: Tavistock (1958) p284

Before I relate the third happening I would like to look more closely at two concepts referred to by Winnicott: **‘regression’ and ‘dependence’**. Both terms refer primarily to states of mind.

The key is the way the two concepts are linked together as part of a **developmental process**. One instance comes from a study of children by John Holt³. He describes his experience of observing young children with their mothers:

The courage of little children (and not them alone) rises and falls, like the tide - only for them the cycles are in minutes, or even seconds. We can see this vividly when we watch infants of two or so walking with their mothers, or playing in a playground or park.

Not long ago I saw this scene in the Public Garden in Boston. The mothers were chatting on a bench while the children roamed around. For a while they would explore boldly and freely, ignoring their mothers. Then, after a while, they would use up their store of courage and confidence, and run back to their mothers’ sides, and cling there for a while, as if to recharge their batteries. After a moment or two of this they were ready for more exploring, and so they went out, then came back, and then ventured out again.

He describes his experience of teaching a young child to swim:

In just the same way, this baby in the pool had his times of exploration, and his times of retreat and retrenchment. At times he let me tow him around freely, kicking his feet and paddling his hands. At other times he gripped my arms fiercely, pulled himself towards me, and by his gestures and expression showed me that he wanted to be held in the same tight and enveloping grip with which we had begun. Or he might even ask to go back to the steps, or to be lifted out of the pool altogether. Then, a few minutes later, he would be back in the water and ready for more adventure.

³ J Holt *How Children Learn* USA: Pitman; Harmondsworth: Penguin (1970) p110

Holt goes on:

At one time or another I have watched a number of parents trying to teach their very little children to swim. On the whole, they don't get very far, because they are so insensitive to this rise and fall of courage in the child. Is it because they don't notice? Or because they don't care? Perhaps they feel that the child's feelings are unimportant, to be easily overridden by exhortation and encouragement, or even anger and treats (1970 edition, p.110).

This type of behaviour has its close counterpart in the images of the relationship between Israel (or the worshipper) and God which we find in, for example, the Psalms.

But be not far from me, O Lord: thou art my succour, haste thee to help me. (Psalm, 22:19)

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
(Psalm 23:4)

I have used the term '**oscillation**' to refer to the alternation of the periods of autonomous activity and periods of physical or symbolic contact with sources of renewal. For most people, the ordering of everyday life provides for regular cycles of oscillation. Each day includes periods when we address ourselves to the problems of living, and periods when we are fed and cared for, relax, reflect and sleep. Similarly, for many, the week and the year provide occasions for more complete disengagement from the problems of living, in the weekend break and the annual holiday.

I want to draw special attention to the words in Winnicott's phrase "**regression to childhood dependence**".

Dependence

In using the term 'dependence' to describe a state of mind, I do so to emphasise the natural condition of all living beings - that is they are contingent, wholly reliant upon their interaction with the objects which constitute their environment - air, food, shelter, other human beings etc. I describe it as the state of '**in-needness**'. This 'in-needness' compels me to reach out to others, from the baby seeking the mothers breast, to the astronaut using the power of rockets to fly.

What this in-needness achieves is to bring us into contact with the world around us and into relation with one another as people. This condition is the foundation of all human relations of love, trust, hate, greed, generosity, power - the actual feelings depending upon whether I seek to satisfy my in-needness by working alongside others, or by being in conflict with them. Human society in all its forms, the family, the community, the church, is derived from the commonality of in-needness. I would go so far as to say that our state of human in-needness is not primarily so that we would have food or shelter, but for the development of the relations between the people who are necessary for their provision. The in-needness is not satisfied biologically, it has a relational dimension.

In-needness needs to be distinguished from 'having needs'. The former is the given state, the latter is the identification of external things, people, artefacts which at any time I may indicate I "lack", "have need of", or "want". The focus is then on the yearning for the object, the something or someone, not on the origins of the need. This is why getting what one 'needs' never satisfies. It can only gratify for the time being. To argue about what is most important to have need of, is more a matter of culture and race, of class, status, age, health and belief.

Based on this argument about ‘in-needness’ I define the concept of ‘dependence’ as a state of mind deriving from ‘in-needness’ which is not one of helplessness.

An example comes from a study carried out into the personalities of American astronauts.⁴

Although these men tend to be **individualists** who show a high degree of self-reliance and a clear preference for independent action, all are reported to be **‘comfortable when dependence on others is required’ and to have a ‘capacity to maintain trust, in what might seem conditions of distrust’**. The performance of the crew of Apollo 13, which met with a mishap en route to the moon, is testimony to their capacity to sustain trust. Not only did they maintain their own efficiency in conditions of great danger but they continued to co-operate trustingly and effectively with their companions at the base on earth.

In other contexts ‘dependence’ is used to describe enfeeblement and exaggerated reliance on other people, or on specific substances *eg* alcohol, drugs. In these instances I prefer the term ‘dependency’.

The state of dependence can lead to many different types of behaviour, **functional behaviour** for the health and development of the individual, group or community; or **dysfunctional behaviour**, leaving the individual, group or community alienated, shut up in their own worlds and unable to develop or grow naturally. The dynamics of the oscillation process is intended to throw light on why on some occasions, dependence leads to development and growth, or to stagnation, retardation and sterility.

⁴ *J Bowlby Attachment and Loss, Vol 2 Loss* London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis (1973) p344

Regression

For many writers on human dynamics, regression has such overtones of psychotic, or infantile behaviour, that they have rejected it for alternatives when writing about creative processes (eg Bettelheim, Ehrenzweig *etc*). But I have retained it with other human scientists (Winnicott, Hartman, Bion and Kris). The antipathy it arouses, is in part a reaction to the process signified, and

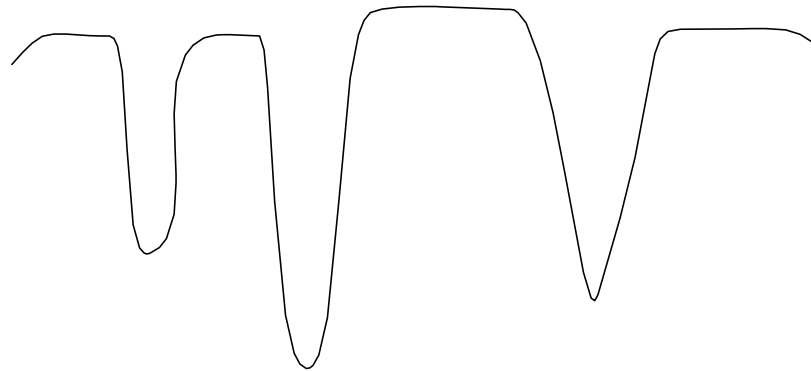


Diagram of the Process of Oscillation

not just to its misleading associations.

Whether regression is functional or dysfunctional depends upon the circumstances. Here is an example, from a work of fiction, in which involuntary regression obscures the capacity of the hero, Paul, to enter into an adult relationship with his boss, Kroner:

Kroner's enormous, hairy hand closed about Paul's, and Paul, in spite of himself, felt docile, and loving, and childlike. It was as though Paul stood in the enervating, emasculating presence of his father again. Kroner, his father's closest friend, had always made him feel that way, and seemingly wanted **to make him feel** that way. Paul had sworn a thousand times to keep his wits about him the next time he met Kroner. But it was a matter beyond his control, and at each meeting, as now, the power and resolve were all in the big hands of the older man.⁵

⁵ K Vonnegut *Player Piano* London: McMillan (1967) p 37

It will be seen that, in this incident, Paul does not cease to be aware that he and Kroner are adults who have a working relationship; he does not in this sense lose touch with reality. Yet his feelings and behaviour are in part dictated by another image of their relationship, according to which Kroner is his father and he is a little boy. His predominant feelings are therefore of being “docile, and loving, and childlike”, though somewhere inside himself he feels quite the opposite.

I am using the term ‘regression’ to describe the mental state experienced which follows a shift from the **outwardly focused** activity and thoughts, characteristic of a planned and regulated life style, to **inwardly unfocused** or chaotic thought and feelings detached from external realities. This transition may or may not be expressed in overt behaviour, so those experiencing regression may not recognise or acknowledge it. When they do they may as it were, ‘try and pull themselves together’, stop being too anxious, overcome stress, and try and pretend to act normally as if nothing had happened. But our hypothesis is that a shift in mental state inevitably occurs, acknowledged or not.

The shift can take many forms. The person may experience anxiety, suddenly being triggered off by their own thoughts. Bad news, misfortune or a death in the family, loss of control due to excessive stress, threats to one’s survival, or mental illness, can cut off the person from their immediate surroundings, isolate them and turn them in on themselves. Another form of shift is deliberate withdrawal: taking a holiday, relaxing among friends, a theatre outing, going on retreat or attending a church service, or retiring to bed. In these latter instances the outward behaviour is intended to allow the inner mental shift to take place involuntarily but it may need the stimulus of being cosseted, exhortation, alcohol, or prayer to get it going.

To regress is consciously or unconsciously to search for something or someone on whom to depend. Hence the term to “regress to dependence” is used by Winnicott both as a process which takes place in psychotherapy, and as a feature of normal human growth and development: Frank Lake⁶ also used the same idea in his “dynamic cycle of being”.

⁶ *Lake F Clinical Theology*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd (1966)

Oscillation

In maintaining that the recurring phases constitute a natural human process, which carries on throughout our lives, I preferred the term 'oscillation' to that of 'cyclic'. The latter has repetitive implications, whereas oscillation suggests variety and that if we could find ways of plotting the process the amplitude and shape of the curve would alter considerably over time in each phase.

There are too many variables however to conceive the process as scientifically measurable. Oscillation is better conceived as no more than a metaphor about human behaviour - an idea we can play with in our minds.⁷

Systemic Thinking

This discussion leads me into the encounter which opened up for me the third disclosure in developing this theme. In the course of studying organisational behaviour I and some others were joined in the exploration by two Italians, Luigi Boscolo and Gianfranco Cecchin who, with their colleagues in Milan, had initiated a new mode of family therapy.

They showed that if the family as a whole were willing to be treated as the patient, they were able to consider that the symptoms exhibited by one member *eg anorexia nervosa*, were a function of the relation within the family - parents, siblings and extending to grand-parents and other relations. One person could not be given therapy apart from the whole family, as the Milan group conceived that the whole was expressed through its parts, even though the persons involved were unconscious of what was happening. By enabling the family meeting together to entertain this notion, the therapists were able to give paradoxical injunctions to different family members to allow them to break across previous habitual repetitive relations. This set up different dynamics in the family system leading to the central person ceasing to display the pathological symptoms.

⁷ J Gleik *Chaos* London, Harmondsworth: Penguin (1989) p 28. Those familiar with the 'Lorenz Attractor' (as James Gleik called it), as a metaphor for exploring chaos may be able to enrich the metaphor

At the behavioural level this method carried further the pioneering work of the Tavistock Institute on groups. It gave substance to **holistic** as distinct from **linear** approaches to behaviour. The major transformation for myself was to discover that I now saw the world differently, I viewed it systemically. As individuals strive to work out their own destinies they are inevitably reflecting and representing others, so that parts and wholes cannot be considered independently.

As I mentioned, this theory was already well known to me and applied in my work in the Grubb Institute, but the disclosure resulted in, to use Thomas Kuhn's term, a new "**paradigm**", when values, ideas, activities and principles came together in new configurations, *ie* **the idea of oscillation as a human process**. It did not happen all at once, but it progressed as I became familiar with the radical changes in the outlook of the so-called new sciences. As Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers write:

Both at the macroscopic and microscopic levels, the natural sciences have rid themselves of a conception of objective reality that implied that novelty and diversity had to be denied in the name of immutable universal laws. They have rid themselves of a fascination with a rationality taken as closed, and a knowledge seen as nearly achieved. They are now open to the unexpected, which they no longer define as the result of imperfect knowledge or insufficient control.⁸

⁸ I Prigogine and I Stengers *Order out of Chaos* London: Fontana (1985)

A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

I turn now to the working hypothesis I want to explore in this paper

the oscillation theory provides a metaphor of life as a psycho-dynamic process which indicates essential conditions for the well-being of society from a Christian perspective.

I have identified four stages or modes in the oscillation process. I have given each stage a distinctive name to symbolise the successive changes in the conscious or unconscious state of mind without restricting the range of experience they attempt to describe as they merge into and replace one another.

Realisation

If I followed Winnicott closely I would call the stage “independence”, in contra-distinction to dependence. However ‘independence’ only hints at one aspect of life in this stage - that of feeling free to take one's own decisions. Since a fuller description is to say the person is trying to express what they consider themselves to be, or to be becoming, I call it **Realisation**. Realisation is the actual outward behaviour expressing the person's inward being in a context. A context where persons relate with one another to achieve things and satisfy their in-needness. Creative thought is being realised in: an invention, a picture, an opera, a poem, a home, a supermarket, running a business, pastoring a congregation and planning a war - the innovations being reflected in and through others and manifest in artefacts and their use.

Regression to Dependence

For this mode, I use the term **Regression to Dependence** to symbolise the inward withdrawal by a person from engagement in their habitual round of activities, and the withdrawal of their own ego-strength from working with others. As I have mentioned earlier, ‘regression’ as a term is frequently used by other human scientists.

Identification

This stage is called **Identification** in order to symbolise the search for a dependent object or person with whom to identify, to be a container for their anxiety which has been aroused by regression. Identification is extremely complex and varied where people are searching for help in finding out who they are, who they **really** are. To use Winnicott's phrase, they want to "feel real". This stage in the oscillation is where the parts, fragmented in regression are brought together, at deep levels of conscious or unconscious thought or dreams. They contribute to the creative work of the self and the community, or a work of art or scientific discovery which is realised at a latter stage. This is the stage of culture formation where community members evolve rituals to create tribal identification, exemplified for example in the primitive ritual behaviour on the terraces of football stadia.

Transformation to Realisation

Transformation is the stage of transition between identification and the realisation stages. Like the caterpillar which emerges from the cocoon as a butterfly, the newly re-constructed ego is being transformed so that it can express outwardly, the inward process of creativity. The process is one of transformation which gradually merges into the stage of realisation.

Oscillation Process in Context

By this time it is obvious to you that this broad outline of human life is not new. Myths and legends of many ages and cultures have pictured the dying and rising of the gods, the ritual death before the new birth into full tribal membership. Scholars in the fields of anthropology, sociology, political philosophy and psychology have arrived at descriptions of social life and mentality which reflect a binary form of human existence, referred to by Emile Durkheim as *homo duplex*. Victor Turner, an anthropologist, concluded that 'society seems to be a process rather than a thing - a dialectical process with successive modalities of *structure* (organised existence), and *communitas* (where restraints are relaxed). Human scientists have explored the behaviour

and experience of those moving from one modality to the other, from the perspective of psycho-analysis, and also those analysing how artforms are created.

This paper is not the place to make a detailed comparison with other theories of this rhythm of life and death. But one or two observations are in order.

We have pointed out that the state of in-needness has brought about the formation of communities and societies, but it is the myths of those communities, frequently associated with the repetitious patterns of the movements of the heavenly bodies, the tides and the seasons, seed-time and harvest, which have affected the quality and the culture of the lives and development of these communities. The stories, amalgams of fantasy and fact, have until recently been underestimated by the so-called advanced civilised peoples, convinced of the validity of universal objective truths. But in the light of the subjective dimension of truth being disclosed through the new sciences and philosophies, these stories are being reassessed, and we are becoming more humble towards primitive or ancient peoples of past civilizations.

The assumption many of us were reared with, was that of a progression from simple to complex, from ignorance to truth, from superstition to faith. Our lives were planned and we were educated and preached to, on this general model of progress. This was the model which treated these ancient myths as irrelevant to understanding life today, our lives. What the oscillation process may do is to enable people to question those earlier assumptions as they re-examine their own experience carefully. We are not as secure in our knowledge as we imagined we were a few years ago, and we need new tools of interpretation of our existence.

A second observation is about the pattern underlying the chaos. However bewildered we are, it is a safe assumption that the earth will continue rotating so the sun will continue to appear to rise and set daily, the moon will wax and wane, the tides rise and fall, the seasons come and go. It is these natural phenomena which provide rhythms for the oscillation processes. The timing of the recurrent stages as we normally experience them are normally measured, but not determined, for us by the calendar, into days, months and years.

Though this pattern is continually disturbed by sudden changes in our lives it reminds us in planning to satisfy our in-needness of how much we take for granted. It is interesting to note that the resource the human race has probably most taken as free and always available - air to breathe, is now being threatened.

The following extract from the *Dynamics Of Religion* is included here as it extends this thinking in the context of society, in a way which was not possible in the lecture itself.

An extract from "The Dynamics of Religion" ⁹

The Oscillation Process in Context of Society: Religion

Implicit in this discussion is the idea that for any group to function, and to be experienced by its constituents as a group rather than as a chaotic aggregate of individuals, it requires some kind of bonding, and that this bonding is provided by the *synchronisation* of the oscillation process of its members. Where we encounter a social group, of whatever size, we can expect to find some consensus, explicit or implicit, about the places, times and ceremonies at and through which its members can together regress to dependence.

The size of the group clearly limits the extent to which its members can gather in the same place. In a small tribe, as anthropologists have observed, it is possible for all its members to participate, at least as onlookers, in its ritual occasions. Observation of such tribes led Victor Turner¹⁰ to conclude that 'society seems to be a process rather than a thing - a dialectical process with successive phases of structure and *communitas*. There would seem to be ... a human need to participate in both modalities'. In a populous nation dispersed over thousands of square miles, the processes through which its members retain their sense of belonging to one nation are necessarily more complex. Even on this scale, there are occasions when the whole nation seems to be suspended in identification, as for example, in Britain on the occasions of the funerals of George VI and Winston Churchill.

These occasions are however exceptional. More significant is the structure of times and occasions which shapes the social oscillation process - for example, when it is time to work and when to rest. Without this, national life would be impossible. A developed form of this is seen in the weekly cycle of life we have today in our society.

The link between oscillation and religion can be stated by saying that religion is a corporate activity which provides a ritual setting for one of the modes of the oscillation process, the identification mode, and thereby 'binds together' the lives of those who participate in it. We should note that one of the Latin roots of 'religion' signifies 'to bind'¹¹; an early christian example of which is the binding together of a religious community by vows. The alternative to religion doing the 'binding' is an acknowledged event co-ordinating activity around the mode of realisation. In agricultural regions this has sometimes been achieved through the institution of the market day. In ancient Roman times this had more significance than religious

⁹ B D Reed *The Dynamics of Religion DLT* (1978), pp 49-57. This passage needs some reworking, although the argument remains. The oscillation phases have been changed to be consistent with the lecture.

¹⁰ V W Turner *The Ritual Process* Harmondsworth: Penguin (1976) p 193

¹¹ Cf Max Weber (1966 edition, p.11): 'The authentic Roman religion contained...a conception of the impersonal as having an inner relationship to the objectively rational. The *religio* of the Roman surrounded his entire daily life and his every act with the casuistry of a sacred law...Every fact and indeed every specific element of an act stood under the influence of specific *numina* (spirits).'

occasions. In rural England market days and religious festivals have been equally important.

Participation in such corporate activity involves endorsement, by an individual or group, of the process of which they are a part. In religion the mode on which the group focuses is one in which they seek sanction or strength for their lives from outside themselves; it is an identification mode. The essence of this corporate activity is that the participants express dependence on someone or something of which they have a corporate or shared view, attaching themselves emotionally to that 'primal object' as a way of identifying themselves to themselves eg "I am a believer". Hence we may define religious behaviour as: the behaviour of people, either individually or collectively, which represents (symbolically) dependence on some idea, thing or person, the implied nature and power of which is not wholly susceptible to rational explanation.

Religion provides a focus for behaviour in the identification mode of the oscillation process. In the realisation mode people scatter through all the diverse institutions of society, engaging in food production, government, education, protection of person and state, home management, creative arts and sciences, and so on. Values attributed to the primal object in identification are externalised in realisation so that they provide rules for social behaviour. Here we touch upon the question of morality, which classifies behaviour as right or wrong for society, but not necessarily as good or bad for the individual. Referring back to our earlier distinction between process and movement, we can see that it is only when the movement pervades the entire society in which the process is dominant that immorality is equated with sin against God. So long as the leaders of a religion show they have this influence, people will tend to make no distinction between sin and immoral behaviour. Participants in religious acts externalise their dependence through symbols which are incorporated into rituals and ceremonies. The rituals and ceremonies then become means of reinforcing the corporate activity. In some religions the corporate activity is manifested in assemblies for worship (that is, in collective activity) because individuals become attached not only to the primal object, but also to one another hence 'identification'. This is something we take for granted in Christianity, but which is also evident in other historic religions such as Islam and Judaism. Sikhism and Bahai also follow this pattern. There is evidence that the Eastern religions, as they adapt to the Western culture in Britain, are practising the same rituals. In most other religions the shared rhythm of oscillation creates such a dominant culture that outward collective activity only occurs infrequently on special occasions. The corporate activity is more frequently expressed individually in, for example, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, Burma and Sri Lanka, where the philosophical idea of the divine with its countless manifestations gives rise to quite different religious behaviour, one instance of which is the emphasis on meditation.

One symbolic action to which religion gives rise is the observation of sacred time; that is, of periods which ritualise the complex and varying oscillation patterns of the members of a society. Such cycles are found in all societies. They may reflect the cyclic movements of sun and moon and the transitions of human life, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. By ritualising the turning points, such as the winter solstice and the new moon, meaning is given to the remainder of the cycle. These periods supplied the major religious festivals for much of the ancient Near East. Perhaps this is why some people feel that if they have been to worship on the christian version of the winter solstice on Christmas Day, they have done their duty for the year.

We therefore propose this working definition of religion:

Religion is a social institution which in the identification mode provides a setting in ritual for the regulation of oscillation processes in a social grouping.

(Without going into much greater detail we can only suggest that it is the identification mode of the oscillation process which effects the synchronisation of the process. Compare Durkheim, quoted by Berger¹², who states that religion is 'the symbolic representation of integration'. Also Mol¹³: 'Religion is the sacralisation of identity').

If religion concentrates on one mode of the oscillation process, what is its relation to the other mode? When individuals or groups believe there is a primal object which is dependable, to which they can turn in times of distress, then they are willing on other occasions to take risks and engage in change and in exploring the unknown. If religion therefore is able to be sufficiently dependable, the members of a community are supported sufficiently for them to work individually and together in the many and varied conditions of their environment, to produce a social structure which satisfies their collective needs.

The dependability of a religion is closely related to the nature and character which is attributed to its primal object. Conversely, the nature and character attributed to the primal object influences behaviour in society, in the realisation mode, insofar as, in the other mode, the worshippers have ritually identified themselves with their god, and been infused with the values which are embodied in his character, and with his power to realise these values in action. Therefore if the Christian is worshipping his god with integrity we would expect his life to manifest the qualities of love, justice and righteousness, because these are the characteristics he attributes to divinity.

¹² P Berger *The Sacred Canopy* New York: Doubleday (1967)

¹³ H Mol *Identity and the Sacred* Oxford: Basil Blackwell (1976)

At the corporate level, integrity demands that these qualities of the primal object are incorporated in the laws of the State. For example we believe that the value of a religion to a nation can be judged by the extent to which the State is able to ensure a match between its resources and the needs of all its members. If a State is dominated by one particular social class, then the value say of divine universality has not been adequately realised at the political level. We can attribute this discrepancy to a number of things: first, that a group (the class) has taken over those who lead the rituals and undermined their integrity; second, that the ruling class has a conception of the primal object which suppresses any other conceptions such as those embodied in sacred writing such as the Bible; and thirdly, that religion has become impotent to change the status quo, because the regression to dependence it induces is not a creative regression but a withdrawal which does not allow development or growth.

Types of oscillation

If a national social group is involved in the process without all its members having to take part in religious acts, what is the function of its religious institutions and those who take part in its activities?

Our first clue to this question was provided by some speculative ideas put forward by Bion¹⁴, arising out of the studies of small groups which we have described. He observed how small groups can become caught up in fantasies of dependence upon all-powerful, all-knowing figures, which engender strong cohesion but which immobilise the group from carrying out the work for which they had come together. The need to find security through regressing to dependence undermines the realisation necessary to engage resourcefully in a task. What prevents society as a whole from being immobilised by the emotions and fantasies associated with the state of dependence in the identification mode? Thinking in particular of the Western world, Bion¹⁴ suggested that societies 'bud off' religious institutions - that is, churches - to contain or localise the expression of these emotions, so that other institutions are free to go about their tasks in a realistic way. He does not say how this 'budding off' takes place, nor does he make any reference to people moving between the activities of churches and of other institutions. Nevertheless this rather strange idea was important to us, because it helped us to shift our frame of reference from the behaviour of individuals to social processes. It also suggested to us that those who participate in the activities of religious institutions might do so on behalf of others who seldom or never attend a place of worship.

We have since come to the conclusion that it is useful to divide members of any community into three types. There are first those who engage in what we describe as *personal oscillation*. These participate regularly in acts of worship; collectively they experience the process of oscillation for themselves and are often aware of the transition from identification to realisation as they engage in the various rituals of the church.

¹⁴ W R Bion *Experiences in Groups* London: Tavistock (1961) p 56

The second type are those who engage in *representative oscillation*. These seldom or never attend worship but it is important for them that a member of their family, an acquaintance, a neighbour, or a significant person in the community such as their doctor, goes to church as it were on their behalf. They become anxious if that person does not go, and even if they apparently criticise them for being too religious, it is done in such a way that the churchgoer is reinforced in his behaviour.

A study of the task of the local church carried out by The Grubb Institute provided many examples of representative oscillation. For example, a colleague who carried out the field-work wrote in his notes:

A sidesman told me that after the Sunday morning service he used to go into the public house near the church for a drink with some friends. They often used to ask him if he had been to church and to joke about it. As he told me about this I gained the impression that he would have found it quite embarrassing to go in and tell them he had not been to church. He seemed to feel under some pressure from them to continue to attend church, as if they found some satisfaction in his doing so.¹⁵

Another example may be seen in this account by an Anglican vicar of an East London church who described what happens when an unwitting representative does not go to church. During a Sunday evening discussion an elderly lady in the congregation said how surprised she had been when a neighbour had told her she was sorry she had been ill. She had not been ill, and discovered in the ensuing conversation that her neighbour had jumped to this conclusion because she had not seen her going to church the previous Sunday. Later in the week several others had asked her whether anything had happened to her. She was amazed that people who did not go to church themselves should bother to notice whether she went or not.

As she reflected further, she realised that she often used to see people standing in their windows on Sunday, watching her walking down the road. There were others she used to meet because they were in their gardens as she walked by. By going to church regularly it appears that she had become a dependable element in the worlds of her neighbours. When she failed to appear, they had to supply reasons.

The third type are those who engage in *vicarious oscillation*. This group do not identify themselves with any individual worshipper, but it is important for them that church buildings should remain standing, that they hear the church bells ringing, and that they see people going to church. This group have no apparent interest in church-going, but our studies have indicated that they constitute a considerable group in society which may not be made manifest until the church building is threatened

¹⁵ D M K Durston *Project on the Task of the Local Church (1968-1972) Field notes in the possession of The Grubb Institute*

with closure. For many of them, the church is a place to stay away from, but upon which they covertly depend, like the adolescent who apparently abandons his parents when he runs away from home, but likes to think they are still there if he should ever want to come back to them.

An example of this type is seen in the following paragraphs from the study mentioned earlier. The place is Baldock, a small market town forty miles north of London:

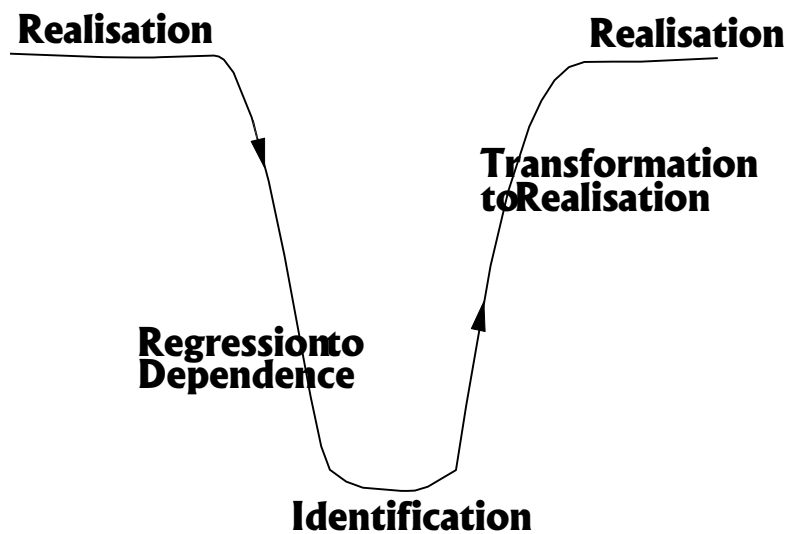
The thirteenth century parish church is near the centre of the town, and the clock in the church tower is visible from many parts of the town. A few years ago it became increasingly difficult to find reliable people to wind the clock, so that it frequently stopped. This aroused considerable irritation in the town, and strong feelings were expressed to the Rector and Churchwardens. Several people said to me with emphasis: 'We did miss it', characteristically using the plural, suggesting they were aware this was a corporate and not an individual feeling. Some described how they used to look at the clock every time they walked down the street from their homes, and from their descriptions it was clear that this was not because they wanted to know the time, but that they were reassuring themselves that the church was still there and the clock still going, so that when they found it had stopped they experienced a sense of deprivation.

When the Rector became aware of the strength of feeling in the town he suggested to the Chairman of the District Council that they should launch a joint fund for the electrification of the mechanism of the clock. A Gift Day and Spring Fair aroused a great deal of interest in the town, with contributions from different organisations such as the Scouts, the Round Table, the Floral Arrangement Society and the Football Club. The sum raised exceeded everybody's expectations, and the surplus beyond what was needed for electrification enabled floodlights to be installed so that the tower is floodlit at night.¹⁶

Such evidence of this third type of oscillation provides a further clue to the place of religion in society. We suggested earlier that every social grouping evolves or develops its own religion. In relatively unsophisticated societies all members of the society may take part in specific religious activities. This evidence indicates the way in which members of more developed societies engage in the process of oscillation without directly participating in religious ritual.

¹⁶ D M K Durston *Project on the Task of the Local Church (1969-1972) Field notes in the possession of The Grubb Institute*

ANALYSIS OF THE OSCILLATION PROCESS



One Phase of Oscillation

In the second and final part of this paper I want to open up the oscillation process to discover and display more plainly our relationship with God.

A Jewish Perspective

This brings me to a follow-up story to that of the Rabbi who spoke only of life, not of religion. Time allows only for a sketchy outline of a multi-faith project carried out some years ago in Birmingham, as a means of providing a support to different faiths as they each tried to explore how their own faith enabled them to carry out a major responsibility they agreed they had in common with other faith groups - that of being citizens of Birmingham. There were 15 different groups including Anglicans, Church of Christ, Roman Catholics, Methodist, German Lutherans, Black Pentecostal, United Reformed Church, Chinese Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. Over the two years of the project, members working separately in their own homogenous faith groups discussed a basic question about living in Birmingham, then sent representatives to a meeting to share their findings, where they agreed on the next step, and decided on another question for group discussion. During the

project, all the discussions and reports were recorded and circulated among the groups. In the process of working with papers of the group meetings, I came across something unexpected. While groups had different approaches, they all had certain basic similarities with the exception of one group - the Jews. While the other faith groups spoke from a religious perspective, the Jews constantly addressed the issue from a human point of view. When I pointed this out at the meeting of representatives I was not popular with the two Jewish representatives present. Many months had to pass before they began to see that I had been speaking positively about their approach. They had believed I was denying they were expressing their faith; what I found difficult in communicating to them was that what impressed me, was their capacity to **express their faith by the way they spoke of their life as citizens**. Only then did I recall what the Rabbi had said.

I recognise I may have tantalized you, by only giving an outline of what was to me a profound experience. Over those months in the project I grasped that these Jews in expressing who they were as human beings in the world, were stating who they were in relation to God in a wholly integrated way. In the terms of the oscillation process, they **were realising themselves**. It gave me a new insight into the way the gospels were written about Jesus, why he spoke of the Kingdom of God and very little about the Church. Professor Walter Brueggemann, the Old Testament scholar, in his lectures on *The Bible and Post-Modern Imagination*¹⁷, has insisted that today we Christians are called to behave like Jews, if we are to imagine how we need to live in the current world situation.

¹⁷ W Brueggemann *The Bible and Post-Modern Imagination* London: SCM (1993)

REALISATION MODE

In the **Realisation** mode, how I behave shows who I am, and what goes on in a community **is** that community, it exists nowhere else. In this mode, the indicative mood prevails, not the mood of 'ought', 'should' or 'must'. This is where the inner world of the person, group or community is made manifest. It is the art gallery of the works we have been making and inventing and contriving within ourselves - the truth of what we **are**, is being displayed. I am not making any moral or ethical judgement. That there may not be those who can understand or interpret my behaviour to me or to themselves does not alter the facts. The family, the business, the laboratory, the sports field, the benefit office, the streets, are where we are expressing ourselves in reality. We may be understood, we may be making mistakes, or we may be trying to hide something, even from ourselves. This is our life.

Within the systemic framework I mentioned earlier, this behaviour can be given meaning in relating to that of others which at first sight is quite separate, *eg* much of my own professional work in analysing organisations addresses this issue. For example why does a Sales Director behave incompetently?

That seems an easy question. But after this one is fired, what does it mean when his successor, and next successor exhibit the same incompetence? Finally it dawns on the Chief Executive the problem is that he himself is behaving as the Sales Director, and he allows them to fail because he did not want to change his own way of working. By thinking systemically, when anything appears to be wrong, we ask "Why does the situation need this to happen?" Paradoxical though it may appear, such an approach can unravel complicated predicaments if we persist questioning.

It is in this mode that great things are achieved. The creative outworkings of our finest thoughts are presented in our culture, in our politics, and in our environment, and provide the resources by which we live and work together. These developments however are threatened by feelings of destructiveness spawned by conflicting thoughts and attitudes about the acquisition of

resources to satisfy needs, leading to destructive competition. We all partake of the beauty and excellence in some measure; but likewise generate the darkness which destroys.

Realisation, as I have said, is the outworking of the prior modes of the oscillation. Behaviour if it is to change positively requires that we take steps to allow it to alter and adapt as we experience and engage in the other modes. For the Christian this realisation mode is where the Kingdom of God comes.

God's Invisibility

George Goyder, an old friend, used to tease people by asking “Why is God invisible?” then to supply the response: “Because all good servants in a household are ‘invisible’ in the way they go about their work”. Jesus’ parable in St Matthew’s gospel about the Last Judgement, where the king separates the sheep from the goats, throws light on this. The sheep were welcomed because they were those, who without realising it, in satisfying the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick and the prisoners, were serving the King himself.

“Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matt. 25)

It was the goats who were rejected. They neglected the King, because they saw only human weakness and poverty and did nothing about it.

The parable shows two things are hidden in this life: the presence of the King among the needy and the oppressed, and the membership of the Kingdom of God. The sheep are expressing their membership, without knowing it. The invisibility of the King is to ensure that the motive for serving in the name of the King, is the in-needness of humanity. It is to respond to human in-needness as human need, not because Jesus tells them to, by engaging with the political and social issues of society naturally, as citizens. It is this kind of thing the Jewish group were saying in the multi-faith project.

This argument finds support in the saying of Jesus (using Eugene Petersen's graphic translation)

The kingdom of God doesn't come by counting the days on the calendar.
Nor when someone says - look here, or there it is! And why? Because
God's kingdom is already among you (Luke 7:20)

Underneath this outward expression there is inward experience. The reliability of disciplined behaviour frequently results from the resolution of a struggle with anxiety; the decisive action after taking risks generated through facing uncertainty, and the calm approach belying turbulent and chaotic feelings. Just as a violin needs a taut string to sing the pure notes, so human beings need to work with stress as a condition for staying alive. As Von Bertalanffy writes

Biologically, life is not maintenance or restoration of **equilibrium** but is essentially maintenance of **disequilibrium**, as the doctrine of the organism as an open system reveals. Reaching equilibrium means death and decay. Psychologically, behaviour not only tends to release tensions but also builds up tensions: if this stops, the patient is a decaying mental corpse in the same way a living organism becomes a body in decay when tensions and forces keeping it from equilibrium have stopped.¹⁸

The building up of tensions and their release is a process linked with creativity. The creative act issues from the building up; the act of creation releases the tension for the time being. To allow ourselves to be subjected to stress in relation to our environment can therefore be a positive condition for the transformation of that environment.

¹⁸ L von Bertalanffy *General System Theory* Harmondsworth: Penguin Edition (1973) p 191

REGRESSION MODE

But there is no suggestion that this is a linear process. Just as John Holt describes the children running back to their mothers for support when their fear overcomes them, so the tensions build up in us and we look for ways of coping - we enter into the mode of Regression.

The situation may be one in which the individual feels he no longer has the resources to meet its challenge, either because of the magnitude of the task or through the depletion of his own resources or one which in the past has usually been within his competence. In extreme cases he may be on the verge of collapsing.

Opportunities for regression may also be sought by the individual, consciously or intuitively, in order to find freedom to re-enter and re-examine past experience, particularly the bad experiences which, in Winnicott's terms, have been 'frozen', because they were at the time too bad to be contemplated.

On other occasions the response occurs at predetermined times and places. Just as Pavlov's dogs looked for food when they heard a bell rung, so the thoughts of some churchgoers turn to God when they hear church bells! As we shall discuss further later, the individual's rhythm of oscillation is partially synchronised with that of others in any group or community.

Whatever the reason, the actual regression process may take various forms, and may turn out to be creative or destructive, or merely to maintain the status quo in the life of the individual. Kris (1952)¹⁹ and Winnicott (1965)²⁰ use the expression 'regression in the service of the ego' to distinguish creative regression from the less organised process in which the ego is overwhelmed by regression.

¹⁹ E Kris *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* New York: Schocken Books (1964)

²⁰ D W Winnicott *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment* London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis (1965)

Creative regression to dependence

Creative regression to dependence requires a suitable setting, a '**facilitating environment**'. In psychotherapy this is provided by the physical setting, and by the attention, understanding and security conveyed by the therapist. In worship also it is conveyed by the surroundings, and by the quality of attention conveyed by those who lead it. In these and other situations, however, creative regression is only possible if the individual, or group of individuals, is **able and willing to use** the conditions provided. It is necessary for the individual to be able, in the present situation, to 'cash in' on the experiences of good-enough mothering which he has received in the past. He requires memories of dependence, in order to be able to take the risk, and tolerate the anxieties of, dependence. This is perhaps a psychological version of the statement in the Letter to the Hebrews, that 'anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him' (11:6).

Creative regression to dependence thus entails a conscious act on the part of the individual, of placing himself in the hands of another, with due appreciation of the risks involved, but with some hope. It is not a means of escape from stress or danger, but a means of re-entering the disaster area under conditions in which there is freedom not to be defensive. In therapy, the patient's awareness of risk indicates that she remains in contact with everyday reality, however tenuously, throughout the process of regression and reintegration. However alarming and potentially overwhelming the emotional world into which she enters, she retains somewhere in her mind the knowledge of what she is up to and where she is. Winnicott refers to this unregressed element in the personality as the 'observing ego', which remains identified with the therapist.²¹

The promise of creative regression to dependence is, in the psychotherapy of Winnicott, Balint, and Kahn, a new beginning in which the patient is able to let go of the habitual ways of seeing the world and herself, which in the past have

²¹ *D W Winnicott (1958) p 289*

constituted her bondage, and to begin to find/construct a new world and a new self, and correspondingly new patterns of behaviour.

Defensive regression to dependence

In psycho-analysis it has been shown that under certain conditions patients enter upon a form of regression to a primitive state, in which they make increasing demands for attention and gratification which can never be satisfied. The patient reaches an addiction-like state in which he is terrified of the withdrawal of the care he is receiving. He has no observing ego who sees the regression as a search for a new beginning and an enhanced life. Whereas in creative regression the patient is aware that he and the therapist are engaged in a co-operative venture, defensive regression leads to temporary states in which the patient feels relieved of all anxiety and the therapist is taken for granted. This sense of security is highly precarious. Because he has totally handed over responsibility for his welfare to someone else, the patient is thrown into a panic when it appears that the therapist is not providing safety. When someone deliberately enters a lift in order to descend to the ground floor he is not thrown into a panic when the lift begins to move downwards; but if he feels the floor of his living room begins to give way under his feet he is thrown into a panic, because the dependability of the floor is something he has taken for granted.

Defensive regression is an impossible attempt to return to the innocence of infancy. By contrast, creative regression does not nurse the illusion that there can be a return to the cradle or the womb. This is why recovery from creative regression is frequently accompanied by anger and mourning, since with his renewed vision the patient recognises more clearly the years and their possibilities which have been wasted in partial living. This mourning is expressed by St Augustine in his Confessions:

Too late came I to love thee, O thou Beauty both so ancient and so fresh,
yea too late came I to love thee. And behold, thou wert within me, and I
out of myself, where I made search for thee.²²

²² *Augustine Confessions* London: Everyman Edition 1907

Therapists also refer to what seems to be a distinct form of defensive regression, when on occasions patients have withdrawn briefly into a waking sleep or reverie; they have ‘switched off’.

John Updike (1968) provides a fictional example in a church service of this:

On command, Piet sat and prayed. Prayer was an unsteady state of mind for him. When it worked, he seemed, for intermittent moments, to be in the farthest corner of a deep burrow, a small endearing hairy animal curled up as if to hibernate. In this condition he felt close to a massive warm secret, like the heart of lava at the earth’s core. His existence for a second seemed to evade decay.²³

Fragmentation and Projection

Outwardly regression may appear controlled where there is an expectation of a dependable object, but whether controlled or uncontrolled, the person experiences an inner fragmentation of themselves into good and bad parts. In her work, Melanie Klein concluded that in the infant/mother relationship the child’s behaviour was affected by fantasies which alternate between two positions - what she called the *paranoid-schizoid*, and the *depressive* positions.²⁴ In the paranoid-schizoid position extensive splitting occurs and the child projects the good parts and bad parts of himself into the mother who is imagined to be two different persons - for example the ‘good’ breast and the ‘bad’ breast.

In regression the person conceives of others on which to project those fragmented parts of themselves. Hence the evolution of myths about God and the devil, which has been commented upon by philosophers like Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and also by Freud. The idea is as old as the Greeks, as this question from Xenophanes indicates:

²³ J Updike *Couples* London: Andre Deutsch (1968)

²⁴ M Klein *The Writings of Melanie Klein* London: Hogarth (1975) Vol 3 pp 48-56

Now if horses or oxen or lions had hands to paint and make works of art that men make, then would horses give their gods horse-like forms in painting or sculpture, and oxen oxen-like forms, even each after its own kind.²⁵

The search for a dependable object or person, whether a myth or reality, is critical to health and well-being - for salvation. The merit of the writers of the Psalms is that they experienced Yahweh as one who could receive all their projections, good and bad. This represents the profound understanding of these writers which Walter Brueggemann shows when he classifies most of the psalms under the headings of “Orientation, Dis-orientation and Re-orientation”²⁶. In those of ‘Dis-orientation’ he points out that the psalmist can express both his own despair about himself and his despair and anger towards a caring Yahweh and relate them together.

In addition to despair, there is also the sense of failure and of guilt - no wonder the gods are feared even when they are longed for. As the writer to the Hebrews says:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”

And again speaking of the need to worship God in the way he finds acceptable, in reverence and fear, he says:

“For our God is a consuming fire.”

With this quotation we move from Regression to the mode of Identification.

²⁵ *Xenophanes 6th Century BC, quoted by Clement of Alexandria Stromateis, 5.109.2*

²⁶ *W Brueggemann The Message of the Psalms Minneapolis: Augsburg (1984) p 19*

IDENTIFICATION MODE

This is the mode of myths, legends, dreams, symbols, visions, and revelations. A sphere of dying and rising, death and resurrection and of the creative imagination. Tribes and peoples since time immemorial have experienced a special quality in this experience which they have called 'sacred' and devised rituals and liturgies with which to steer them through its mysteries which is illustrated by great art and profound music. For example Mozart takes the fragmented and ambiguous stories that comprise *The Magic Flute* and transforms them so that we can get in touch with the menace and liberation of human existence.

I have no wish to enter into a discussion of the merits of these different systems in providing environments which seek to enable people to feel real. What I will do is to take the example of Christian worship, which I have studied over the years and also because it is something which comes from my own experience. Since dependence is the state of mind underlying the identification stage it implies we have **faith** in who or whatever we regress to. Worshipping God within the body of a congregation is one way of searching which I now wish to explore.

Worship in Church

Church buildings are usually larger than needed in comparison with the human scale. They invite us to imagine something greater than ourselves and open us to see beyond the immediate *here and now*. Stained glass, sculpture, vivid colours, and memorials underline this sense of awe. Entering such a building becomes a preparation for worship, providing a facilitating environment. Karl Barth gives an outsider's impression of this

Everyone must apparently, perhaps without wishing it, speak of God. And then the minister will have the congregation sing ancient songs full of weird and weighty memories, strange ghostly witnesses of the sufferings, struggles, and triumphs of the long-departed fathers, all leading to the edge of an immeasurable event, all, whether the minister and people understand what they are singing or not, full of reminiscences of God, always of God. 'God is present! God *is* present.'²⁷

²⁷ K Barth *The Word of God and the Word of Man* London: Hodder & Stoughton (1928)

Familiarity has perhaps numbed our feelings of mystery and awe, re-awakened when we visit a strange cathedral, but habitually leaving us taking our surroundings in church for granted. The more comfortable and easy it becomes, the more our regression tends to be defensive; because we have avoided the depths of dying, we cannot scale the height of new life. Alternatively we can treat the place as unchanging as if God were dead, and changes in liturgy or furnishings arouse hostility or grief, indicating our own fragility. We want to go out from church without ourselves changing or developing, like Piet in John Updike's story.

The point I am making is that well designed churches are built to facilitate our creative regression to dependence. The act of private prayer when going to our seat is a positive response to this. Jesus' words 'Except you become as little children you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven', is a warning to those who wish to attend church as if they were listening to a university lecture.

We are invited to surrender our creative minds, to face the uncertainty of what we are doing. No wonder we need to trust God!

The Church Service - Liturgy

Then the liturgy is spread before us, to allow us to participate at the psychic level for which our regression has prepared us. The confession may be either an occasion for telling ourselves we could do better, or for accepting the pain of guilt, speaking of our helplessness and our accountability for our sins to God, who can contain all the damage we have done to others. When the minister pronounces forgiveness, it is God offering it to us on behalf of all those we have offended, many of whom we don't know, and because we cannot be sure of the effects of what we have done. Here the boundaries between God and ourselves and between each other are dissolved. We become one with each other in our reconciliation.

What Freud called the “oceanic feeling of religious experience” may follow, stimulated by hymns, music, and dance, offering our praise and thanks to God. People who have not hitherto been in touch with the depth of their emotions may spontaneously engage in strange and manic behaviour. Whether this is the working of God the Holy Spirit depends upon the outcomes - does it produce the fruits of the Spirit as Paul says: love, joy, peace, gentleness and so on? Sadly, in some churches the shaking of the hands to signify the sharing of the peace, instead of promoting identification of one with another, reduces the sense of wholeness and oneness by the individual physical encounters, where one sometimes feels left out.

The liturgy seeks to encourage us to use our imagination, not least as we hear the Bible. The stories can evoke ideas and feelings to fill our minds with God. This God who has worked in countless ways with different peoples of every age, **this** is the God we are being called to worship, to be at one with, so that as we identify with Him, we discover our own identity. Here the sermon, the address, can prophesy and give us new visions or can talk us into locking up ourselves into dreams of the past. As my father-in-law, an Archdeacon used to say: “However poor the preacher is in his preaching, I can always meditate upon the text.”

But there is more. Where the process of identification has extended through the congregation, the prayers for the church and world make more sense. It becomes a representative activity, an example of the whole human system of life and death in operation. The ones who lead the prayers are at the same time addressing God on behalf of the whole, of which they are the speaking part, and also asking God to work with those prayed for as being other parts of the same whole. There may be no obvious **relationship** between all these people, but as part of the same system there is a universal **relatedness** which also includes God.

But the Church also has another major resource for this mode, the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion each of which has two major symbolic movements - dying and rising, and identification.

In **Baptism** the candidate in passing figuratively through the waters, dies and rises again - the death is to sin, the residue of regression; the rising again is to new life. The identification is with Christ, in his dying in baptism where he himself identified with our sins and his coming out of the waters to proclaim his Kingdom of new life under God. After their baptism identification is then extended to the baptised who have now become incorporated into Christ's body, becoming members one of another in his Church, and inheritors of his Kingdom.

Likewise in **Holy Communion** the celebration is of the death of Christ and his resurrection, where, as we eat bread and drink wine we are made one with him, both in his dying and in his rising again. Here the incorporation is physically symbolized by the eating and drinking. The God on whom we projected, has received not only our good parts, but accepted our bad parts and reconciled them, in Christ. Our fragmented parts are made whole as he is in us, and we in him.

The great accomplishment of the Christian Church is that it has developed a liturgy over the centuries which enables human beings to work through the stage of identification, in discovering a meaning for life.

Becoming whole persons

The consequence of this new life is to become *perfect* in the St Paul's sense, *ie* to be made fit for God's use in the world. Now, there is no need for us to project unimagined parts of ourselves on others, *ie* to blame them, or to become *satans* to them *ie* accusers. Nor is it to be envious of others. We who are experiencing reconciliation with God in Christ are now able to reconcile within our own selves both good and bad parts, in technical terms, to re-introject them, and to integrate them to become whole persons.

Referring back to Melanie Klein's two positions deriving from the relation between child and mother, but here applied to the relation between us humans and the Creator, it can be said that the members of the Church in their identification mode, have moved from the *paranoid-schizoid* position referred in the regression stage, to the second, *depressive* position. Klein calls it **depressive** because the individual is well aware of past behaviour with its hurt to others, and seeks to make reparation for it, by the way he/she lives in the future. Klein regards this as the foundation of all creative work, even though it may only be felt unconsciously.

When the person fails to re-introject the bad parts, but only the good, then there is mania. There are Christians like this who consider their redemption means that their sins and their consequences have been completely blotted out so that they become sinless. Where they believe this, manic behaviour is likely to follow, which can be mistaken for the next stage in oscillation.

TRANSFORMATION MODE

The process has now reached the fourth stage, that of **Transformation to Realisation**.

It is vital to recognise that in the Identification mode, all is **symbolic**. However there is need of psychic space to learn how to express the symbols to become **real** in life, in our actual behaviour *ie* the Realisation mode.

Why then do I propose this Transformation mode, why cannot Identification immediately lead to Realisation?

Transformation is the stage where the re-constituted person hangs out ‘L’ plates, preferably green ones! It provides a space for the rich symbols of the previous stage to work to the surface, in particular to become aware of the systemic dimension of the context which might have unfamiliar features, certainly different from those seen symbolically.

There are those who confuse the symbols with the real and wish to conduct their lives as if the Identification stage was the only one, or the most important. It is to them that Samuel Greg addresses the hymn, picturing them as the three apostles on the mountain after Jesus was transfigured before them.

Stay, Master, stay upon this heavenly hill;
A little longer, let us linger still;
With all the mighty ones of old beside,
Near to the awful Presence still abide;
Before the throne of light we trembling stand,
And catch a glimpse into the spirit-land.

No, saith the Lord, the hour is past, we go;
Our home, our life, our duties lie below.
While here we kneel upon the mount of prayer,
The plough lies waiting in the furrow there.
Here we sought God that we might know his will;
There we must do it, serve him, seek him still.²⁸

²⁸ S Greg (1804-76) *Hymns and Psalms* London: Epworth No 158

Without being contentious I suggest that those who confuse the Church with God's Kingdom are in a similar position to the apostles. They try to build up the Church as an organisation to change the world instead of seeing it as the symbol of the Kingdom, where God rules in love, forgiveness, justice, goodness, peace and hope, through its members working in the world. Jesus taught us to pray "Thy Kingdom come" not "Thy Church come". It is to make the Kingdom real that we are called.

Bearing in mind that the whole oscillation process is a metaphor for human life, in practice all stages overlap and there is no ideal process to discover. People experiencing one stage are in systemic terms doing it on behalf of those experiencing the other stages. Even though a close knit community might be fairly homogeneous and nominally have the same rhythm and pattern of life-style, the stages of oscillation cannot be read off from what they do together - eg where everyone goes to church on Sunday it may be, for some, no different from going to a social event.

I speak of disciplined activity in engaging and re-engaging with others for the enhancement of life in dealing with in-needness. The transformation is from symbolic activity to **work activity** and this requires psychic adjustment as the unconscious shifts into the depressive position.

The drive which emanates from identification arouses awareness of **power**, power to achieve. Christianly speaking this is explainable as the internal working of the **Holy Spirit** - people with the power of the Spirit. Disconnected from the realities of human tasks, pretensions by people to have such power are as dangerous as a loose cannon. What impressed the contemporaries of Jesus was his **authority** - he made things happen in accordance with, as he said, his Father's will. It is not for our benefit that we receive the Spirit of power, but to use it with authority in expressing our love for others. That is what we are ultimately accountable for, as human beings defined by our state of in-needness: of God, others, nature and the world.

TO SUM UP

I have now sketched in one phase of the oscillation process. As I have indicated the process cannot be planned in advance, it is a **dynamic response** to the interaction of the experiences of the outer with our inner world. As individuals work through it for themselves, however alienated they feel, they are functioning as part of a wider system - remember the flapping of the butterfly wings in the Chaos theory story.

I started out with a working hypothesis, and hope that I have provided evidence for you to test it for yourself.

Oscillation is a recurring process throughout life. Much of it is unconscious and its outcomes may not be recognised except over a long period of time. A little here, and a little there, may be the story of the more-healthy-than-ill person, but so long as we retain the will to live, according to **my hypothesis** the process will continue; and according to **my faith** God is present with us, Emmanuel, at every stage in every mode and state of mind.

Awareness of these issues can provide the context for us to foster the well-being of society from where we can practise it.

The Aim of The Grubb Institute

The Grubb Institute of Behavioural Studies energises people to transform their behaviour individually and corporately as they gain insight into their experience of human systems, institutions and personal relations when seen in the context of Christian faith.

Founded in 1969, it is an applied social research institute working at critical organisational, professional, social and spiritual issues which are undermining the effective work of client institutions. In working with both conscious and unconscious group processes it draws upon theological concepts and values to provide frameworks of meaning and purpose.

Clients currently include transnational companies, government bodies, educational institutions, professional associations, health agencies and trusts, churches and religious communities, prison service, and a wide range of voluntary social care agencies.

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The Grubb Institute, Cloudesley Street, London N1 0HU
Tel: +44(0)20 7278 8061 Fax: +44(0)20 7278 0728
Email: info@grubb.org.uk Website: www.grubb.org.uk
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