

Walsingham : Federation of Catholic Priests : October 2005

Establishing and Increasing Our Congregations

Thank you for your welcome. My aim in this address is not to be pragmatic about how to establish and increase congregations, but to try to ask some of the deeper theological questions beneath that activity; to seriously pursue whether this is a genuinely Christian thing to do.

I grew up mildly Anglo-Catholic. The Parish of All Saints Putney in London raised me on Parish Communion, with the 1928 service sung to Merbecke. After a Gospel Procession, a Priest in Chasuble celebrated taking westward position, which led to solemn reception at the east end. True it was without incense and it was a choice to call the clergymen Father or not. Since then I have been inside a number of other camps within Anglicanism and been an observer at various interdenominational groups too.

I am glad to have enjoyed what could be called a catholic list of sources – here meaning both wide and inclusive. I want to test with you whether I have understood Catholic instincts, before tackling the title given, for all mission comes from and goes to particular contexts. What follows are headlines, not draw out nuances.

Positives of the Catholic inheritance

1. A world affirming doctrine of the creation, rejoices in what is natural, and is not suspicious of it. Linked to this, it holds that being Christian and being human are closely related so wholeness is an enduring passion.
2. Creation's value is both echoed, and underpinned, in the centrality of the Incarnation. God is prepared to get his hands dirty and actually rather likes involvement with us.
3. Catholic is understood as the connectedness of things. This links both to a search for wholeness and the sense of universality. Sacrament is thus a wide concept.
4. There is an enduring but contemporary instinct for the corporate and which resists the merely individual.
5. Continuity matters, and innovation is not welcomed for its own sake. Continuity or the great tradition is about "only handing on what is given" Though I think Vincent of Lerin assumes too easily that "what is believed everywhere" is both easy to identify and not contestable.
6. This continuity of truth, ministry, order and government is focussed in the episcopate, thus leading to the view shared from Orthodox Zizioulas to Anglican Avis that the Diocese in celebrating round the Bishop definitively constitutes being the church, rather than the parish.
7. Out of Incarnational thinking, there is a noble history of costly mission to the urban poor, such as of Robert Dolling in Portsmouth, or the sentiments of Scott Holland "I mind about the drains because I believe in the incarnation"¹
8. The church, as the body of Christ, is an intrinsic part of the mission of Christ, not as some Liberals hold, an unfortunate aberration; or a second best, following the Christ event and advent of the kingdom.
9. Because of all the above, being not just speaking, is the core part of mission. Presence is a legitimate part of the Gospel.
10. Yet it would be also true that mission grows out of spirituality, not out of guilt or activism. In the end, or perhaps more accurately at the start, Mission is a God send. That pun is intended; to be sent is the root of being apostolic and is a call from above.
11. *Eucharist is the focus* for most of these instincts. The Mass is seen as evangelistic because it is sacramental. As Stephen Cottrell put it; "The word Sacrament means a pledge"² – and Christ is faithful to his pledges of being with us for all time.
12. The bringing of these set of convictions, and to show these realities locally, is focused in the ministry of an episcopally ordained priest.

¹ Quoted by Christopher Lindlar: *Sandwich Deanery Mission Plan 2004* . p17

² Stephen Cottrell. *Sacrament Wholensss and Evangelism, a Catholic approach* Grove Evangelism 33. p15

By now at least two things are happening. You can see already what I have not yet understood about Catholic instincts and I hope you will be gentle in my continued education. The other is that you may be wondering “there has got to be a but, in this address”

Let me build slowly towards my but. I was glad of the way Father Brian Tubbs put things, in his March invitation. He expressed the thought that MSC has a contribution towards the title you have given me. He went on. “New Ways of Being Church is, we realise, just jargon from a catholic point of view – could you talk about church ways of being new”.

You may be surprised but *Mission-shaped Church* [MSC] actually agrees. As the author of that section, I argued then that the language of “New Way of Being Church” is at worst impossible, or at best unhelpfully convoluted, charitably meaning renewed old ways of being church. In serious theology either something is church, or it isn't. It is possible that something isn't yet church, but that's a different issue. Hence we rejected that term and preferred the language of *Fresh Expressions of Church*. We wanted to hold the line that church is church – but explore that how being church is expressed can change in a principled fashion.

This begins to open up today's subject, establishing and increasing congregations. I want to root my case in exploring elements of the Incarnation, the challenge from the New Testament motif *Dying to Live*, referred to in MSC and lastly look at Eucharist in a Mission context.

Lessons from the Incarnation

I want to start with Incarnation because of the conviction that Christology should lead to Ecclesiology, rather than the other way round. If we are looking for evidence as to whether Fresh Expressions of Church are theologically possible, it is relevant to explore our understanding of Christ. As you know one of the earliest hymns of praise to the Incarnate Christ comes in Philippians 2. It celebrates glorious and sacrificial changes. Out of a divine love, which the passage calls us to emulate in spirit, He who is by Nature God made himself nothing, He who was equal with God took the form of a servant, He who was in nature God was found in human likeness. He who is eternal became obedient to death. He who is glorious, died a shameful death. All these willingly embraced changes are not a million miles away from the language of Fresh Expressions. This life of the God/Man was a fresh expression of being the second person of the Trinity. The divine was not distorted or eclipsed, but this incarnation had not been seen before. In that sense this is change. It is not a change that destroys or compromises his identity but rather, could we say, freshly expressed it?

Then in his earthly ministry, Jesus the God/Man seems to live out the reality that life is open not all pre-planned. John's Gospel shows him seeking and following what the Father is doing. Jesus also experiences changes. He appears limited by the lack of faith in Nazareth, disappointed from time to time with his disciples, surprised and delighted by the faith of the Roman Centurion. Finding the way is not guaranteed ahead of time. His suffering and struggle in Gethsemane are more plausible as real, than pretended. And throughout the Crucifixion narratives, though the suffering is quietly understated, it is equally clear. This Jesus is passible. He suffers. Then supremely comes a change that happens to him. In the words of the hymn “'tis mystery all the immortal dies.” Moreover the pattern of change continues, in that he is raised; it is always a passive tense in Scripture. Resurrection happens to him; it is not done by him.

The continuities are in his identity, his relationship to Father and Spirit, his moral integrity and his commitment to the mission and the disciples. The changes are in whatever was set aside by becoming Incarnate, the becoming enfleshed, the ups and down of where the mission took him and notably through his own predicted process of dying to live. I suggest that continuity and change can be held together. Jesus is theologically the crucial example of this.

So then church also is called to hold onto its foundational ecclesial identity, but to follow in the steps of Christ and become incarnated, not just photocopied, into various cultures through its mission calling. It is the incarnation that opens up the possibility of principled change whilst keeping continuity.

A caveat

Here I want to put a caveat on how much we can take from the Incarnation, rich though this seam is for mining material for missionary ecclesiology. The NT talks of the relationship between Christ and his people in a number of ways. Some are that He is head, we are body. We are branches, he is Vine. He is Bridegroom, we are Bride. We are Temple, he is cornerstone. He is new Adam, we are new human race. In a variety of ways our union with Christ is described. What is the central and determining mark of this union? Put in a question, is it about the Incarnation or about Death and Resurrection? I share the view, expounded by Newbigin³ against Mascall, that the textual evidence and the liturgical practice is massively in favour of the latter. Mascall asks “is Lady Day or Good Friday the supreme commemoration of our redemption?” Newbigin responds by saying that while dividing the Incarnation and the Passion is always folly, we must ask which of the two is given as our pattern for union with Christ.

Here the evidence he cites and I have expanded stacks up. Romans 6 is all about our union with Christ, in his death and Resurrection. Baptism from then till now celebrates our union, not into Incarnation, but into Christ’s death and Resurrected life. Communion centres around his death and the life he now offers. Within it, Incarnation is barely mentioned. The Christian sign dominantly has been the Cross. The sign of the hoped for victory which at present still is hidden, is that of the Resurrection, which is the in breaking of the future, the first fruits of the Kingdom. Paul speaking about his life and identity in Galatians 2 exclaims “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live and yet no longer I but Christ lives in me.”

Conversely the NT knows of no extension of the Incarnation; Jesus returns to the Father. Indeed he teaches that it is necessary that he goes away. There is no command that the incarnation is to be continued in us. As already enfleshed and human, we could not take that road even if we wished. Newbigin concludes “The corporate life of the Church is no other than this profoundly mysterious life of Christ in us, which is to be described only in terms of paradox – as a dying yet a living.” It looks like dying to live is truly central. To that I now turn. Let me relate to our thought in *Mission-shaped Church*.

Dying to live

The writers of what became MSC had to think of a title. For some time we thought a good provocative summary of its thrust was “dying to live”. It got turned down by the publishers but the idea is alive and well in the text.

Fresh Expressions and Church Planting are about the process of creating contextual church. At its heart is a dying to live process. In contextual planting it is not the case that absolute gospel, or 100% neat church is imported, so that we can know exactly what will emerge. That would be a transplant or a clone, not growing something from the context. As the definition of planting from MSC p32 tells us, both gospel and church, embodied in a group of particular people is sown in a specific culture and something different to both emerges. But, is such thinking fair to biblical sources?

There is a New Testament analogy from 1 Corinthians which reflects on what is known about all sowing and planting. When you sow you do not plant the body that will be, but a seed.. but God gives it a body which he has determined. 1 Cor 15 37-38 This is what every farmer knows – a seed looks very different from what comes up later.

³ Leslie Newbigin. *The Household of God*. SCM Press 1953, now Paternoster 1998 pp 147 – 155

Planting involves dying

As I have reflected on best practice in church planting over 20 years, I want to add the spirit of the previous verse in the Pauline text – “what you sow does not come to life unless it dies”. This awareness connects with something even more theologically significant than St Paul’s understanding of death and heaven in 1 Cor 15. It echoes Jesus’ own teaching on the significance his own death in John 12 24f.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Jesus presents a picture of seeds, which die to enable reproduction of a plant that grows, which in turn continues the process of creating further seeds.

The discipline of Church Planting teaches that movement and change are inherent in mission. This is true for seeds. Seeds left in an unopened packet cannot be described as planted. They must be moved out of the packet. Their interment in the soil means an intentional end of their existence as seeds. Translate that dynamic into the discipline of creating Fresh Expressions of church in any mission context. It means that the seed, in this case the incoming planting team, does die. This seed does lose part of its previous identity; it was part of the sending church which had its own particular manifestations and culture. This seed will become a body that it was not before. What we are realising is that Dying to Live is inherent in the discipline and process of creating of Fresh expressions of Church.

There is a truly radical change involved in true mission. The planting team [or seed], by mixing with its context, becomes rooted there. It draws nourishment and resources from that environment as it sends out roots and a shoot. By this process, it dies as a seed, changing from what it was. In church planting, the seed community becomes a new body of believers, as well as a body of new believers. As such the seed planting analogy has real strengths. It conveys by analogy, what should occur theologically, in all cross cultural mission.

Jesus’ words in John 12, suggest that dying to live is inherent in the Christian way. This is not some weird game only those in church planting play. Baptism should have reminded us of that; it is symbolic enactment of, and identification with, the Death and Resurrection of Christ. He makes it clear that his patterns are to be ours. This very text follows his view of what must happen to him.

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. Jn 12:26

It is curious and worrying that while we have taken the notion of death and resurrection into our central liturgical rites, we link it to the church’s year and patterns of spirituality, but we have broadly omitted taking it into mission. Yet the very person who taught mission to us said it was the pattern of his mission.

Jesus made it quite clear that his followers are committed to his pattern. Turn on to John 20, and the same Jesus is bringing peace among the startled disciplines. He shows them his hands and his side – the cost of dying is not glossed over. Then these missionary headline words follow, or if you prefer ecclesiological language – at this point apostolic identity, is conferred on the church. “As the Father sent me so I send you.” What a word “as” is.

- As – in the same manner as I was sent as God’s apostle – so I sent you
- As - on the same journey from incarnational identification with culture, to the disclosure of Lordship, endorsing counter cultural engagement with that culture– so I send you.
- As – in the same way as I the seed died in the ground and have now emerged both similar and different – so I send you.

- As I – the eternal Son was willing to die to the glories of heaven, to be transformed into the form of a dying slave – so I send you.
- As - in the same way of becoming very different to become like those to whom I was sent - so I send you.

Have no doubt that the patterns of Jesus are for us all. They are for the whole church, most especially when it gets clear that Church is extension of the mission of Jesus. The patterns apply to the creation of Fresh Expressions of Church. They apply in all cross cultural work. Dying to live is normal., because it was the norm set by Christ.

But the publishers thought the phrase was much too risky. It got dropped. None the less it is central to the thought of the report. It is again a case of Christ and his patterns showing the church what she is always called to be. So I come now to the third section.

Eucharist in a mission context

The church will be Eucharistic because this is a dominical sacrament. But how, when, and in what expressions, could change because of the above understanding of Incarnation and the principle of dying to live. In terms of church tradition, it is also helpful to note that it has already done so, several times.

The simplicity of the first last supper and the domestic communal meal, perhaps referred to in Acts 2, but clearly in 1 Cor 15, is a long way from the choreographed complexity of a high mass in a parish, let alone in a Cathedral. Change certainly, continuity I think so.

Consider other changes. In the time of the early fathers, before Constantine, there was no sense that Eucharistic hospitality should be wide and generous to all comers. Indeed the introduction of the Peace, since Series 2 in the mid 1960's, is a architectural relic of the time when even those seeking, but not yet baptized, were put out of the assembly before the eucharist. The casual by passer or the fellow dweller in the tiny city were not welcome. They might have been imperial spies. Eucharist always happens in some kind of mission context.

At the Reformation and since there have been changes. A good number of them have a changed mission context lying behind them. The change from the Latin Mass to an English text is not just about politics or even Reformed theology but about understanding and participation. The change from reception in one kind to both kinds, or more recently in the ARCIC process that repetition of Christ's sacrifice is not what is going on, reflect both the reforming that comes from letting Scripture govern our view and also from a recovery of the participation of the laity. The more recent changes such as the introduction of Nave altars, non Sunday main mass, folk mass – all of them have some connection to a desire to engage in mission. Interestingly many of the entire list of changes of the last 400 years would have been widely repudiated in the Ultramontane climate pre Vatican 2. All would be resisted in the name of continuity. I do not argue that all changes have been for the better, than none are driven by a questionable search for supposed relevance. My point is more simple; there have been changes, fresh expressions if you will, and yet it is still Eucharist. In some cases it may be even more authentically so.

[Here followed a story of adapting Eucharistic practice for mission reasons. It was led by a priest in the Catholic tradition, Peter Calvert, based in Todmorden, Yorkshire. For the full text see *Encounters on the Edge No 11 Never on a Sunday?* This can be bought on line at www.encounterssontheedge.org.uk The dying to live motif emerged in various ways; the costly choice to close church buildings, accepting the choice given to local people to opt for worship other than on Sunday, moving from fixed liturgical words by finding their dynamic equivalence, accepting that the Monday worship was their Sunday.]

Staying with the mission context question I want to plead, don't let Eucharist be taken captive by what is Christendom thinking. The priest of a parish, long been in the Anglo-Catholic tradition and near to where I was a local priest recently wrote.

“The mission of St Anselms [not its name] is to present a generous celebration of the sacraments of the Church. .. the public worship seeks to express the sacramental presence in the community of the church and the living reality of her Lord Jesus Christ... The occasional offices are moments of mission extending that sacramental hospitality”.

You may or may not echo the sentiments. I don't wish to criticize this particular priest for I wouldn't want such a right. My concern is more general. I am nervous whenever this kind of language sounds as though the mission has been domesticated by the church building. Despite the words, over time such places have become a refuge for those who like that sort of liturgy. The mission is almost completely seen in terms of come to us. Public worship is the concrete in which the mission is trapped. Presence has become sufficient in itself and is in danger of excluding proclamation and persuasion. The Catholic has devoured the Apostolic. As John Twiselton, Missioner in Chichester Diocese sometimes puts it – how do we stop Communion being exclusive ?

A later part of this parish statement, even has a view that all the parishioners constitute the congregation, only some of whom formally come. I regret that this view, that the surrounding population are our people, is deep Christendom delusion. Let me highlight how our context has changed.

A changed mission context changed

One reason for the re-imagination we need, is facing up to a changing context. The England, which its churches exist to reach and serve has significantly changed. They are so widespread and so far reaching that it is more helpful to think that the Church's task is cross cultural mission. Mission has come home. This is something people have been urging the Church to face up to since the 1944 report *Towards the Conversion of England*. Lieut Col. Oldham introducing that debate in June 1943 said “This country has in fact become for the Church of England not only the nearest but the most important mission field in the world.

Only a mission-shaped church can fit with God's missionary intentions, which he himself showed in the incarnation, to engage with people wherever and however they live. Only a Church that is Mission-shaped can travel into this changed world and see parts of it transformed by and for Christ. What is this changed world like and how does that affect how we understand church ?

There is a seismic shift from a somewhat unified society to a more fragmented society; contributing factors are trends in employment, increased mobility, changes to family life patterns and so more single households. The predominance of entertainment and leisure also accentuates personalised culture. The effects are that Sunday is under increased competition. In the ensuing diversity of life patterns that people have and the group they form, “no one form of church will be adequate”.⁴ The call to diversity of expressions of church is a crucial idea, that needs to inform the establishing and increasing of congregations.

At the same time, and not least because of various electronic communication media, the dominance of territory to confer identity is being replaced by network. Clearly, place still exists. That will not cease to be so. However who we know, not where they live, is more significant. In a fragmenting society, people are choosing how to connect. Surveys show fellow hobbyists, friends and colleagues matter more than neighbours. Our neighbours may be strangers to us. So we face a change, from ministry centred on what we called “where people live”. This is now often only where people sleep, so we have to move to mission to how, not where, they live.

⁴ Mission-shaped Church p 13

Incarnation will have more interest in the how than the where; just as Jesus was sent to a culture, the house of Israel, not the parish of Bethlehem or deanery of Galilee. To enter such a fluid world, expressions of church will be non-boundary rather than cross-boundary. To achieve that, we need a shift to seeing existing parochial, territorial boundaries as permeable. This language of permeability reflects that boundaries will not be obliterated, but they should no longer be seen as proscriptive and restrictive.

If the first two are dynamics of changes within society, the third marks the shift of the status of church in relation to society. The demise of Christendom and arrival of post-Christendom, mean Christian identity is no longer conferred on the population by the culture and its values are no longer normative. So most young people do not know the Christian story. To register as “Christian” in a national census, may not claim more than being white and nice. Now church monopoly on truth, let alone attendance, is perceived as being ludicrous. Multi-faith options and combinations are expression of choice. To this should be added data suggesting that on present growth patterns, by 2015, those with confessed allegiance to Paganism will be as numerous as practising Christians.⁵ All these factors mean that our long lived and much loved strategy “come to us, we are available and accessible” is virtually totally out of date among the under 45’s; “...mainstream culture no longer brings people to the church door”.

In the past they might come for the hatch, match or despatch departments, or it might be that a crisis made them turn to the church. Then our job was to help them from interest to commitment That is less and less true. We are either invisible or unattractive. Church is often seen today as a relic of the past, an example of religion not spirituality, an institution past its sell by date. Today the culture doesn’t bring people – so we must go to them. But few churches know how to do this. It is so foreign to deep instincts to separate church and world or only to rescue people out of the world. In a 2004 book *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, the Baptist authors Frost and Hirsch call this operating in attractional mode. They call for a change to incarnational working. I prefer a wider term – the apostolic. But either way, the apostolic or incarnational journey to form Fresh Expressions of Church, out in the world, seems uncertain. What it will be seems hazy. Centred in Jesus and those who follow him yes – what else is less given.

Catholic history contain now well thought of examples, though controversial at the time. Take Francis Xavier who pioneered inculturated mission work in Goa and Japan. Another notable case is Matteo Ricci in China in the late 16th century. Or the Jesuit Robert de Nobili who acted as a Brahmin in India probably following Ricci’s lead, all abandoning western dress and customs and wherever possible adopting cultural dress and even beliefs, as cross cultural missionaries.

This is not new, nor was it then. Think back to the foundation of the living tradition. What changed in NT with the advent of Cross cultural mission? I suggest that among the changes were from work among Jews to creating communities that were a mix of Jew & Gentile. The language spoken and even the sacred texts moved from being in Hebrew & Aramaic to Greek. Synagogue segregated patterns shifted to Ecclesia patterns that more widely included women and slaves. Dominant models of atonement shifted from sacrifice to Justification. Temple gathering moved to dispersed ecclesias in each small town and further spread into various households in large towns.

Highly important, previously non negotiable distinct cultural and theological values were changed. Circumcision was no longer required – which from the start of the OT story had been a familial and personal mark of belonging to the people of God. Also the food laws were largely suspended, including who one could eat with. Neither of these were trivial in their day, though we tend to assume this change now. It took conflict and council to establish that this was a

⁵ In 2004: Membership of the Pagan Federation numbered 300,000. This is roughly the number of Baptists.

change that needed to be made. Even then some parts of the church – called the Judaisers – resisted the changes and saw them as betrayal and fatal compromise. This process is not new.

Churches of whatever age, when they embark on the mission adventure to engage with today's cultures, will find themselves confronted by this dynamic of dying to live. This means finding what need to be continued in the living tradition and finding what is acceptable to change. [An entertaining living example in Walsingham is the railway station, which still shows its ancestry, though now converted [sic] into an Orthodox church.] The process is very demanding and may feel like a dying – the promise is that voluntary dying leads to life. The willingness to submit to these difficult processes is essential. Only being in mission will reveal what kind of church is needed.

[Once again a story was told about the Mission Priest Fr. Damian Feeney and how he was led to plant the Mass in the concourse of his local ASDA super store. For the full story see *Encounters on the Edge No 16 Mass Planting* It is available from the same web site as above. Stress was put upon the dying to live motif once more over the choice of day, venue, going onto the turf of a cathedral of materialism and enduring their rejection, in order to where people actually gather]

The following section was omitted for lack of time. It is retained here for readers interest. I approach the end of this address with a suggestion that within eucharist itself is some justification for this courageous and risky way of mission. Let me enter it through a question. What is the same essential “shape” to these two passages?

a] The feeding of the 5000 : Mt 14:19

“And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”

b] The Eucharistic action Mt 26:26

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

The common shape is the 4 verbs; took / blessed (gave thanks) /broke / gave. You would not be very surprised that this is suggestive for all Christian ministry. I note that same shape is found in the Communion as is found in an act of compassion which was also a demonstration of mission. The Catholic view might be that Eucharist is focus of all Christian worship and service. It is then no accident that Henry Nouwen develops exactly this four fold shape in his book *Life Of The Beloved*.

But we can take it even further. The identical shape of Communion and the feeding of the 5000, in different contexts shows we can't and shouldn't force a wedge between task of worship and task of compassionate mission. They are revealed to us as having the same shape. The shape reflects a divine dynamic - not just that Jesus literally did this by the lake side and in the upper room - but that the pattern is a reflection of his own ministry. Let me put that in no more than the form of bullets.

Took Jesus took human form - Phil 2 - and took people, as he found them, to himself

Blessed He was blessed - at his baptism - and he blessed others by his work

Broke He Broke Jewish legalism and conventions and was broken by the authorities

Gave He Gave Himself - in life and death

With what Result ? His pattern and process of dying to live lead to multiplication of his life in his new people.

How does this paradigm apply to Fresh Expressions ?

Took God takes a group of Christians – as they are, but sometimes with little idea of what they may be taken to.

Blessed Unless those taken are blessed by encounter with God - they have no life to give to others; receiving salvation and having a living spirituality, empowered by the Spirit, are essential before mission can happen. We can only give away what we receive.

As Stephen Cottrell wrote about the effect of sacred space on his people

“Best of all as the spiritual temperature rose to apostolic level, the spontaneous combustion of Christ-like witness and ordinary everyday evangelism began to happen”^{6]}

Broke There is a break up of the old congregation and of one way of doing things. Establishing congregations means being called into a process of dividing to Multiply. There is no other way. It is its own kind of dying to live. As Jesus put it, the new wine goes into new wine skins. As such creating fresh expressions is not a process of simply adding the new into the old.

Gave The essence of Church Planting and so of Fresh Expressions is giving away. The sending church giving away resources of people, time and money for others. Then the sent church gives away its life to those surrounding it. It is costly, outward and in that sense apostolic.

With what Result ? Multiplication of Christ’s life in a new group of people. This is establishing and increasing congregations indeed.

Noticing this intriguing set of connections, I ask myself does it proceed from eucharist, or is it the other way round. Is it the Christological shape from which the Eucharistic one derives? Is this one way of understanding why Eucharist is so nourishing?

Some time ago I came across an attitude in the form of a quote, whose source I have forgotten. I shall be glad if anyone is able to remind me. The sense of it was something like this. Have as high a doctrine of Eucharist as you like, as long as your doctrine of the church is higher. And as high a doctrine of Church as you like, as long as your doctrine of Christ is the highest. I am drawn to that progression. This reflects an instinct that the Church is the receiver of grace before she is ever its dispenser. If I were among evangelicals I would say : have as high a view of the word as you like, as long as your doctrine of Christ the living Word is higher.

It is Christ who is the centre, Christ who is the giver of grace, Christ alone who brings life. Ultimately only Christ can establish and increase congregations. But what is so noteworthy in our day, and what I have tried to give a rationale for here, is that it will be in his patterns. That will embrace incarnational instincts, but be most formed by the dynamics of dying to live. This gives a Christological framework in which to hold continuity and change. Continuity and change are then demonstrated in the tradition of the history of mission and dying to live is also echoed in the Eucharistic shape itself.

⁶ Cottrell op cit p 17